

QUICKER
THAN THE EYE



JOHN MULHOLLAND

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QUICKER THAN THE EYE



QUICKER THAN THE EYE

The Magic and Magicians

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by

JOHN MULHOLLAND



Illustrated by

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BY JOHN MULHOLLAND

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To
MOTHER
Who Just Can't Be Fooled

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Preface

IN HIS introduction the author of *London Boys' Own Book* said: "We think that it would be by no means rash of us to pledge ourselves, that there is no superior treatise on Legerdemain to be obtained; it is true there are more bulky ones." We magicians are all alike.

This is a book about entertainers. No mention has been made of Cagliostro or any of the other great pretenders to supernormal power. I have discussed fortune-tellers only because they have been defrauding the public.

Rather than to take the covers off their magic boxes I have tried to take you back-stage to know the makers of minor miracles. They are a fine people, and I hope you like them.

As the manuscript is handed to the publisher I recall the lines of the Conjuror in Gilbert K. Chesterton's delightful play, *Magic*: "I think that journalism and con-

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juring will always be incompatible. The two trades rest on opposite principles. The whole point of being a conjurer is that you won't explain a thing that has happened. And the whole point of being a journalist is that you do explain a thing that hasn't happened." May I be considered a conjurer.

J. M.

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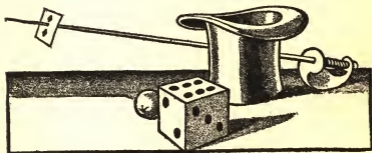
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CHAPTER I

PEDDLERS OF WONDERS





Peddlers of Wonders

IN NEW YORK, Paris, London, Berlin; in Delhi, Pekin, Tokio more magicians peddle their wonders at the present time than ever before, for the appeal of the subtle art of magic has not been lessened by the astounding and elaborate mechanisms of the every-day world. Indeed, the very complexity of the electrical and mechanical devices of the home and factory make magic all the more amazing, for those things which are impossible to science are seemingly demonstrated by wizards who use only magic words. For example, science to-day presents radio, with all its elaborate mechanism, but hundreds of years ago magicians brought voices out of the air. The magician of to-day, however, laughingly admits that his spells are merely for effect, that his incantations are simply the lines of

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his play, and that his only power is the power to entertain.

Magic has always been popular in America. Magicians had performed in public rooms of taverns on Broadway even before 1740 when the first theater was built on that famous street. Fifty years ago there were only a dozen theaters and a score of magicians in New York; now there are hundreds of theaters and hundreds of magicians. Because of the days and weeks and years of practise necessary to become proficient, and because few have the required aptitude even to start, the number of magicians is still relatively small.

Magic is something that can be understood by all types of people and in every land. Consequently magicians are great travelers. It is not unusual for a magician to have sailed the seven seas and played in all the countries which border them. When he can not speak another language he memorizes, parrot-like, a translation of his patter or omits all his professional conversation and limits himself to pantomime.

Magic is the apparent defiance of natural laws. Before magic can become magic the audience must know that the things the magician seems to be doing are in actuality impossible.

If the magician limits himself to making things appear and disappear, restoring objects which have been destroyed, making things float in air which without

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magic would not float, he finds that the audiences of the entire world will be amused.

Because magicians travel so far and so much, they may miss one another for years. When several reach a town at the same time there is almost certain to be a party. One such party occurred five years ago in Howard Thurston's beautiful home on Long Island.

The Chinese bronzes, the Burmese teakwood, the Indian brasses, the Persian rugs and hangings, all give his home an Aladdin-like setting. The white-turbaned Indian, ready with lighted match at your elbow even before you had made up your mind to smoke another cigarette, completed the setting.

Dinner was announced, and men who had mystified emperors and coolies, men who had confuted sages, offered their arms to ladies who needed nothing more than a softly spoken command to disappear into the thinnest of air. At the head of the table sat the marvelous Thurston, with Adelaide Herrmann, widow of the Great Alexander, on his right, and Mrs. Houdini on his left. At the table were Houdini, the greatest showman America has known, and Harry Rouclere and his wife, the marvelous Mildred, who knows not only what you think, but what you are going to think. There were also Max Mallini, and Charles Carter. And there were others. I sat next to a man named William Johnson, who was the only outsider present. Mr. Johnson was a

famous newspaper man, and all his life a devoted and unprying fan of magic.

Before the fish had been served the conversation got around to royalty. Houdini told of his visit to Czar Nicholas, and the three days he had spent in the palace. Thurston told how King Edward used to come backstage in the London theater, sit on a prop trunk in Thurston's dressing-room and exchange card tricks. His Majesty was a skilful performer, as is his grandson, the present Prince of Wales. Mallini told of the dinner he had had with Queen Liliuokalani, the last of the Hawaiian monarchs, and some of the other magicians present laughingly asked if it were really true that he had said to Queen Mary, at a command performance at St. James's Palace: "Here, Queen, take a card." I felt as if I really had no right to be present, for at that time I had never had a command performance.

Madame Herrmann recalled stories of Porfirio Diaz, the Dictator of Mexico, and of Alexander III, Emperor of Russia. By the time coffee and cigars were passed, the conversation had gone from performances before royalty to the ever-fascinating subject of where tricks come from. Of course magicians find it easier to demonstrate tricks than to describe them. Mallini, for instance, called for a newspaper, and the turbaned East Indian handed him one before he had finished asking for it. Mallini wrapped a tumbler in the paper and placed a

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walnut under it. The walnut changed to a cork, the cork changed to a billiard ball, and the billiard ball changed to a small cordial glass filled with brandy. Mallini accomplished each of these metamorphoses by merely covering the object with the tumbler wrapped in newspaper. When the small glass made its appearance the magician crushed the newspaper and the tumbler had vanished. This was done casually and simply to prove a point that he was making in his talk. Other tricks were shown to prove other theories. The work of one artist is always interesting to another, and we magicians enjoy the mysteries of our fellows.

It was a memorable evening. Never did we all meet again. Mallini went to South America. Carter and I toured the Orient. Houdini died.

Such informal gatherings are not infrequent and are, of course, simply a manifestation of the fact that for all his esoteric practises the magician is a sociable being like anybody else. But there is a more regimented organization to which most of us belong. It began a good many years ago. Francis Martinka had finished a tour of Europe and South Africa as the manager of a performer before he opened his shop in New York to supply the appurtenances for magicians. Associated with him in the magician's supply business was his brother Antonio, who had been trained as a precision mechanic. The shop prospered for years. This was not the first shop of its

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kind, nor the only one, but it had larger quarters than the others and magicians who were not working always met at Martinka's on Saturday night. Various things would be discussed. It was finally decided to form an organization of magicians, which was named the Society of American Magicians. It is the oldest organization of the craft in the world, and all the famous magicians for the past thirty years have been members. The society includes also amateurs who are ardent students of magic.

The society was founded to help magicians and their art. The word of the society was looked on as final in any question which might arise concerning magic itself. It was backed by Keith and by Albee. It works in closest cooperation with R.K.O. It accomplishes practical results. For instance, Will Hays, the czar of the motion-picture world, has ruled that no exposure of methods of magicians shall be allowed in moving pictures. Other organizations and individuals have backed the stand taken by the society, which forbids that the secrets of the magician be made public. This is not a reactionary measure. No one really wants to know how he has been fooled. His amusement comes from mystification, and once he knows the mechanism he is no longer amused.

Many a star of the theater can tell of having run away from home as a boy to travel with the master of mystery, the professor of thaumaturgy, or the "world's

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greatest magician," who happened to play two nights in his town. These men look back on the years they spent vanishing twice a day, precisely at three and eight-thirty, or acting as nurse to the rabbits who come out of hats. There is another group who are college graduates, and whose memories of the less interesting courses are confused with card and coin tricks, which they practised in their pockets during class.

The national conferences, which are held once a year, are extraordinarily interesting. We meet behind closed doors, and reporters, who are so cordially met during the rest of the year, are kept out, for inside are traded the secrets of the magic craft. We have one dinner to which the reporters are invited, and certain information, such as the names of the new national officers, is furnished, but nothing ever leaks out of the secret sessions.

Addresses are given which would make a sales manager sit up and take notice, because certain reactions, universal and reliable, are talked about that make selling radio or real estate child's play. Models of apparatus are shown and described with respect to their scientific construction, their transportability, and their appearance. Authorities on the humorous talk, which flows so glibly from the lips of the magician, give demonstrations of how it should be done. The only difficulty is that frequently every one is so convulsed with laughter

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that it is impossible to take notice, or to think seriously. No one who has not attended one of these meetings, that often go on for hours on end, has any idea of the number of angles to the profession of mystifier.

Several of the sessions are performances where one magician after another performs feats which are historically interesting, specialties of his own, importations or novelties. At these shows we work for our own amusement, and the instruction of one another. Many things which to the minds of a lay audience would seem the tricks of the trade, are not even mentioned. Not a single rabbit has been pulled from a high silk hat in the last three conferences, although the trick is still a favorite.

One of these performances takes place after the dinner to which the newspaper men are invited. The magicians have abolished after-dinner speakers—no mean evidence of their power—and instead stage a performance of magic.

In many ways the group resembles the usual convention gathering. The men might represent business houses collaborating to plan a sales campaign. As we walk through the corridors of the hotels little attention is paid us until some one reads "Society of American Magicians" on our badges. Then we are followed in the hope that some magic may occur. It usually does. Frequently the magicians are oblivious to the non-

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paying, though admiring, audiences who find therefore the more thrill in watching the magic happen. Perhaps one man, having forgotten to check his gloves, will cause them to vanish by throwing them into the air. Another will eat his cigar stub when he finds no ash-tray. A third will lift a quarter from behind a gilt picture frame to tip a bell-boy who has just brought a telegram. For the several days of the convention the morale of the casual guest and of the hotel employees is usually in a precarious state.

There are some twenty-five branches of the Society of American Magicians in various cities of America, and the Society is affiliated with similar organizations throughout the world; the British Magical Society, the Syndicate Des Artistes Prestidigitateurs, the Magischer Zirkel, and the Hungarian and Austrian Societies, as well as the Magic Circle, which has its own club rooms in London. Associated clubs exist also in Australia, New Zealand and throughout the Orient.

There are in addition groups of magicians throughout the United States which are in no way connected with the Society of American Magicians, although all the clubs are friendly to one another. The largest of these clubs is called the International Brotherhood of Magicians. Of late years this organization has formed local branches not only in America but in other parts of the world. Its main activity is a convention of several days'

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duration to which hundreds of magicians go each year.

At the monthly meetings of the branches of the Society of American Magicians there is a business session followed by a program. The business may touch on the ethics of the magician, the welfare of the members, or questions which would come before any professional organization.

The ethical standards of the magician are very high, higher, as a matter of fact, than in many other walks of life, for the magician can not safeguard his secrets by copyright or patent, but must rely on the integrity of the other magicians. Some apparatus has been patented, but very little in which the secret is essential.

The effect of a trick is really all that matters to an audience. A vanishing-girl illusion is a vanishing-girl illusion, no matter whether the girl be a blonde, a brunette, or a Titian. Whether the magician merely says go or shoots off a pistol makes no difference to those who watch and leaves no mark in their memories. It makes just as little difference whether she is put in a trunk, or a little red box, or a curtained cabinet, prior to her disappearance. To them it is just that a girl vanishes. Therefore, if a magician were to patent his trick an entirely different mechanism could be contrived to produce the same effect, and his trick would be valueless. As a matter of fact, any patent is open to the press or to any one else who cares to bother getting the de-

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scription through the Patent Office at Washington. In short, patenting a trick releases it for publication, and it then immediately becomes valueless for the stage.

Sometimes years of time and thousands of dollars are spent for a trick which takes but a moment to perform. It has to be designed and redesigned, made and unmade. The magician must not fail, and a trick must be mystifying to every observer. The trick of making a girl float in air cost Kellar, and his successor Thurston, some fifty thousand dollars to perfect. A little trick in my own program, which takes two minutes during a performance has cost me two thousand dollars in material and seven years of effort. It seems to me that it is all right now, though probably by next year I shall scrap it and build it again.

