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PRACTICAL
DRAWING ROOM,
CLUB AND STAGE
PATTER

BY
PRESTON LANGLEY HICKEY

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F. G. THAYER



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*To the memory of John Nevil Maskelyne,
whose work has immortalized the Art of
Magic, and whose death robbed the world
of its foremost magician, this little book is
affectionately dedicated by the Author.*

Bequest of
Harry Houdini
April 1927

27.9/15/32

"FOREWORD"

My object in presenting this little book, is for the magicians who use patter in their acts, and who find it difficult, at a moment's notice, in having a ready flow of language at their tongue's end. Do you realize, that if a magician can talk, and talk in a sensible way, it matters little if he is not so clever, he will be much more appreciated by the public, than the fellow with the elaborate act, who can fool you without half trying, but who cannot, for the life of himself, talk.

In this book, I am writing patter on subjects that I think will be most beneficial to the Amateur, as well as Professional, performer, who makes a specialty of Drawing Room and Club entertaining. The tricks upon which the patter has been written have been chosen with great care, so as to get the most popular ones in this branch of Magic. Of course, I agree with the argument, that written patter is not as good as your own, but then, if a performer can't talk, that argument will do him no good, and it will do no harm for him to take patter out of a book, as his audience will not know it is not original.

Hoping that the reader will be benefited by this little volume, I remain,

Most fraternally yours,

PRESTON LANGLEY HICKEY.

Harmon Place,
Minneapolis, Minn.

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OPENING ADDRESS

Ladies and gentlemen, my portion of the afternoon's or evening's performance, (whichever it may be), consists of a number of possible and impossible vagaries in the peculiar art of conjuring; or expressed in plain English, American bunk, including vanity, insanity, and egotism.

I have the greatest of pleasure in commencing my little sketch with a series of new and original effects and slights in the art of card manipulation, using an ordinary deck of fifty-two playing cards. There is no talking necessary on my part while working with the cards. All that I ask of you is that you watch very carefully the various movements of the hands, so that if by chance your eyes are quick enough, you will better be able to discover the secrets and mysteries of sleight-of-hand.

From this point proceed with your program.

OPENING ADDRESS

(Only those who have entertained at children's parties know how difficult a thing it is. The smaller the children, the more trouble. They are inclined to run up and grab something, or in shrill voices holler out the method by which they think the trick is performed, which strange to say, is often correct, even with tricks that puzzle their elders. The following is an example of an opening address that might possibly be used on one of these "memorable" occasions.)

My dear young friends, it is with the greatest of pleasure that I come before you this afternoon or evening (whichever it may be), and I assure you that I will endeavor to amuse as well as to deceive you to the best of my ability. However, before beginning my performance, there are a few little favors that I would like to request of you. If during my entertainment, you know, or think you know how I perform a trick, keep it to yourself, and don't tell your friends. After I have finished you can say whatever you want to about myself or the tricks, but during the performance please do not tell your friends *how* the tricks are done. Let them figure them out for themselves.

From this point proceed with your program.

"PATRIOTIC ROCKETS"

I have, in my right hand, as you will notice, a small brass tube, which I will give to you for examination. Over here in my left hand are three wooden rockets, or candles. One red, one white, and the other blue. These also will I submit to you for examination. Now ladies and gentlemen, the object of this experiment is to have one of your number place any one of the three candles in the tube, hide the other two, then give the tube back to me, and without opening it, or taking it from your sight for an instant, I shall immediately tell you what candle has been placed in the tube. (From this point, the patter lies wholly in what color is placed in the tube. If, by chance, it is the blue one, make this remark.) This, my dear friends, is the white one; only the wind, being strong one day when I was working this trick, blew (blue) it. (This generally brings a good laugh.)

"SPIRIT SLATES"

In my next experiment I am going to leave the well beaten path of magic, and introduce to you, an experiment, that lies wholly in the power of the spirits, to be a success or a failure, just as they choose. (Pick up slate with flap.) First, I will show you slate No. 1, to be absolutely unprepared. (Show both sides of the slate, and they lay it down on the table.) I will also show you slate No. 2. I shall now place the two slates together, and tie them securely with this stout cord. (When picking up slate No. 1, leave the flap behind on the table.) My object in tying the two slates together is to make sure that nothing can pass between them without first being seen by you as well as myself. (Set the slates up against something so that they may be seen by the entire audience.) I shall now be forced to ask some lady or gentleman in the audience to draw a card from this deck, here in my hands. (Force a card by sleight-of-hand, or use a Folco Deck. We will call the card the ace of spades. After the card has been drawn, say): Please return this card to the pack, and give the deck a thorough shuffling. (While he is shuffling the pack, go over and get the slates, and bring them to the gentleman. Look him steadily in the eye and say): Place your right hand on the top of this slate, and think of nothing but the

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suite, and denomination of the card that you drew. If you have faithfully carried out my instructions, the spirits will have written the name of the card that you drew from the deck, while your hand was placed upon the top of this slate. Please tell the audience in a clear voice, so that those at too great a distance to see the writing on the slate will hear what your card was. "The ace of spades." (Open the slates and show the ace of spades written across slate No. 1).