My colleague, Jack Gwynne, and I were together a short time ago, and a layman friend, who had seen Gwynne's performance, was introduced. The friend said: "Mr. Gwynne, I have seen your act and I think it is perfect." "Thank you," Gwynne replied, "I'm glad that you liked it. I feel that it has many flaws, but after all it should run smoothly, for it takes but twelve minutes to do and I have worked twelve years on that act. Allowing a year's rehearsal for every minute's performance it would be astounding if it were not smooth." It is not unusual for a magician to practise a new trick five years before it is added to his performance.

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When the cost, and time, and effort, and money, are considered, it does not seem strange that the magician tries to safeguard his secrets through his organization. Magazine and newspaper editors have been astoundingly high-minded and generous in helping the magician keep the mystery of magic. One editor, whose attention was called to the fact that magicians hoped to keep their secrets from becoming public knowledge, not only ordered that no such exposure should again appear in his magazine, but printed the following, exceedingly generous statement:

The Magician's Secrets To Be Respected

"Magicians earn their living by mystifying the public. Performances such as 'the vanishing elephant' and 'passing through a brick wall,' both of which have been explained in this magazine, are produced not merely at great financial cost for paraphernalia and equipment, but also at the expenditure of much clever brain work and severe physical training and then—when the magician has perfected his idea and begun to delight large audiences with its presentation—what must be his dismay to have the secrets of his patiently mastered art revealed by the press! To him it is a catastrophe.

"Realization of this fact leads to the announce-

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ment that henceforth the *Popular Mechanics* magazine will publish no detailed articles of magicians' performances, but, instead, will cooperate with the Society of American Magicians in protecting the secrets of a form of amusement which has always met with popular favor. EDITOR."

Many editors, I find, also believe that their readers are annoyed to discover the means by which they were fooled, just as they are annoyed when a critic discloses a feeling of hatred between the hero and the heroine of a successful romantic play. Audiences enjoy their illusions, and feel disgruntled when the illusions are shattered.

Many actors of the legitimate stage have short careers because they can not be cast in romantic parts after a certain age. This is not true of magicians, for they play the rôle of a man with supernormal power, and such a man may be of any age.

Frequently, so that younger showmen may know the work of other times, arrangements are made by the Society to have performances given by men who have been on the stage fifty years or more. One of these performances was held in New York, and a theater was taken for one night. Frederick Eugene Powell was invited to give an entire evening of his art. It was arranged so that the performance took place on the eve of his

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seventy-third birthday, and at the culmination of fifty-three years on the stage. Fifty-three years of traveling throughout this country and into Mexico and throughout all of Latin America! Fifty-three years of delighting children, and of confounding their parents, of changing white gloves into doves and making girls fade in air! Years marked with the greatest success, and years marked by the greatest hardships. Once his show was burned to ashes, and another show was swept away by flood, and yet another ruined in a train wreck. His property was all taken away in a war in Mexico, but through war, fire and illness, he kept on and in his pleasant and lovable way convinced his audience that coins belonged in whiskers, and that rabbits might always be found in top hats.

Ninety per cent. of the crowded house for Mr. Powell's performance were practising magicians. Men who, in order to attend, had had to cancel their own performances, came on the evening trains and returned to Boston, Chicago, Baltimore and a hundred other places on the midnight. It was not only an extraordinary demonstration of the interest which magicians feel in the work of others, but it was an extraordinary tribute to Frederick Eugene Powell, the elected dean of their organization.

The time scheduled for the curtain had passed, but it was being held for those who had telephoned from

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the station that their train had been late. Why not hold the curtain, for was not this a show for magicians, and what were rules? The delayed ones arrived sooner than any but magicians could get through traffic. The lights went out and the house grew quiet. Dean Powell walked out on the stage and, during the welcoming applause, threw his gloves into the air where they turned into doves. All over the house could be heard a hum as the magicians in the audience turned to the girls on their right, who get sawed in half, or those on their left, who float in air, and murmured, "Perfectly done." Dean Powell next produced enough flowers to fill a large-size basket. During this trick, as if in response to a leader, the entire audience burst into applause over a pretty piece of technique, which only a magician would detect—and then later gave the trick itself half that much applause. It was clear by the end of this second effect that these men had traveled so far in order to see the beautiful craftsmanship of a master, rather than the tricks themselves.

The performance went on. Money was discovered where it always is during a magic show and never is at any other time; coins were plucked from the air, and picked out of hats, and snatched off the top of a very bald pate. It was found in all the customary places, except in little girls' hair ribbons and little boys' noses; there were no little boys nor little girls there—just row

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after row of magicians. During this wonder, in place of the usual small boy who is inveigled upon the stage, up went one of the younger magicians, who is himself a Broadway favorite. He seemed quite as delighted as would be the small boy, for whom he was substituting. The entire trick seemed unreal. Perhaps it really did not happen, but the laymen present applauded at the same time that the magic workers did. Many other feats of magic, such as shooting a bullet through a girl who smiled the while, were performed. An outsider would never have known, except by bursts of applause at unexpected times, that the assemblage was other than an ordinary audience.

Intermission found the lobby and the lounge crowded with men, many of whom had been kept apart by their travels for ten, or fifteen, or even twenty years, business rivals and close friends. The few laymen who were there had in their eyes a look of suspicion, as if they expected at any moment to hear an alarm clock ring and find that the magicians had faded away. When the call came for the curtain, the man with the magician's correspondence school course stood talking to the smiling, quick-motioed Belgian, who never bothers to "vanish" a canary bird without sending his cage along. The rush back to the seats was more like that of prep schoolboys than a group of blasé professional workers of miracles.

The performance continued and the few laymen sat

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dazed from watching acts so unreal in the company of people whose daily work was miracles. It went on and on as mystery after mystery was unfolded. Things were shown that had not been done in New York for fifty years, and other tricks that had never been done north of Mexico. It all ended as so many magic shows used to end, by the surprising production, upon the report of a pistol, of a girl holding a large flag. That was the end, and yet it was not the end, for Mr. Powell was still on the stage receiving the audience when twelve o'clock came—and his seventy-third birthday.

Another time the Society of American Magicians brought the beloved master, Harry Kellar, from his retirement in Los Angeles, to show one of his celebrated acts at a performance in New York. It was staged in the Hippodrome, and all of the thousands of seats were filled. At the conclusion Kellar stood bowing to the tumultuous applause of the delighted audience. He started to walk off the stage when he was stopped by Houdini, who had arranged the whole show. Houdini took Kellar by the arm, led him even closer to the footlights and, addressing the audience, said, "As this is Mr. Kellar's last appearance, we, the magicians, have decided to show him what little honor we can on this historical occasion, and as we all love him for his great heart and know that we will never again meet him in public, we have decided not to wait for his flowers until he has

passed into the Great Beyond. May he be with us for a long time, but we will give him flowers while he is with us." Then, turning to Mr. Kellar, he said, "Permit us to show you only a slight token of our huge regard for you." A sedan chair was brought out, Mr. Kellar was forced to sit in it, and some of the leading magicians of the world picked up the chair and carried Mr. Kellar off the stage. Other famous magicians threw flowers in the path of the chair. The orchestra played *Auld Lang Syne*, and the thousands of the audience stood up en masse. That is the way magicians do things.

The way that magicians of one land offer hospitality to magicians of other lands is always astonishing to men of other professions. Were a lawyer or a doctor to call in a foreign country on a man of his own profession he would be treated about as would any other visiting foreigner. This is not true among magicians. If in a foreign country you announce to another man of magic that you are a magician he will almost immediately ask if you need money, if you have a place to stay, if you will not have your next meal with him. I have found in a country even as far off as India that when I came to ask for my hotel bill it already had been paid by a local magician. I know of no other profession in the world whose members are as loyal to one another, and as helpful.

When one magician no longer has use for a trick he

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will probably permit others to use it, and in this way some feats become the common property of all magicians. Certain effects have been common property for centuries, and when it is realized that thousands of magicians have known these secrets and yet they are still mysteries to the laymen, it may be seen how carefully everything is guarded. Every once in a while the lure of money, or an overwhelming desire to be in print, will make some magician forget the rules of his calling, but few continue exposing for any length of time, for they soon realize that a renegade is unpopular not only with his own people but with outsiders as well.

Bits are sometimes taken from other peoples' acts, but, in the main, the only cases of the sort would be considered perfectly legitimate in the business world. It is quite usual in business for some one to invent something for which there is a demand and to have another firm contrive a variation which is also put on the market; but that sort of thing is very seldom done by magicians. It must be remembered that a piece of apparatus may be used legitimately by another performer provided the effect presented appears to the audience to be different. I have in my possession an ingenious contrivance which will either vanish a full pack of fifty-two cards, or change the color of a red handkerchief to green. Most of the difficulties which arise between magicians come about because one man by long usage has made some act of

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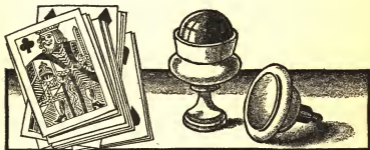
magic, which is common knowledge of us all, so much his that the audiences begin to identify him with that particular trick. When a man becomes so identified, he is apt to want every other magician to give it up.

As magicians we are citizens of the world. We are at home wherever we may be, as we travel from city to city and country to country peddling our art. Watching the impossible has always intrigued people.

We shall continue to devise new ways to amaze, and we pledge ourselves that we shall do our utmost never to take away from your amusement by letting you find out just how the impossible is accomplished.

CHAPTER II

OF THE OLD WORLD





Of the Old World

“IF I GET to know how a trick is done, I lose my interest in it,” explained a man almost two thousand years ago. Records of the ancients who watched magic show that the attitude of the old audiences is the attitude of audiences to-day. The accounts of the tricks themselves show that the Greeks and Romans sought performances of those feats which are the basis of sleight-of-hand performances of the present time. Early magicians had little apparatus, and that of the crudest kind, and depended on their own dexterity to mystify their audiences. Priests in the pagan temples had mechanical contrivances which they used to astound their followers. But it is the secular performers who were the forerunners of the modern magician, not the priests.

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Early magicians traveled from place to place as the magicians do now. They would perform at the festivals or wherever a public or private gathering showed the least inclination to be entertained. They also performed, at times, in regular theaters, though they were much more likely to be seen in the market-places, or on the roadside.

In later times the magicians' performances became more elaborate, and they found their paraphernalia too bulky to be carried in the sack on their back. The more successful men then began to travel about in wagons, which would not only facilitate carrying their cumbersome apparatus, but also serve as their home. These showmen's wagons still travel the road on the Continent. Some of them are elaborate houses on wheels. A three-room wagon, in which I was entertained in Germany, was fitted up very much like a cabin and a galley in a ship.

As Christianity spread and placed its ban on all theater performances the magicians, as actors, were in ill favor. During this time, which covered several centuries, magic made very little progress, although the magician, frowned upon as he was, continued to work his magic. When the theater was once more established magicians took part in the performances, though even then more of them continued to be itinerant street performers. In several cities, both in England and on the

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Continent, we find streets named "The Place of the Trickster," which shows that they were probably made to stay in certain places in the town, and were still classed, as they were under old British laws, with rogues and vagabonds.

By the seventeenth century magicians were again in popular favor, though not as yet sanctioned by ecclesiastical authorities. They were featuring their own entertainments more and more and depending less and less on a company of troubadours and gymnasts and animal trainers. Their performances were finding favor with the royalty and the nobility and gradually becoming more polished. The performing showmen were adopting the attire of gentlemen. They had previously worn the garb of working men, and they always wore an apron with a large pocket. In this apron pocket were carried the cards and the pebbles and all those things with which they performed. It is still recalled by the German term *Taschenspieler*. Those men who performed at Bartholomew Fair and smaller places continued in this respect to dress like the earlier conjurers, and the apron was not entirely discarded until the early part of the nineteenth century. The magicians, who traveled by wagon, were adding portable stages to their equipment.

Even though some magicians were bettering their performances, and were men who could mix in educated

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circles, it was not until after the middle of the eighteenth century that magicians were able to present an entire evening of magic. With their sleight of hand they also exhibited automatons which were looked on, in that unmechanical generation, as wonderful. Some of these automatons were mechanical figures in name only and depended on the work of an unseen assistant for their movements, rather than on the gears and wheels which were shown.

Some of these more modern magicians, in trying to disassociate themselves from the humbler practitioner, not only cast aside the magician's clothes for the gentleman's, but would wear the most costly gold-trimmed brocades, presumably in the attempt to be admired personally if not for their work. One man donned the uniform of a general complete with many medals, and he would drive around the city in a carriage drawn by four white horses. It was a great method of gaining attention, and it was the beginning of the school of performers who believe that being widely known is more necessary than being expert. The performances of the men of this time were recorded in detail as to effect, though the writers have often been in error as to method. Perhaps the biggest step forward was an admittance that they were entertainers who depended on trickery rather than upon supernormal power. Even then they felt that this confession was necessary only when they were performing

for educated people and that an ignorant person might just as well be led to believe that the tricks were demonstrations of a race of superior beings.

They still found it profitable to suggest being in league with devils. A newspaper advertisement in my collection, which was printed in 1783, shows their method.

“May the BLACK CAT have nine Times nine Lives!

“Katterfelto is sorry to find, that writers in the news-papers have several times, and particularly within the last fortnight, asserted, that he and his Black Cat were Devils. On the contrary, Katterfelto professes himself to be nothing more than a moral and divine philosopher, a teacher in mathematics, and natural philosophy; and that neither he nor his black cat bear any resemblance to Devils, as they are represented in the print-shops; and assures the Nobility and the public, that the idea of him and his Black Cat being Devils, arises merely from the astonishing performances of Katterfelto and said Cat, which both in the day’s and the night’s exhibition, are such as to induce all spectators to believe them both Devils indeed!—The Black Cat appearing in one instant with a tail, and the next without any, and which has caused many thousand pounds to be lost in wagers on this incomprehensible subject!

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“Katterfelto will shew This Day and To-morrow, from nine to five o'clock, his various Occult Secrets. His Evening's Lecture begins This and To-morrow Evening, at half after seven. Admittance, day or night, front seats 3s. Second 2s. Back for servants only, 1s. at No. 14, Piccadilly.”

The majority of advertisements were changing so that either power was denied in the way in which Gyngell denied it or the subject was not mentioned. Gyngell's advertisement said in part:

“Had Mr. Gyngell a wish to insult the understanding of his audience, by attempting to impose upon them the idea of Magic, the exquisite power of these wonderful pieces of mechanism would assuredly assist him in the plan; but being a friend to plain truth, and adverse to every idea of conjuration, it is his wish to introduce them as they really are.”

Even he, however, in another part of his advertisement noted:

“Mr. Gyngell, with his Charmed Apparatus, will work such MIRACLES, That the audience will say to each other, 'Are we asleep, and is this a dream, or are our eyes made the fools of our other senses.'”

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The magicians continued to use fanciful names for their mysteries even though they stopped claiming demoniacal aid. *The Satirist* once printed a note about this: "Conjurers delight so much in abstruse and far-fetched names, in describing themselves and their manifold deceptions, that we are almost afraid they will in time be quite lost amidst a chaos of confused sounds."

The magician also still claimed he would show all feats of magic in his announcements. One such advertisement said: "To enumerate the Illusions, Transformations, Mystifications and Hallucinations produced by this master of wonder-workers, would require a repetition of all the tricks known to the Magic Art, and a great number never before heard of."

The featured effects in one performance were entitled, "The Oracle of Psammetichus, The Choretikopas, Thaumaturgic Surprises, The Cabalistic Counters, The Charmed Chair of Comus, The Inseparable Separable, and Homological Evaporation."

There are hundreds of names of magicians of olden times known to the magicians of to-day. The most comprehensive history was written by Sidney W. Clarke, and published by George Johnson of London in an edition limited to four copies. It had previously been published in Mr. Johnson's *Magic Wand Quarterly*. This magazine is made available only for magicians. Dr. Henry Ridgely Evans has also written a number of ex-

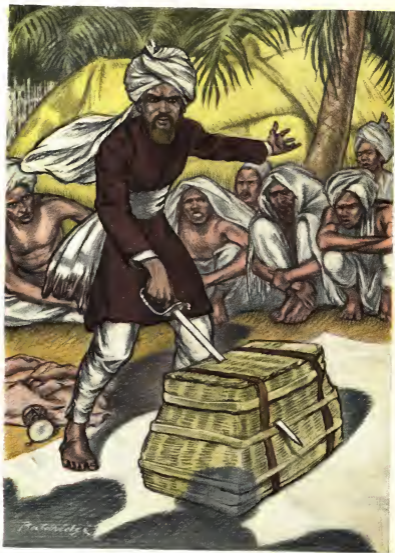
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cellent books on the history of magic. Houdini wrote two interesting books. Never has a history attempted completeness for there has been too large a number of magicians. A few stand out because of having started a movement or because of their own preeminence.

Louis Conpte, whom Louis Philippe made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, may be considered the first of the great French magicians, but the Italian, Bartolomeo Bosco, was in all probability the first of the really great stage magicians.

Phillippe was another great French magician, though he had his start not in France but in Scotland where he had gone as a pastry cook. A great deal of Phillippe's success depended on the use of Chinese feats of magic which he learned from a troupe of Chinese showmen who were in Dublin at the time of one of his trips to that city.

Guisippe Pinetti, who is also supposed to have been born in France, was a magician of international repute and an extraordinary poser who manufactured high-sounding titles which he bestowed upon himself. It was Pinetti who started a remarkable series of events that led to the modernizing of stage magic. Pinetti was playing in Italy where at that time Count Edmond de Grisy, a French nobleman, had sought refuge because of the revolutions. De Grisy was a practising physician whose hobby was magic. As an amateur conjurer he was in



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great demand socially. Pinetti was jealous of this amateur who was attracting so much attention and while pretending friendship arranged to humiliate him publicly.

De Grisy was furious and planned to revenge himself by building a show which would eclipse Pinetti's. His plan worked. Pinetti went to Russia and left the southern European field entirely to his rival. Once used to the glamour of the stage de Grisy kept on and had the greatest success until during the feat of catching a bullet fired from a gun in one of his performances something went wrong and he accidentally killed his son. He was sentenced to prison and his money confiscated. Upon his release from prison he learned that his wife had died. He managed to collect some simple equipment and started out with a small wagon show under his wife's maiden name, Torrini. During his wanderings Torrini found a boy, with a high fever and unconscious, lying on the road where he had fallen from a stage-coach while traveling home from school. He nursed the boy back to health and taught him all the tricks of his repertoire.

The boy who was befriended and tutored was named Eugene Robert. He was later known to the world as Robert-Houdin. He exerted the greatest influence on magic and is looked on as the first of the modern stage magicians.

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Robert-Houdin's memoirs make one of the most fascinating stories in magic. Particularly interesting is the account of his being sent by the French Government as a special envoy to Algeria to attempt to dissuade the natives from their belief in the magic of the Marabout priests. In this Houdin was successful, and from that time on the French were able to rule Algeria without the opposition of the priesthood.

From the time of Fawkes, England has had many great outstanding magicians though the names of Devant and the Maskelyne family are perhaps better known than all the rest. John Nevil Maskelyne founded a theater in London in which magic was the feature of the performance, and that theater is still functioning seventy years later under the direction of his grandson. The theater has been housed in several different buildings. At the beginning there was a man named Cooke who was the partner of Maskelyne, but the several generations of theater-goers think only of the name Maskelyne.

David Devant is looked on as the greatest of all English magicians, and though he has been retired for fifteen years he still exerts a real leadership. A few years ago, while I was at his house for tea, he astounded me by knowing of the whereabouts and the acts of all the magicians whose names were brought up in conversation. As magicians move continually, this is a task like the memorization of a stock-exchange quotation board.

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He also showed a complete familiarity with my act although he had never seen it.

Devant was a partner of the first Maskelyne for a number of years. The present head of the Maskelyne family, Mr. Jasper Maskelyne, and I were talking one day about the time when his grandfather and Devant were together. Mr. Maskelyne made an appointment with me for the next morning at ten o'clock to inspect a hamper full of old programs of the theater of magic. We met promptly and went to his dressing-room where the hamper had already been brought. We both sat on the floor fascinated by the interesting material which we found. Besides the programs of fifty and sixty years ago, and those of but ten and twenty years ago, there were pictures showing the old stage sets and apparatus. We were interrupted by a knock on the door and a voice saying, "Mr. J., ten minutes till curtain." "What's that?" Jasper Maskelyne answered. "What curtain?" It was almost three o'clock and time for the matinée. We had been on the floor for five hours and had not realized it was more than a few minutes.

Bamberg is another name which has been known for many generations of magicians. The first of the family to be a magician became famous about 1800, and to-day the seventh generation is still following magic and the name is known throughout the world.

Many of the people most important in magic are not

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well known to the layman. One such man was the Belgian, Bautier de Kolta, who was a great inventor of tricks. His trick, the bird and cage which vanish from the hands of the performer, has helped to make many magicians better known to audiences than was de Kolta himself. With this trick, shown while standing in the middle of a circus ring in Havana, Cuba, Harry Kellar made his first real success. And so it goes. Kellar and other magicians have made the trick their own because they so excel in the performance.

The leading performer of a particular trick may be some one who is known to very few people, as he may be a local magician or perhaps an amateur. Certain tricks depend for their success on the peculiarity of the magician. A man may, because of his strength or his size, or nervous mannerisms, or placidity of demeanor, be able to do something which a man with different qualifications would be unable to do. There are specialists in magic as in almost every other profession. These specialists will do a series of tricks in which they use the same objects, or they may make their specialty a type of trick. One man specializes in tricks with small objects. Another man may do only large illusions, in which people vanish or appear,—tricks in which people are pulled apart and put together again, or made to go through sheets of glass or brick walls. One man will do an entire program using nothing but handkerchiefs for

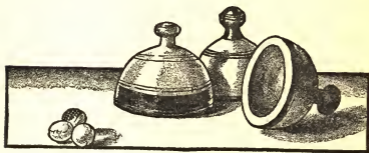
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his mysteries; another will depend entirely on cigarettes or cards. T. Nelson Downs is known as the "King of Coins," for in his act he did only coin tricks. Gus Fowler uses only watches and clocks in his mysteries but is able to hold any audience spellbound for an hour.



CHAPTER III

FIRST MAGICIANS IN AMERICA





First Magicians in America

The *New York Weekly Journal*, of March 18, 1734, "containing the freshest advices, Foreign and Domestick," carried the first-known advertisement of a magician in America. The page size is the size of a magazine rather than that of a newspaper and there are but four pages in all, but it is a big paper in the eyes of the magicians. In the wording of the advertisement we are given the impression that the people of that time were not bothered by ticket speculators and presumably not annoyed by traffic congestion.

"This is to give notice to all Gentlemen, Ladies, and others, that on Monday the 18 of March at the House of Charles Sleigh, in Duke Street is to be seen the famous German Artist, who is to perform the

Wonders of the World by Dexterity of Hand: The Things he performs are too many to be enumerated here. He herewith invites all to be Spectators of his Ingenuity, 1s., 9d. & 6d. is the price for admittance. He begins at 7 O'clock in the Evening. To be continued every night in the week. Saturday nights excepted. To be performed by Joseph Broome."

Mr. Broome had to pay but three shillings for his notice in the paper whereas to-day the same space would cost at least twenty-eight dollars in the *New York Times*. However, all things considered, perhaps the sixpence was a fair price for admission.

Forty years after this first account of a magic performance in America we find that the comfort of the audience was beginning to be considered. Even then it was good salesmanship to be foreign.

"Just arrived from Europe

"The celebrated Hyman Saunders

"Who begs leave to acquaint the Ladies and Gentlemen of New York that he intends exhibiting several new and astonishing performances in the dexterity of hand, different from what has been hitherto attempted, and such as was never seen in this province. His first night will commence on Monday next the 29th of this instant October, at

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the house of Mr. Hyet, on Hunter's Quay. Where he will endeavour to merit the continuance and approbation of the company.