BILLIARD BALLS

Owing to the countless number of sleights and tricks that can be performed with the billiard balls, it will be impossible to give patter for them in the present volume. However, I am offering a little talk that might be used in conjunction with the beginning of billiard ball manipulation on your program, and also the Multiplying Balls.

I have in my hands, as you can all readily see, one of those peculiar objects known as billiard balls. I doubt if any of you have heard a billiard—b-a-l-l, but let me assure you that you have not missed anything, as its cry is absolutely inaudible. By simply waving this ball up and down in the air slowly, you see that I make another appear between my fingers. (It is not necessary to write any further patter on this, because it is really not necessary to say anything during your manipulation, as the people are interested only in the skill with which the performer works, and not in any little witticism that he might wish to offer. However, when the four balls have been reduced to one, you can vanish it by means of a pull, sleight-of-hand, etc., and remark): Watch carefully now as I pass my hand over this ball and you will see it vanish. (Show the hands empty). It has gone to join the others in that far land of Mystery.

EAST INDIAN YOGI

Ladies and gentlemen, during my recent trip through India, I saw a very curious sight, which I shall endeavor to repeat for you. One day, while walking through the market place of Calcutta, I came upon a Hindu fakir, who was astonishing a crowd of a score or more people, by swallowing a package of needles in this way (place the first package on the tip of your tongue, and get rid of them).

He then took a second package and repeated his first operation. (Manipulate the second package.) Then as soon as he was sure that the needles were safe in the pit of his stomach, he took about three yards of silk thread (take thread), and wadding it up into a little ball, he swallowed that also. (Eat thread at this juncture.) Now, to prove to you that the needles and thread are not in my mouth, I will drink this tumbler of water. (Drink water.) Much to my surprise, after drinking the water, he put his thumb and forefinger into his mouth, and pulled out the thread with the needles strung on it. (As you say this, pull the thread with the needles on it out of your mouth, and make your bow.)

RING ON STRING

The principals for the next experiment are very unassuming little objects, as you will notice. Nothing could be more innocent looking than a little ring, and a piece of string; yet mystery surrounds them. I shall be forced to request the assistance of some kind person in the audience to help me put this one over. I make no set rules as to who will assist me. It may be either a lady or gentleman—but—preferably a lady. (Give string and ring for examination, then put ring on the string, and request the assistant to hold the string by its utmost ends.) So as to cover up the underhanded part of this swindle, I am going to cover the ring with his handkerchief. (Attach the duplicate ring to the string which is covered by the handkerchief, put your hand over the ring on the string, and say): Pardon me, you don't hold it just right; let me show you. (Take the string in your hands, and slide your hands out to the ends, thus by keeping the ring covered by the back of the hand, you are enabled to get rid of the first ring unbeknown to the audience.) The statement that the spectator is not holding the string right is nothing more or less than a little play on words so as to make it possible for you to get rid of the surplus ring in a natural manner. Give string back to assistant and say): If you will kindly loosen up a little on the string I will endeavor to remove the ring. (Fumble around a little, and make a few casual remarks, just for the sake of effect, and then produce the ring from under the handkerchief and remark): As I said before, Mystery Surrounds Them.

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FLAG VASE

To my mind, there is no trick on the market that makes as good a closing effect, at the present time, as does the Flag Vase. This is a time to boost patriotism to the limit, and to conclude your performance by producing a large flag from the vase is a very proper and consistent ending. The patter, here submitted, is what I have used personally during my appearances at the Princess, Southern, Empress, Liberty theatres and other theatres in and around Minneapolis, and I have never known it to fail to be met with approval. However, it does not necessarily need to be used as a closing effect. (Have the vase standing bottom side up on the floor. Go over, pick it up and say).