"His dexterity of hand, or grand deception, will consist of a variety of entertaining, as well as surprising tricks; and for the better accommodating the company, his performance will be divided into acts, between each act will be a concert of music; the room illuminated and well aired.

"Admittance half a dollar.

"Mr. Saunders' stay in this city will be but a few weeks.—Whoever desires a private exhibition by giving a day's notice to Mr. Saunders at his lodgings at Mr. Israel's opposite the Honorable John Watt's will be waited on, except when he performs in public."

These two examples of the announcements of the eighteenth-century magicians are typical. The performances consisted entirely of those things which could be done by "Dexterity of Hand." A card was invisibly transported forty paces, the head was cut off a hen, rooster or other living fowl and restored without harm to the bird; a gentleman's handkerchief or lady's gown was made whole by the power of hocus-pocus, after a piece had been cut from it, and other similar bits of magic made up the performance. Just about the year eighteen hun-

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dred, however, the magicians became more ambitious, and one performer, who, I have reason to believe, was William Frederick Pinchbeck, though his name did not appear in the advertisements, began to offer more ambitious illusions. The Learned Pig, the Acoustic Temple, the Invisible Lady, together with the Philosophical Swan, were the names of the chief mysteries. One can hardly blame the lady for being invisible in such company.

Although there were a few who were adding to their performances items of bigger magic we still find in Boston in 1820 that a Mr. Maginnis carried on with the same old hanky-panky. Because of the description of his performance and further because of his connection with one of the very early variety shows his advertisement is interesting.

“This is to acquaint the Curious and Admirer’s of Activity and Dexterity That This Evening November 20th, At the Hall under the Columbian Museum will be exhibited a variety of astonishing Feats of real manly Strength by the celebrated Mr. Robertson, from Astley’s Ampitheatre, London, where he has performed, to the astonishment of every audience he has performed before.

“He will perform all manner of ground and lofty tumbling, Flip-Flap and somersets, on the Floor: also from tables and chairs.”

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Mr. Robertson also promised to do the Whirlegigg and also during the course of the evening to "perform the wonderful imitation of various birds."

That he came from Philip Astley's circus was considerable recommendation, for Astley always had an excellent entertainment. Astley, by the way, was himself not only an equestrian and contortionist but also a magician. The advertisement continues:

"Mr. Maginnis will perform a number of Don Dego's deceptions, of Visor's experiments and deceptions, which have astonished the spectators in every part of the globe where he had the honor to perform. As it would be too tedious to insert the whole Mr. M. will only mention a few. He will commence with his small Goblets, and Magic balls; which is the masterpiece of *deceptivorum*. Mr. M. will allow any person in company to draw a card, shuffle it into the pack and throw them on the floor; then permitting himself to be blindfold, will pick the card with a sword.

"The curious pepper-box, or quick conveyance. Mr. M. will change the face of a card as quick as thought. The strange experiment of dissolving silver. Any gentleman in company shall draw a card, shuffle the pack at pleasure, put them into his pocket; Mr. M. will take out the card drawn. Also,

the laughable experiment of swallowing eggs. Ten or a dozen of the company may draw a card apiece, Mr. M. will command one card to discover the whole. The wonderful deception of the Bell and Bushel, or conveyance in perfection. An astonishing deception with cards, called the Nervous Tip. Likewise—the much admired experiment of passing seven cents through a table. Mr. Maginnis will deliver to the company a box containing several numbers or figures; they may place the numbers at pleasure, and enclose the box with a sheet of paper with their own private seal; Mr. M. will write on the top how the figures are placed. Also—the Magic Tunnel, with a variety of other experiments too numerous to insert.

“Doors open at half past 6, and performance to commence at 7. Admittance is 50 cents. Tickets to be had at the place of performance, and at Major King’s and Forbes’ Tavern, Market Square.”

There was little or no change in the performances of magic until another importation was made in 1817. This was the far-famed Ramo Samee, the East Indian. He had attracted a great deal of interest in London where he had had his troupe of jugglers and contortionists performing in a little hall in New Bond Street. One of the London advertisements announces, “These extraordinary

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characters lately arrived in this country, from Seringapatam, in the Honorable East India Company's ship *Alexander*." After several years in London they came here for one season and then went back to India. Besides breaking thread and "drawing it out whole in one perfect thread," "he could change the color of sand and thread beads on a horse hair with his tongue and lift weights tied to a piece of string threaded in his nostril and out his mouth." In all it must have been a strange and fascinating performance of dainty tricks and horrible feats. "The sword is then put down the throat, with as much ease as though it were being sheathed in its scabbard; the sword is afterwards drawn up and presented to the Company." It took almost as much courage to watch tricks in those days as to do them.

Perhaps the first really marvelous performance of magic was brought to this country by John Henry Anderson, "The great Wizard of the North," who came here in 1851. He played in New York the best part of a year and then went to Philadelphia and Boston, where his success was repeated. A Boston paper said of him:

"Professor Anderson, a few days since, at the Melodeon, in this city, did the famous bottle trick, assisted by his little son. This trick with the bottle is certainly a most incomprehensible one, and almost incredible to one who has not witnessed its perform-

ance. His 'Bottle' certainly is the greatest wonder of modern times. Brandy, rum, gin, whisky and wines, flow from it in streams. We could understand how a bottle could be constructed to give the different liquids, but we are at a loss to know the quantity. A gallon is poured from a common quart bottle. One can, throughout our great Union, recommend Professor Anderson as the most incomprehensible and gentlemanly performer we have ever seen in the mystic art; and we are gratified to know that his success is fully commensurate with his merit."

The trick of the bottle is an excellent one and was used by many of the old performers. Of course, the modern ones have kept from using it for fear of riots.

The Wizard's son John Henry, Junior, was an assistant to his father on his first appearance in America and took a major part in the entertainment when he returned ten years later. Professor Anderson, when he found that he had played to all the people that were interested in his "Acts of Magic and Thaumaturgy of the Ancients," would put on a play in which he would take the leading part himself. One of his favorite parts was the title rôle in *Rob Roy* in which his son took the part of Capt. Thorton, and his daughters the parts of Robert and Hamish, Rob Roy's sons. Teller of exaggerated stories

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that he was, Anderson could not long have held the job of present-day press-agent on the strength of his boast on the *Rob Roy* program, "On the production of this piece alone, Professor Anderson has expended One Thousand Dollars."

Professor Anderson did a great deal to make tricks of invulnerability a part of every magician's show, for he taught the public to expect that at least one person would be foully dealt with during the performance. Shot through and through with bullets and arrows or pierced with a sword, the smiling assistant would live to accept the applause with the same unconcerned manner as he would submit to the casual removal of his head or arms or legs. This same public taste made the "Sawing a Woman in Half" illusion one of the most profitable of modern times.

Signor Antonio Blitz, a contemporary of Professor Anderson, had a performance of "Modern Wonders" in which he not only showed "his wonderful experiments in magic," but had illusions such as the double-headed sphinx, juggled six dinner plates and did all of the "Ventriloquial Modulations," as well as present an act of trained canary birds. Signor Blitz had a Grand Testimonial Benefit May 29, 1868, upon his retiring from the stage after fifty years as a public performer. A number of those years were spent in his native Germany. That he was a magician must suffice to explain why a German

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was called "Signor." Blitz's name was known throughout the country, for not only had the Signor Antonio Blitz performed at the White House, but he had had, literally, scores of other performers who aimed to trade on his reputation by taking his name. Clever as was Signor Blitz personally, his performance smacked of the country fair. This is not said by way of criticism for Herr Alexander, and Le Commandeur Cazeneuve and the other men of his time who were so wildly acclaimed from Mexico City to Montreal, had also not outgrown the fair methods.

An English conjurer named Robert Heller had the most pleasing presentation of any of the earlier magicians. He was an extraordinarily fine musician and a gifted actor, and with his magic combined piano solos and story-telling. With an assistant, whom he called Miss Haidie Heller, and who was supposed to be his sister, he brought popularity to the stage performance of thought transmission. While Heller did away with the fair man's style of show, he began what we know as circus advertising. He had advertisements announcing Heller's Wonders, as far away from his theater on Eighteenth Street as Harlem. He also managed to get considerable publicity from ministers, whom he got to mention him and his performance in their sermons. After giving up his *Salle Diabolique* Heller featured Automata during the entire season of 1865-66 at Heller's Wonder Theatre.

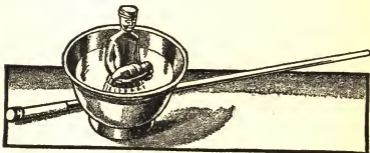
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In the last one hundred years the magician has changed from a man who performed in the public room at the inn to the organized professional who owns his own theater. There have been great changes in staging and presentation and personnel, but, to the never-ending delight of the audience, the wonders which occur to-day behind the electric footlights are very much the same as were those wonders lighted by candles in a well-aired room two hundred years ago.



CHAPTER IV

BOOKS OF MAGIC





Books of Magic

“THE horrible art of poisoning and all the tricks and conveyances of juggling and legerdemain are fully deciphered,” by Reginald Scot in 1584. Since then more than three thousand books have been written on magic as an art, as a parlor pastime, or to show, as did Scot, that these men held no contract with “devils.” Reginald Scot called his book *The Discovery of Witchcraft*, and disclosed to his readers all those things which he felt might convince them wrongly to believe in witches and spirits. This was the first published description of the tricks of the magician.

Scot regretted that he had to expose the secrets of the legerdemainists, but felt that their magic was too apt to convince the uninformed observer of a magic power, even though the performer claimed none. In this note

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of regret, he further mentions that the doings of "such poor men as live thereby are not only tolerable, but greatly commendable, so that they abuse not the name of God, nor make the people attribute unto them His power, but always acknowledge wherein the art consisteth."

In his treatise Scot declared that "the nimble conveyance of the hand" was "the true art" of legerdemain, though he also noted that the performer "must set a good face upon the matter: for that is very important." Many other writers followed Scot's lead and declared extreme rapidity of the fingers to be necessary for magic. In that error Scot was believed, but he was not believed so universally when he said spirits played no part in the work of the magician. Hundreds of books written by those who hoped to convince the reading world of the normality of magic have followed Scot's book and yet we are told we have supernatural power even to-day.

The number of books actually written by professional magicians describing tricks for the use of other magicians is very small. Few of the professional men are writers nor have they time for writing. The continuous traveling and the showman's long hours are not conducive to the making of books. Robert-Houdin, who was a professional, as we have seen, wrote the first professionally minded books for the magician, but even his books were translated into English not by a professional but by a

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British barrister who used the pen-name of Professor Hoffman. Many of the books credited to well-known magicians were written in whole or in part by "ghosts." This has made little difference with some of the books, for the "ghost" set down what was performed for him and incorporated the magician's oral suggestions in the book. As the writer records the performance as described or presented for him, the magician's personality, to a great extent, gets into the book. Some of the biographical material, however, has been written entirely by men who were willing to trade the ensuing publicity for the magician's name, knowing they could sell a magic story more easily when under the name of a well-known magician. These have been magazine articles more often than books, though both have appeared. Harry Kellar told me that his *Magic of the Red Men* article in *The North American Review* had not been seen by him until it was out and that the contents were not matters of fact. I also know it to be true that Mr. Kellar's name was used in the retelling of the story at innumerable dinners that year. Great was the publicity because of Kellar's biography during his professional days, but he spent the years of his retirement trying to purchase and destroy the existing copies.

Because of the frequent conniving of magician and ghost writer and because few publishers and editors are in a position to know the inside stories of the show world,

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one finds in the history of magic considerable fiction garbed as fact. Often this fiction is more striking than the reality, but in the majority of cases it is not nearly so colorful. Only by reading all the books and making constant comparisons can the story of magic be followed. Even the historians, with but few exceptions, have accepted the printed word as always being fact and passed on some piece of writer's imagination as a magician's real experience. In reading magic books one forms the opinion that magicians are opposed to all the work of ghosts except their writings.

Reginald Scot's book was treated as a menace to society and condemned by King James I, who wrote on the other side of the question, "To be burned by the public hang-man as being immoral and irreligious." It was thought the things told about must be the work of witches and wizards, and it was wrong to say they were not. Shakespeare used the book as a source, and in other ways it made its mark on the time and, through its influence in later editions, on other times. Though it was probably the only book actually condemned, later books were very likely to be anonymously written or to have some note saying, like the unknown author of *Hocus Pocus Jr.*, "If thou rightly understand this book there is not a trick that any juggler in the world can show thee, but thou shalt be able to conceive after what manner it is performed, if he doe it by sleight of hand,

and not by unlawful and detested means. That there are such is not to be doubted of, that doe work by unlawful means, and have, besides their own natural endowments, the assistance of some familiar, whereby they many times effect such miraculous things, as may well be admired by whomsoever shall either behold or hear tell of them." There is just a possibility that he believed that the tricks done by his rivals which fooled him were due to supernormal power, but it is much more probable that he was safeguarding himself against any possible religious censorship.

Scot mentions Kingsfield of London as a performer of the beheading illusion known as the "decollation of John Baptist." And in all probability there was such a man, but I have never found his name in a history of magic. Scot merely states that he performed the feat in 1582. Scot also tells about, but fails to name, a performer who killed himself in attempting a trick that failed. He was in a tavern in Cheapside and had come to the performance of the feat known as "thrusting a dagger into your guts, very strangely and immediately recovering." Scot states that the magician was drunk, but I hope that this must have been merely hearsay. There is a long line of strange deaths among magicians due to the failure of one or another of their attempts to prove themselves immunized to all harm. They have not all happened in the past centuries either, for but a few years

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ago Chung Ling Soo was killed during a performance by a bullet fired from a gun.

The best performer about whom Scot wrote was an amateur named John Cautares. He was a Frenchman by birth and lived at S. Martins, and though he "getteth not his living thereby, but laboureth for the same with the sweat of his browes, neverthelesse hath the best hand and conveyance of anyman that liveth this day."

The author of *Hocus Pocus Jr.*, which was first published in 1634, thinks more about the presentation of the tricks and what is to be said, than the previous authors. He even gives a list of four requisites for the performer whom he calls the operator.

"First, he must be of an impudent and audacious spirit, so that he may set a good face upon the matter.

"Secondly, he must have a nimble and cleanly conveyance.

"Thirdly, he must have strange terms, and emphatical words, to grace and adorn his actions, and the more to astonish the beholders.

"Fourthly, and lastly, such gestures of body as may lead away the spectators' eyes from a strict diligent beholding his manner of conveyance."

If put in other language I believe that most magicians

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to-day would think these were primary requisites though they might want to change the order. The first point made means that the magician must be a showman. A showman is one who is able to make what he does please his audience. Showmanship undoubtedly still would be listed as the most necessary part of a magician's requirements. Then perhaps they would skip to number four of the required traits which the magicians term "misdirection." It is in reality the ability to use the psychology of deception. The second item would then, probably, come third and would still mean that, after all, the magician must be a practised and skilful performer. The remaining point brings up a question, for no longer is it thought necessary to have the magician's professional conversation, which he terms patter, made up of strange or meaningless words, though frequently now he tries with his patter to adorn his actions if not to astonish the beholders. Patter is not necessary to the performance of magic and many of the best-known magicians have scorned it altogether, though as a group magicians still feel that patter is most helpful and advisable. Patter often adds entertainment to the performance of a trick. What should be in the patter? Should it be in story form, or a series of quips and jokes, or a description of the routine of the magician? Those are ever-present questions in the mind of the magician. The conversational suggestions offered occasionally through *Hocus*

Pocus Jr. would be of little help to the present-day magician though the trick for which the patter was given would in most cases still be effective. One suggested remark was to be made as a member of the audience opened his hand to find that the coin he believed he was holding had vanished. "Loe, if you can hold a pretty *lasse* no faster, when you have her, I will not give a pin for your skill." Another suggestion in patter was to be used upon recovering a glass of beer which had previously disappeared, "I am a good fellow, and would not willingly lose my liquor." The instruction follows that the magician "then drink it up."

A. B. Engstrom, who admitted that he gave instruction "in the following polite branches of education—Viz., Drawing and Painting in water-colors, Landscapes, Fruit, Flowers, Birds, etc., and an improved system in the usual style," wrote one of the earliest books of magic printed in America.

Although Robert-Houdin was the first man to write on magic from a professional view-point, there were really no professional books until toward the end of the nineteenth century. The books now number hundreds that have been written to tell the magician what to do, and how to do it, and what to say while it is being done.

Some of these have had amazing safeguards. Written pledges were required of all subscribers before they could purchase them. One author made a buyer swear

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that he would not allow the book to fall in a layman's hand, and even required of the owners that the books be destroyed upon their deaths, provided they could not have some other magician take charge of them.

Will Goldstone's magnificent series of *Exclusive Magical Secrets* are known to magicians as the locked books. It was part of the pledge of all those who bought the books that they would keep them locked whenever they were not in use. Lectures which had been given before the various societies have been printed in pamphlet form. A score of magazines are printed by the various organizations of magicians. These magazines are in French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Swedish, Spanish and Portuguese, as well as in English.

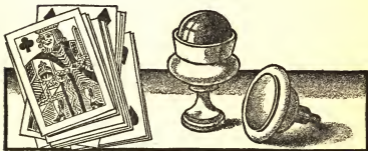
Many of the most helpful books for the professional magician have been written by amateurs. These men often bring special training in their own professional fields to aid them in writing on their hobby. Psychologists have written on the psychology of deception. Engineers have described improved mechanisms. A patent lawyer named Wobensmith described all those patents which had been taken out by magicians in America. Ministers have written on how magic may be an aid in teaching Bible lessons to children. Many amateur magicians write about tricks they have originated, and seem to forget, during the writing, that they earn their living as doctors, lawyers, ministers or insurance men.

There have been nearly one hundred and fifty periodicals printed for magicians. Some of these were able to last for more than one or two or three numbers. The one with the longest record is the *Sphinx* with thirty years of regular monthly publication. This was originally a twelve-page paper, but it now contains fifty or more pages each month, and it is so modern as to include a rotogravure section.

Most of the technical books on magic are such dull reading that the layman must have an enormous amount of curiosity before he will plow through them. In a real text on trickery the details must be so fully described that they read very much like the "knit one, purl one" of the knitting instructions. The biographies are much more interesting, although some of these would make us believe that all magicians must have precisely the same adventures. Perhaps the similarity of the adventures may be due to the outside reading and retentive memories of their biographers.

CHAPTER V

THE WAY YOU'RE FOOLED





The Way You're Fooled

MAGIC is designed to fool the brains, not the eyes. This means that the best audience for magicians are persons of intelligence. A bright and agile mind will furnish the details of a mystery which the magician has only suggested. This is done in the same way as in the Wild West drama a horse is pictured in the minds of the audience because of off-stage hoof beats and the hero's shout. When a few major points of a familiar situation are given, all the rest will be filled in from memory.

A magician's trick is a little play, very carefully built, detail by detail. It is devised so that everything is so obviously fair that the one or two small points on which depend the success of the deception may be slid over without attracting attention. A magician often adds

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unnecessary details to the performance of a trick solely to confuse the audience.

Many conjuring tricks are perfect psychological experiments, whose effectiveness has been proved. A magician may, with mathematical certainty, rely on what any group will do during the process of a trick. Through hundreds of years of experimenting and adding little by little to their knowledge magicians have found that certain definite and unvarying responses may be expected. The study of this mass of special knowledge that has grown up with the profession is the most fascinating side of magic.

Magic depends for the most part on the magician's behaving so that certain of the things he does pass unnoticed. Those unheeded things make the mystery. What the audience thinks it sees has been merely spoken of, or suggested by pantomime, and has not been done. What has been slyly done is not noticed because every one has been made to look in just the wrong spot at just the right time. At those moments when an action is made to appear insignificant there is a relaxation of the spectators' attention. The obvious will never be noticed while movement will always attract attention. The magicians' own term, misdirection, was used long before they had heard the word psychology. The wider the knowledge of a person the more easily he may be fooled, for his mind may be distracted in so many more ways.

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While scientists are just as subject to mystification as any other educated person, it is obvious that by their training they are able to make a correct analysis of any phenomena which appeal to them as subjects of study. The popular legend that professors are easier to fool than the average human being arises from the fact that a professor is apt to regard a performance of magic as an amusement and a relaxation, and is likely to attend such a performance with a will to be fooled. It must be remembered that in a report which appears in the public press about any scientific or pseudo-scientific activity the perpetrator is invariably elevated to the rank of professor, no matter how remote his connection with an educational institution may be. Because of a man's eminence in one field, too often the world credits him with a knowledge quite as broad in fields outside his own. The great man's opinion is, therefore, looked on as a statement of fact.

Richard Hodgson said: "It may be laid down as a rule, almost without exception, that the account of a trick, by a person ignorant of the method used in its production, will involve a misdescription of its fundamental conditions. And this misdescription is frequently so marked that no clue is afforded to the student for the actual explanation." When a man is fooled he has not seen all that has happened; all that he did see were a series of disconnected details. As it is im-

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possible to recall a series of unconnected perceptions experienced but once, and as the details of a trick will not be recalled in a connected series, few of them will be remembered at all. Since one can not remember what one saw, any story which one tells about a trick is bound to be inaccurate. Alfred Benet has said: "The illusion of each trick is not merely the result of one single cause, but, of many, so insignificant, that to perceive them would be quite as difficult as to count, with the naked eye, the grains of sand on the seashore."

John William Sargent was one of the keenest students of psychology magic has had. Mr. Sargent limited his professional magic to occasional performances, for his business interests occupied much of his time, but he did more investigating in the causes of the reactions of audiences than any other magician. Mr. Sargent pointed out that the greatest problem of the prestidigitator was to make the movements necessary for the completion of a trick seem not only casual but perfectly natural. Almost no move that a magician makes is really natural. As this is true, the simpler a trick is and the fewer motions that are made, the more difficult it is to do. A trick of many details may be so confused as to mystify an audience. A simple trick must be perfectly executed or its method is at once apparent.

I had the honor to have studied under Mr. Sargent for a number of years. During that time he would

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never demonstrate a trick for me, because he felt that were he to do so I would copy him. His plan was to teach the psychological background of mystification and those things necessary for the presentation. He felt that in the hands of a good conjurer the trick was no more than ten per cent. of the performance. The personality and showmanship of the man were what really mattered.

Mr. Sargent pointed out that "the eyes are ordinarily faithful servants of the brain, but they are only a combination of lenses which function mechanically and it is the brain which must instantly translate a series of impressions which the eyes transmit. These translations are often the exact opposite of the real facts, as when you are in a railway train and the train on the adjoining track begins to move. Your brain gets the impression that it is your train which is in motion. As long as you watch the moving train you can not rid yourself of the illusion and it is necessary to sight some stationery object before the illusion vanishes."

A good example of the power of suggestion upon an audience is the trick shown, in Cairo, by an Egyptian friend of mine. He shows this trick to but one person at a time. He begins by telling several quite fantastic stories. His listener will, of course, doubt these weird stories, and the magician then pretends to be furious. He tells the man to hold his hands out. The magician

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then waves his hands above the spectator's hands and calls for a plague of ants to come upon him. The magician then steps back and the person begins to feel a crawling sensation over his hands. The magician keeps up a constant harangue about being doubted, that he will show his power and that this man who denied him will have ants crawling over him and biting him, invisible ants that he can neither see nor rub off. By this time the spectator will be actively working, trying to brush off these ants which he can not see, but can feel crawling over his hands and up his sleeves. Probably he will feel them crawling all over his body. The magician then shouts at him; "Do you believe now that I have power?" The man will usually say that he is willing to believe anything provided he can be rid of the ants. The magician then takes away the spell, tells the man that it will be a matter of an hour or more until he is finally cured of all the irritation which the ants caused. When the man is once again in good spirits he probably will hold the belief that the magician had complete control of his mind.