I wish to call your attention next to this little metal vase. It is known as the water or production vase, and has been performed throughout Europe and America with great success by such men as Herrmann, Keller, Thurston and myself. If any in the audience has been lucky enough to see either of the first three performers work this trick, and did not appreciate it, they will realize how good they (meaning performers) were after I get through. (Set vase on stand, take pitcher of water and say): The next "acoutrement" to be introduced is a pitcher of lovely sparkling, bubbling, gurgling, sizzling, Aqua-de-tonique, or preachers delight. (Fill vase with water. If you have in your possession any kind of an old fashioned pistol, that is large, it makes a fine conjuring pistol. I use an old fashioned duelling pistol, which I have fixed to shoot caps. The bigger the better. If you have an old weapon of this type, be sure to use it. Pick it up off of your table, and step down close to the footlights. Hold it in your hands and turn it over slowly so that the audience can see it plainly. While doing this remark:

I wish to call your special attention to this little "pocket" pistol. It was presented to me some years ago by my old friend Captain Kid. Poor old Kid, many the tramp he and I used to take. Do you know, when he and I used to raid the little ocean ports of Spain and (check yourself quickly). If I am not careful I will give myself away. But then I was only Kidding. To get back to the trick, that so far has had no appearance of one, because nothing has happened. Hold your ears, folks, this is going to be

terrible. (Shoot the gun, go quickly to the vase, and pull the flag rapidly out. These quick movements don't give the audience really time enough to realize what's happening until it's over. This adds to the effect of the trick.

GENERAL PATTTER

There is a type of patter that has no connection whatever with what you are doing, but which is used merely to entertain the audience. This is nothing more or less than a play on words, and is called general patter. All of you have tricks, that there is nothing particular to say about them, while you are performing. This is the place where general patter counts. The following is just a suggestion, to be worked on.

You know, folks, I often wonder whether I am a conjuror or a comedian, I never can come to any definite conclusion on that point. I often ask other people, but they don't seem to know any more about it than I do. Those that see me conjure say that I am a comedian, and those that see me comedie, swear that I am a conjuror, so what's a fellow going to do anyhow. Gosh, but it's tough to be misunderstood. But then, if you don't know what you are yourself, how can you expect any one else to know what you are. The more I think about it, the more I begin to believe that I am neither. So to protect my reputation as the world's greatest conjuror, I reckon I'll have to stop thinking about it altogether.

The above is a typical type of general patter. There is no real sense to it, but the people like it, and it's always good policy to give people what they like.

ISING CARDS

For the next trick, or rather I should have said experiment, for should I fail to accomplish it with complete success you will see that it was only an experiment and not a trick. I shall be forced to request the assistance of several ladies and gentlemen. As I pass among you, I wish to have a number of cards drawn from the pack. (If you try to force a card, and a spectator evades the force and takes another, don't get confused, remark casually): Thank you, sir; I see you draw very prettily; now we will see how

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well this next gentleman can do it. (Always bear in mind that it is easier to force a card on a woman than it is on a man. When a person draws a card say): Thank you, very much; just force of habit, you know. (This little phase means nothing, but it sets them to thinking. After having the required number of cards drawn, noted, and returned to pack, go back to the platform, stage, or wherever your apparatus is set up.) If the first gentleman will be kind enough to call out the name of his card, I shall endeavor to make it rise to my hand. (It gives the trick more effect, if, instead of making all the cards rise right to your hand, you make one of them come up and go back into the deck, make another rise slowly, etc. When you come to the last card, make it jump up to your hand quickly.)

DOVE PAN

There has been no trick invented that proved of more enjoyment to children, unless it is the dice box, than the dove pan. To produce a pan full of candies during the performance, or as a closing effect, is not only a source of enjoyment to the children, but also heightens the popularity of the performer, in their minds. The following is quite appropriate patter for the occasion.

What do you say to a nice pan of candies? Watch me very closely and then after you go home you can take a chafing dish and make yourself some more candy. Take a couple of paper bags, pour a little oil over them. Then take two shakes of salt and pepper, and an egg. Be very careful not to get a bit of the egg shell in the pan. After you are positive that there isn't a single speck of the shell in the pan, why just take and throw it all in. Stir it up well with your wand to add the magic touches, put the cover on, take it off, and here we have a pan heaping full of delicious bon-bons.

REMARKS

Remember, that clear enunciation and proper inflection of the voice, combined with a number of carefully studied expressions and gesticulations, are the main essentials of all good patter. Don't make the mistake that many do, and

think that it is only what you say that counts; regardless of how you say it.

For your own good, don't memorize this patter, and then give it to your audience. This is only meant as a frame for you to work on. Take the ideas and suggestions offered here, and then elaborate on them as much as you want to.

Try not to forget that patter that is clear, terse, snappy and short is much more desirable than the sermons that are delivered in connection with some performers' entertainments.

When I say that your patter should be clear, terse, snappy and short, do not misconstrue my meaning, and think that you should tear off your patter at a breakneck speed. Take your time, but make it **SHORT**. Now that you know how, go and do it.

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