The trick is a simple one and depends on the acting ability of the magician plus a small quantity of irritant powder. The powder is sprinkled over the backs of the hands of the spectator, whence it is spread to the palms of his hands when he tries to rub away the ants. It may easily be carried by his hands to his face. The

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rest is only imagination. The spectator will have had proved to his own satisfaction that the magician has abnormal power or at least is able completely to dominate another person's mind. No matter how simple those other tricks may be which the magician will later show, the spectator will attribute them to super power.

By manipulative skill and showmanship or by camouflaged apparatus the magician suggests to his audience that he is about to do the impossible. The success of any magic entertainment depends on the audience's accepting these suggestions. When some one in the audience does not respond correctly there are ways to control his actions. One of the most amusing examples of control is something that Houdini told me. I have no knowledge of his having used the plan himself, but he told it to me with a perfectly straight face and I have used it a number of times. I was with him one day when I was not yet full grown, although my legs and feet were. Houdini started to tell me about a trick which he thought I would like and mentioned that it required that a certain card be shoved into a spectator's hands when the spectator believed himself to have had a free choice. I interrupted Houdini by protesting that I had had indifferent success with my attempts to force cards. He looked at me sorrowfully and said: "You can not force a card? A boy with feet the size of yours?" I thought he was only making fun of the enormity of my

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feet. I was hurt. Houdini saw that I was, and he went on to explain: "Listen, John, you ask him to take a card, and if he takes the right one, fine. If he doesn't, step on his foot and as he jumps you drop the card into his lap and step back. Then you say, pointing to the card: 'I see you have chosen one. Was that a free choice?' Do you think he will take chances on being stepped on again? He'll say it was a perfectly free choice."

The Chinese street showmen have a clever method of grouping their audience around them. Were they to tell people where to stand they would have little attention paid to their request. They begin to call the crowd by beating a tattoo on a brass gong and when a number have gathered they offer to show a feat of juggling. This is done with a weight on a string which they whirl around their heads in a way to form a number of different designs. As they continue the string is allowed to slip through their hands so that the weight is swung in ever larger circles. The crowd steps back so as to get out of the way of the weight. When the crowd retreats to a large enough circle the magic starts. All unwittingly the spectators have been made to stand in their places and the magician has not had to issue a direction.

Audiences vary, and most particularly according to age. The most difficult audience to play to is one com-

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posed entirely of children, and the younger they are the more difficult is the magician's task. Children are hard to perform for because it is almost impossible to fool them. They have so little knowledge of cause and effect that they are apt to fail to know that the orange is in the hat because the magician put it in. The adults of course know that a thing must be where it is placed. The orange very probably is *not* in the hat; the magician merely feigned the motion of dropping it there and the children are right. That is where all the difficulty comes. The reason an uninformed mind is more difficult to distract may be shown by pointing out an object to a man, to a child and to a dog. The man will instantly look in the direction pointed. The young child will look at the finger, then follow the way it is pointing until he sees the object. The dog comes to smell the finger. The dog will keep his eyes on the man. The child is slow to look away. The man will be distracted immediately.

There is little difference in effect noticeable in showing tricks to men and to women. Men are more apt to pay strict attention and it is better to call on a man than a woman to remember a card. As long as women are only part of a large audience the difference in attitude is negligible, but when a woman is asked to come on the stage and is separated from the group, she is not so reliable in reaction as a man would be. She thinks of her posture, and her clothes, and a dozen other things which

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would not occur to a man. This is not so likely to be true of younger women. As long as no complicated problem is given which requires the audience to pay too strict attention women find magic just as fascinating as do men. Women take their amusements much less seriously than men do.

Probably the most common belief of those who know nothing about magic is that the hand is quicker than the eye. As that brilliant scientist, Albert Edward Wig-gam, has pointed out, "the beliefs most commonly held by laymen are always wrong." Those people are in error who believe that the speed of manipulation fools the eye. The eye is infinitely faster than the hand. One need only consider the hands of the musicians to know that this is true. One sees the lightning-like hands of the pianist clearly, and although it may not be possible to identify the particular key struck, the movement is seen. Were any quick motion to be made by a magician the audience would see it, and even were the purpose of the motion not understood they would feel satisfied that it was at that moment that the trick happened. No audience may be allowed the satisfaction of believing it even partly understands a magic feat if the trick is to be successful. No, a magician's hands are not more rapid than a spectator's eyes. A magician moves slowly and depends on distracting the attention of an audience from his secret motions.

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Another common fallacy of the layman is that a magician must be more skilful to do a trick within a few feet of his audience than to perform a bit of magic at a distance on the stage. Proximity, most people believe, is all that would be necessary for them to solve the magician's secrets, and they are amazed to find that they can be fooled when a trick is shown within a foot of their eyes. The reason that it is more difficult to perform a trick upon the stage is that the range of vision of any member of the audience is wide enough to include not only the magician but a considerable part of the stage. In order to distract the audience it is therefore necessary to make them focus their attention on something quite distant. When a magician performs within a few feet of his audience their range of vision is so narrowed that if their attention is attracted to one hand the other hand may work unnoticed. It is true, of course, that while close to an audience the magician must depend entirely on himself, whereas upon the stage all the equipment of the theater may be brought to his aid.

Magicians often require the assistance of individuals in the audience, and many people imagine that those who are kind enough to take part in the performance are part of the magician's company. This is very seldom the case, although there are instances where it has been true when the one who was to assist might in some way

be made to feel uncomfortable. Rather than embarrass any one in the audience the magician would use one of his own men. The interesting thing is that the magician is able to take a totally untrained volunteer assistant and go through his performance as if they two had been rehearsing for weeks. The magician depends on the fact that most people are anxious to help the progress of the show and willingly do the few things requested of them. Once in a while some disagreeable person comes on the stage with the desire to interfere with the performance rather than to aid it, but this is infrequent. Such a person has little chance of attaining his object, for no audience is in sympathy with any one who interferes with an entertainment which they have come to see, especially when an admission has been charged. The magician can, by using embarrassment as a gentle whip, force the most unfriendly person back into line. Intoxicated people offer difficulties at times too, though with elaborate greetings in which is expressed the magician's great joy at the kindness of the inebriates in offering to help they too become willing aids.

Hypnotism is not used by magicians, because individual hypnosis would do no good and group hypnosis is not possible. We magicians are frequently told by those who have seen our performances that they realized that they had been completely under our control and

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knew all the time that it was because they were hypnotized that they were seeing what was not really happening. It does us little good to protest that they were not hypnotized. They came to the performance with the firm belief that they would be, and when they saw something which mystified them they knew it was because of hypnosis. This same type of person often asks that we tell his fortune, for he looks on us as being possessed of occult powers.

Tribal superstition and actual demonstrative magic are often confused in the minds of laymen. Superstition is largely caused by the fear of the unknown, and the practising priest may be just as beset by this fear as his followers. On the other hand, the tribal priest, or medicine-man, who demonstrates his magic power knows full well that his methods are not magical. All the demonstrated magic of the primitive magi are apparent realizations of natural desires. These desires include immunity from the attack of enemies; animals and other tribes, as well as evil spirits. It is natural to want food, cure of injuries, and relief from pain. We who are not savages also want power over others and the ability to attract those whose love we seek. The magician-priest performs some trick of magic to show that he has all the powers which the rest want, and then explains the sacrifice, or incantation, or tribute to him which will grant this power to others. Those who then

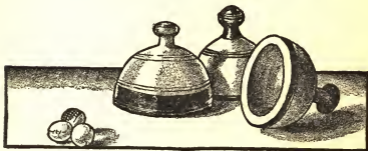
continue to live healthy unmolested lives and are successful in their amours are believed to possess the magic power. Those who are attacked by enemies, or fall ill, or are ill-fated in their loves are told that they have failed to carry out all the instructions necessary for magic power.

An illustration of the sort of trick which the magician performs to convince his followers of his power is that of granting invisibility. He explains that the easiest way of avoiding an attack is to be invisible to enemies. He shows some small object to his tribesmen and then causes it to disappear. Of course he doesn't admit that it is no longer where it was, but declares that he has made it invisible.

Tribal magicians of primitive people, and their counterpart, the fortune-tellers among the slightly more civilized, rely to a large extent on the superstitious beliefs of those who come to them. But this book is concerned with the actual practitioners of magic rather than with the exploiters of human credulity.

CHAPTER VI

EASTERN MAGIC



Eastern Magic

AN ORIENTAL magician is more often considered a mystic than a showman. He is thought to have a knowledge of prayer rather than of patter, and of ceremonial routine instead of pantomime. Occidental fictionists, showing less concern for fact than for future sales, frequently garb the Eastern conjurer in priestly robes. The magicians of China and Japan and India and all those other lands east of Suez are merely clever performers, though miracles do occur in those lands with as much regularity as in our Western World. As the theater is the offspring of the church so it is true that once the magician and the priest were one. The magician and the theater have strayed about the same distance.

The magic of the world has for a long time been a

hybrid mixture. The variance is in the performer. From the view-point of the theater the Chinese are the best magicians of the East. The Japanese follow closely and are in turn followed by the Hindus though at a greater distance. The Malay and Javanese, the Siamese and other Orientals share a distant fourth place. That is, all the rest except the Korean, who patterns after the Chinese in magic as in so many other things. Of course, the Orient does not have the stage illusionist who exhibits theater mechanisms in lieu of legerdemain and it is therefore limited to the magician who depends on manual skill and acting rather than on footlights and stage crew.

The Indian Jadoo-wallah performs, as a rule, outdoors; any place where he believes a crowd will gather. His rattle-drum and his gourd pipe are first used to attract his audience and later used to distract the attention of that audience from the process of the mystery. Indian magic had some foreign additions centuries ago, but the big change came about 1820 when Ramo Samee and his troupe returned from their stay in England and America. To the Indian magic of that day were added—or subtracted—Nordic ideas. As an example, one feat of Ramo Samee was to place a length of horse hair and a quantity of small beads in his mouth and when, after appropriate grimaces and a suitable length of time, he withdrew the hair all the beads were threaded upon it.

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Either in London or New York he had the suggestion to replace hair and beads with thread and needles. Both could be had in the average household and the needles added an interesting element of danger. The trick was brought back to America some sixty years later and found its way into the program of Houdini and others.

Something-from-nothing effects, called productions, are the mainstay of all Oriental magic. The Indian produces two score of birds, or a small mango tree (in effect, of course, it is grown), while the Chinese shake great bowls of water from a silk scarf, and the Japanese take lacquer boxes, and lanterns and parasols from places where obviously they were not.

The Indian, to perform his feats, relies on deadening the attention of the spectators, while the Japanese depends largely on his perfect manipulation. The Chinese by their acting attract the attention of the audience away from their secret moves. Almost all other Asiatic nationalities use the wearing down of strict attention as do the Indians.

The Japanese are the only magicians of the East to be really organized and the Magicians' Club of Japan, with headquarters in Tokyo, is similar in aim and organization to the Society of American Magicians, which is over twenty years older. In China they still have the apprentice system. There they begin training a boy when he is from five to seven years of age. He is first

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taught to be a contortionist and then must learn to be a skilled juggler before he actually starts as a magician. By necessity a Chinese trickster is very skilful. The Indian is a magician because he must be, as his father was a magician, and his grandfather, and his great-grandfather. He is trained from babyhood.

There have been a large number of Occidental additions to Oriental feats, though quite as many effects have been adopted by Western performers from the repertoire of their Eastern associates. At the same time a great number accredited in program titles to India, or China, or some other far-away land are not of Asiatic origin but a combination of the inventive ability of the performer and his press-agent.

The most impressive performance of Indian deceptions I have witnessed was by a group of Sikh showmen performing on a street in Rangoon, Burmah. The effect was simple—a man's head was cut off and later restored. The sword wielder was a large man with piercing black eyes and the impressive full beard the Sikhs wear. The victim seemed quite willing to undergo his radical operation; more, perhaps, because he had no fear of the outcome than because the headsman was his father. We were led to believe that the only reason the boy was made to lie on the ground was to keep the head from bruising as it fell. The assistants beat drums and sang a song so barbaric that one felt in the

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mood for a beheading. The magician unsheathed his sword and felt its edge. He toyed with the blade and then, in cadence with the song, danced around the boy. He stopped his dance, but the song and the drums continued. With his toe he made a line in the earth out from the boy's neck. He laid the blade's edge on the lad's throat and stood motionless. One of the singers picked a cotton cloth from a basket and spread it over the boy's form to save the spectators' eyes from the actual gash. The magician stood rigid. Then with a wild cry he whipped the sword through the waiting neck. Without so much as a glance at the body he carefully examined the sword edge and wiped the gore from the blade. He then stepped on the cloth and kicked the head away from the body. It could be seen under the cloth three feet from the shoulders. The magician begged for coins with the admonition that if this didn't bring forth money miracles were of no interest to the public. Coins were tossed at his feet but he continued his incessant harangue that he would leave the boy headless before he would work for so little. Finally, satisfied with the amount, he reached under the cloth and replaced the head in position, stood erect and slowly walked around the boy's body in the opposite direction from that in which he had danced. The cloth was jerked away and the boy jumped up, salaamed and went around rapidly collecting coins on his own account. The little

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play was most effective. It had been evolved through many generations by trial and error and making this change and that. It was carefully timed and acted in just the manner taught the performers in childhood. Even for one knowing the tricks of the trade and thinking in terms of magic it was difficult not to believe.

The most skilful Chinese performer I had a chance to see was not the magician to the Dowager Empress who now performs at the Peking hotels for tourists, but a ragged young showman at the fair by the bridge to the gate of the Temple of Heaven. When I first saw him it was a warm day and he stood, encircled by his audience, good-humoredly explaining that it was too hot to keep twisting his head around like an owl to see if any one was trying to sneak away before giving money for the wonders he witnessed. He kept up a steady flow of patter which in the Occident would have been curtailed considerably because of the good taste of our censors. But though his topics and language were irregular he was good-humored and very amusing. His audience were mostly tradesmen and quick-witted. To me, in many ways, his most effective trick was a small one. Perhaps it was more effective for a brother conjurer than for a layman. The audience seemed more impressed by the production of a cart full of assorted house furnishings from the thin, though rather dusty, air. What I enjoyed most started with the jumping of a

little black ball from place to place. Be it remembered that my legerdemainist was squatting on the ground, that he wore but trousers and shoes, and that he was entirely surrounded by his audience. After the little black ball had reappeared for about the tenth time it was held upon the outstretched right hand. The hand was slowly closed and as slowly opened and the ball had changed to white. And then successively this chameleon ball became a real white mouse, a black mouse, a live frog, and finally a wriggling goldfish. The perpetually amusing patter, the funny unexpected changes, and the delight of the magician in his own ability made the act as entertaining as any I have ever seen.

The best magic I witnessed in Japan was performed by several officers of the Magicians' Club on the occasion of a dinner which was given for me. The setting stands out vividly in my mind. The dinner was served on the standard low table which makes no allowance for long, non-folding, Yankee legs. Geishas sang and played. I learned the Japanese word for magic from a table companion who experienced as much difficulty and amusement from my pronunciation of his words as with his own pronunciation of ours. Two of the assistant directors of the Imperial Theatre translated rapidly so that I missed none of the conversation. The performance was first the work of one man, then another, each

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exhibiting perfect technique and that ease which comes only with assurance. Two brightly colored silk ribbons were plucked from the air. Paper balls went from under one saucer to hide under another and finally to vanish entirely. The thumbs of one mystifier were tied together almost cruelly tight. While his hands seemed fastened together he proved they weren't, and yet were. Other feats were shown or discussed and always, with thoughtful courtesy, it was made certain that I fully understood each point. A book was given me with illustrations of all the apparatus used. In short I was shown examples of Japanese magic in the same dignified way that I have been shown native magic in the conjurers' clubs of England, France and Czecho-Slovakia, and of Germany and Austria and Hungary.

The Near East's most interesting magic I found in Turkey. Not that the wizardry of Egyptian or Moorish performers is less skilful but because of the origin of the Turkish brand which is solely in the hands of the descendants of the Spanish Jews who migrated at the time of the Inquisition. The effects are still those of old Spain although the presentation shows the several hundred years of Eastern influence. For example, none of the old Spanish books on the subject note that a clown assistant is required though one is most necessary to present performances. As the clown tells a joke, or makes some ridiculous attempt to help, the audience

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momentarily forgets to watch the magician. Each of these mental lapses, one may be sure, is of considerable use to the trick's successful conclusion.

The Egyptian conjurer is well known for his everlasting chant of Guli-Guli and his tricks with baby chickens. An egg is produced and cracked and a chick crawls out. The chick is twisted in the hands and apparently pulled apart to become two chicks. They vanish to reappear in the pocket of a spectator, or in a box, or under a kerchief. Of course, the Egyptians are also well known for their snake charming, as is the East Indian, but we of this side of the world like to overlook that part of the art of magic.

The magic of the world is much more alike than is drama, or music, or the dance. The magician in one land thinks in the same terms as those in another. He bases his deceptions on the same psychological principles and mechanically his apparatus varies little. The difference is small after all between the Christmas conjurer who delights a group of London children with the production of a rabbit and his Chinese confrère who, though he uses a rat, follows the same method and does precisely the same feat in amazing the younger generation of Canton. The effect of the decapitation feat which amused our parents depends on the same principle as does the beheading performed by the Sikhs.

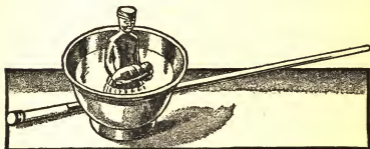
I recently checked through a number of volumes on

magic, all of which were printed early in the nineteenth century. There were books in English, Dutch, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and Chinese, yet one table of contents might almost have done for all. There was described that universal trick of the cups and balls, and though the decorations, and to some extent the design, of the cups varied, the manipulation was the same. The ball would vanish under one cup to reappear under another no matter in which language the magic word was spoken. Another general wonder taught was to restore a rope after it had been cut asunder. Still another feat was to appear to cut off the nose or a finger. Effect after effect was the same.

This similarity of mysteries might lead to the belief that people would tire of magic. Yet through thousands of years the world has enjoyed being fooled. All that audiences ask is that the magician exert due care not to let them discover that he is after all merely an actor pretending he can do the impossible.

CHAPTER VII

HOLY MEN AND JUGGLERS





Holy Men and Jugglers

INDIA is the home of magic, the land where the impossible may be accomplished. India is where men can be buried for months at a time, where trees sprout at the bidding of the magician, where boys climb ropes hung from the heavens. These are the stories. The facts are so different.

It is often said that the Indian holy man must not be confused with the strolling performers, who do their legerdemain for a few rupees. Nevertheless, the description of those things which these holy men do are almost invariably descriptions of what the condemned strolling magicians also do. Typical of this type of story is the one that Madame Blavatsky described. She first quotes an account she had read:

“An empty flower pot was now placed on the

floor by the juggler, who requested that his comrades might be allowed to bring some garden mould from the little plot of ground below. Permission being accorded, the man went, and in two minutes returned with a small quantity of fresh earth tied up in a corner of his chudder, which was deposited in the flower pot and lightly pressed down. Taking from his basket a dry mango stone, and handing it round to the company that they might examine it, and satisfy themselves that it was really what it seemed to be, the juggler scooped out a little earth from the centre of the flower pot and placed the stone in the cavity. He then turned the earth lightly over it, and, having poured a little water over the surface, shut the flower pot out of view by means of a sheet thrown over a small triangle. And now amid a full chorus of voices and rat-tat-tat accompaniment of the tabor, the stone germinated; presently a section of the cloth was drawn aside, and gave to view the tender shoot characterized by two long leaves of a blackish brown color. The cloth was readjusted and the incantation resumed. Not long was it, however, before the cloth was a second time drawn aside and it was then seen that the first two leaves had given place to several green ones, and that the plant now stood nine or ten inches high. A third time, and the foliage was much

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thicker, the sapling being about thirteen to fourteen inches in height, had ten or twelve mangoes about the size of walnuts hanging about its branches. Finally, after the lapse of three or four minutes, the cloth was altogether removed, and the fruit, having the perfection in size, though not of maturity, was plucked and handed to the spectators, and, on being tasted, was found to be approaching ripeness, being sweetly acid.'

"We may add to this," went on Madame Blavatsky, "that we have witnessed the same experiment in India and Tibet, and that more than once we provided the flower pot ourselves, by emptying an old tin box of some Liebig extracts. We filled it with earth with our own hands, and planted in it a small root handed to us by the conjurer, and until the experiment was ended never once removed our eyes from the pot, which was placed in our own room. The result was invariably the same as above described. Does the reader imagine that any prestidigitator could produce the same manifestation under the same conditions?"

Madame Blavatsky seems to have hoped that the reader could not imagine such an astounding result being produced by legerdemain. I hope that the reader will believe that this feat can be performed by sleight of hand, for that is the fact. The trick is done throughout the

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world, although it is necessary for the magician to plant some seed which is native to the country, for he must get his shrubs to stick in the flower pots, and importations are difficult. The Chinese prefer to grow cucumbers. The American Indian, of course, grows corn. We of the professional stage grow roses or carnations, for our appeal must be to the eye rather than to the appetite.

While in India I met several members of the Bakhsh family and we became such close friends that they considered me as part of their family and I was adopted in spirit if not by law. I visited the family home in Cawnpore and met the oldest member, whose memory still was clear, though his fingers were too stiff longer to do sleight of hand. I was shown the mango-growing trick—one of the standard feats of the Indian magician—step by step, with each detail explained so that I would not only know how to perform it but why it was done in just that way.

The Bakhsh family are Moslem, and that strikes at the popularly held theory that Indians have their power because they are Hindoos. There are Hindoo conjurers also, but every trick that the Hindoo can do the Mohammedan also can do. Hindoos likewise know the tricks of the Mohammedan. This magic is a matter of training and practise and not of fasting and prayer, although many magicians have fasted during their early days.

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Madame Blavatsky also said that "to certain men who deny the evidence of their own senses as to phenomena produced in their own country and before numerous witnesses the narrations found in classical books and in the notes of travelers must, of course, seem absurd." The desire to believe that the feats of magic are due to supernatural power makes some descriptions of sleight-of-hand performances no less absurd.

Magicians perform small tricks and tell big stories. The big stories seemingly are illustrated by the small tricks. A magician plants a seed and a shrub sprouts. That is the limit of the trick, but the magician says that he can make the tree grow one hundred feet in the air, provided, of course, you are willing to wait. You are not willing to wait, and you have seen a demonstration of his power, so you enlarge his story and tell that magicians grow trees one hundred feet high. If you have a poor memory, or if you wait some weeks before you tell your story, or if you have a strong enough desire to please your listeners you will say that you saw a tree one hundred feet high sprout before your very eyes from a little seed which you examined and found quite ordinary. No questions are asked about how much you know of the ordinariness of mango seeds, nor do people ask if mango trees ever grow one hundred feet high. You are not asked why, when, "the magic fluid emanating from the hands of the magician effect intense

and rapid changes in the vital functions of the plants," he does not grow an elm or sycamore or a hickory-nut tree. The mango leaves and branches are pliable and tough and will stand the rough usage that is necessary when they are hidden about the magician's person. Sometimes when a branch can not be found bearing mangoes which can be used for the final stage of the feat, the conjurers tie mangoes on their shrubs. You do not notice that the mangoes were not a part of it, for the magician plucked them for you. You had seen a shrub. You had held the mango, and you paid no attention to the way the mangoes were attached.

The mango-tree trick is often given as an example of group hypnosis and as reason for using the hypnotic theory to explain the boy and the rope mystery. The mango-tree trick is one of the standard feats of the Indian magician. It is a trick, and merely because the observer does not discover the method makes it no less a piece of magic. The mango trick, the diving duck, the basket trick, the production of dozens of little birds—all these are legerdemain. The rope trick is a legend, at least it is a legend as far as India is concerned. But it was originally a Chinese fairy tale, which in many of its details is similar to Jack and the Beanstalk. There never was a Jack who climbed the Beanstalk high up into the clouds, and there never was a boy climbing a rope into those same clouds. From the

fourteenth century on, travelers have told this story in one form or another, although it was first described as being performed by a Chinese. Briefly, the story is this. In the open air, in an open square or field, a magician tosses a rope into the air. The rope remains rigid and starts to lengthen until finally its tip has grown out of sight in the sky. The magician then calls for his assistant, a young boy, and tells him to climb the rope until he is so high he can no longer be seen. After the boy's ascent and disappearance, the magician calls to him to come down, and according to the formula the boy refuses. The magician takes a sword and sticks it in his breech-clout and climbs after the boy. Shortly after the magician is out of sight, all those waiting hear shrieks and cries. The gory and dismembered parts of the boy's body fall to the earth. Then the magician slides down the rope. When he is once more on the ground he taps the rope. It begins to shorten and finally it is the original length. The magician taps the rope a second time and the rope falls limply to the ground. He then picks it up, coils it carefully, and puts it away in his bag. Then for the first time he notices the boy. He goes around and picks up hunks of boy—here and there a leg, an arm, the trunk, another arm, the head. He puts these pieces carefully together as if he were fitting a jigsaw puzzle. Finding that one leg is missing he hunts for that so as to make the boy complete. A few magic

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words, several passes and the boy jumps up, runs around among the spectators calling, "Bakshish."

In this elaborate form the story is told by a great many laymen and no magicians. It was not, as is commonly supposed, shown before the Emperor Jehangir, father of the man who built the Taj-Mahal, even though he claimed to have seen a weird version. The other records of the time disagreed. Those tricks actually shown were adequately described by Yahīnya Alī. The mango-tree trick and the other standard feats were described. One of striking earth and making a spring of water gush forth was also mentioned, but my "cousins," the Bakhsh, do not know of this trick. I have never found any other Indian magician who knew of it. Most of the impossible stories of Indian magic were written by foreigners. It is our writers who should be thought miraculous because of their amazing imaginations, rather than the Indian for his magic.

Walking on live coals and through a flame is another of the feats offered to confute the skepticism of the unbelievers. Fire-walking is not supernatural with the East Indian, any more than when it is done by the Japanese, Polynesian or the Red Indian. As in everything else it is the way that it is done, and no fire-walker ever is subjected to a heat as high as are the stokers in the holds of steamships or as high as the heat in ovens used for drying molds, into which workmen sometimes

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go. There are on record instances where men have stood in ovens for minutes and were not harmed by heat as great as 300° Fahrenheit. The fire-walking has been done in a variety of ways. At times the bed of fire is composed of charcoal embers, while in other localities stones are heated in a roaring fire. Just before the walk begins the fire is scraped away from the stones. The stones used in such cases are lava which does not hold or conduct heat. When the walk takes place over actual coals there are many preparations which are heat resisting. In all probability when those who do the fire-walk permit no one else to attempt the feat some preparation is used, and when bystanders are allowed to follow it is safe to assume that the heat seems greater than it is. Fire-eaters and heat-resisters are found throughout the world—in our circuses they are a matter of casual amusement while in far-off countries they are a matter of awe. This fact suggests the difference between a circus tent and a pagan temple.

The old scent trick has attracted considerable attention in the last year or two, because of its having been described by clever and widely read travel-story writers. The effect is this. A piece of cotton-wool has the sun's rays focused upon it by means of a lens. When the cotton begins to smoke the aroma of any desired flower rises with the smoke. For the successful completion of this trick the spectators must not be botanists.

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There are but a few flowers whose choice is permitted and any other flower named will be disregarded. It is a simple trick and depends on the ingenious use of perfumes. The legerdemain consists in opening the right container at just the right time. It is likewise a pretty trick, and I regret having disclosed it, but I do not want it claimed exclusively by those who are so ready to assert that Indian magicians are a race apart.

One of the oft-told stories of India is the one about the burial, for long periods of time, of various fakirs who are said during these periods to be able to suspend animation. Houdini proved that a motionless person who shows no excitement can exist on surprisingly small quantities of air. More air is required for an active, or a frightened, panting person. Houdini stayed over an hour and a half in a hermetically sealed coffin which had been sunk to the bottom of a swimming pool to preclude the possibility of any fresh air leaking in. There is no authenticated case of any man doing the burial feat for more than a few minutes or at most a few hours.

The boy and basket trick, which is described, with the mango and the rope tricks, as being one of the three impossibilities of Indian magic, consists in making a boy vanish while entirely surrounded by the audience. The spectators form a circle in a courtyard, and a basket or hamper is shown. The basket is similar to those used

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for carrying loads for horses and camels. A boy is made get into the basket. He seems to have difficulty in folding himself small enough, but finally succeeds. The basket is covered and strapped, and the magician runs a sword through the basket and supposedly through the boy, for his cries rend the air. The magician then takes off the cover and jumps in the basket to show that the boy is gone. He again covers the basket, plays his drum and his gourd whistle, and the boy is found to have reappeared when the cover is again removed. This trick was done at three different expositions in America by members of my adopted family, the Bakhsh, and throughout the continent of Europe and America in vaudeville. In the Occident it is a good trick, but it loses all the flair of the miraculous. Miracles of this sort grow stale when brought so long a distance. Even in Indian you never really see inside the basket.

The Indian magician is clever, practised and a man who is not as we are. He makes his performance most impressive. He is not a man of power, even though the lines of his little play claim power, and as I have said before he has borrowed many of the feats of the Occidental mystifier only to garb these mysteries in Oriental attire.

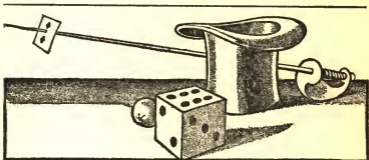
As we come to know India through her Gandhis, Naidus, and our thousands of tourists, much of the mystery, the insolvability of India, is lost. Real magic

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comes from that part of the world about which we are ignorant. As soon as foreign travel begins on a large scale magicians in the foreign lands lose their fabulous power.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RED MAN'S MAGIC





The Red Man's Magic

Americans are apt to believe that the Indians' only peaceful pursuit is smoking a pipe and that his skill is with the tomahawk, the scalping knife and the rifle. The red man has never been looked on by the Americans as a maker of magic. Magic is something from the Orient.

Long before Columbus took months to make Lindbergh's thirty-six hour trip, the Red Indians were doing magic. The early missionaries told in their accounts of strange feats Indian magicians could do that ordinary men could not do. The missionaries ascribed the power of these conjurer-priests to demoniac aid.

As I have said the magic of all primitive people is the apparent realization of natural desires. Magic would grow food in times of famine. Magic would give them

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favor with the Gods, and protect them from the demons. Magic would give them power over those they loved, and power to defeat their foes. By magic they could travel great distances without effort.

The Indians would slash themselves and immediately cure the wounds. They would stick spears through a man, and when the spears were withdrawn he would be unharmed. They would grow yucca and corn and beans, from seeds to bearing plants, in the space of a moment. They would read minds and send their thoughts to distant tribesmen. It is on record that they would do every feat that the East Indians or the Africans had ever done.

Most of the magical demonstrations of the American Indian were made by the medicine-men. These men would perform their feats at public ceremonials, or privately at the bedside of those who were ill. An Indian would send for the medicine-man to take the illness out of his arm, or his chest, or his leg. The shaman would go to the distressed person, put his mouth to the afflicted spot and after a certain amount of sucking, would spit out a stone, which he would claim had been the cause of the distress. Frequently this would cause a mental improvement in the patient, who, of course, did not realize that the stone had been in the magician's mouth before the healing began.

The Navajo magicians, during a ceremonial dance at

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night, plant yucca and cause it to grow, blossom and bear fruit. Not only is this done more rapidly than it grows normally, but the ceremony takes place in the winter, when, except for magic, the plant would not grow at all. The imitation leaves and blossoms and fruit which the magicians use are quite convincing in the firelight. Their substitutions of larger plants for smaller ones are not noticed as the dancers mill around. The Hopi grow beans and corn in much the same way, though they usually use real plants in their trick. The Zuni and the Pawnee, and other tribes to the north, and south into Mexico, also do this trick.

The Indians perform the trick of slashing their abdomens which the Siberian tribesmen and the Mongols also do. This feat requires that the performer wear under his shirt a slab of fat from an animal and underneath this a bladder filled with blood. When the man seems to cut violently with his dagger, he is careful to cut only through his shirt and the fat, far enough to pierce the bladder. As the red blood gushes out the fat is turned back, as if to show that he had cut to his vitals. A few minutes later in the ceremony he shows that the wound has healed and that there is no longer even a scar.

As long as the magician can so murderously cut himself the spectators are quite willing to believe that a spear can be pushed through him without harm. To do the

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spear trick he shows a part of a spear head seemingly sticking from his back as he braces a spear shaft to his chest. Many of these tricks are performed during ceremonies which no one but Indians may attend, and others because of their gruesomeness do not attract audiences.

The Indian tricks of prophecy and telepathy were usually the result of collusion, although the device also was used of making ambiguous statements which could be understood in a variety of ways.

The Kwakiutl Indians did the decapitation trick in precisely the same way as it was done in both Europe and the Orient. A person was made to lie on the ground, then they hacked off his head and showed it to the awe-struck throng. The method required that the man whose head was to be taken off be a confederate. At the moment of doing the cutting the magician and his assistants would stand between the audience and their subject. The subject's head would then be pushed in a pit and a portrait mask exhibited as the severed head.

The Indians also did a variety of tricks apparently demonstrating immunity to fire. During one of their fire tricks the Navajos used a wand tipped with eagle down. At one time in their dance these wands would be thrust into the fire until the down was ignited. They would dance around the circle again with these blazing wands. At the end of the dance the magicians would show that the wands were not even scorched, and that

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the eagle down was entirely restored. In this same ceremony they would apparently swallow arrows by means of a telescopic shaft, rather than actually doing it, as do the modern sword swallows.

The little wooden duck which floats on the water of the bowl of the East Indian magician, only to dive at command, is replaced, in the American Indian's magic, by feathers which dance in a basket. The basket is placed in the center of a circle, inside the medicine house, and the magician squats several feet away from it. A couple of eagle feathers jump up and down, and keep time to the beating of the drum. Although eagle feathers replace the duck and the basket replaces the bowl of water, the mechanism is the same. At times a single eagle feather is used, and it follows the motions of a single dancer who moves about the room. If he dances one way the feather leans that way, if he bends over, the feather leans down. The feather follows closely all the varied movements of the dancer.

Some of the Indian tricks are much more elaborate. One which the Navajos perform is shown at night and makes use of several large-size objects. A blanket is spread upon the ground, and, without any apparent means of support, a rough hewn plank is made to stand upright upon it. At the base of this board is placed a basket which contains a carved image resembling the sun. Slowly the sun rises to the top of the board and

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then goes down. This miracle occurs several times and is completely mystifying to the audience. It is a very old Navajo feat, which makes it all the more remarkable, for there could not be any elaborate mechanism.

During the ceremony of one of the northwestern tribes a demon comes up out of the ground in the medicine lodge and clutches one of the young men by the hands and pulls him down into the earth. The man who is in the hands of the demon calls loudly for aid, and his friends take hold of him and carry on a tug of war with the demon. Finally, according to routine, the demon is conquered, and the man is pulled back to earth. This little play depends on the earth inside of the lodge being loosened, and the man, whom the demon is supposed to be after, being a carefully rehearsed actor. Several inches under the surface of the earth a rope is staked down in a circle, in the center of the room. At the time the demon is supposed to come after him he stoops over, puts his hand in the loose earth until he can catch hold of the rope. He then screams that the demon has hold of him. By holding on to the rope, and moving along it as he is pulled by those trying to release him, he is able to resist the combined pull of a half-dozen men. He is aided in this by the fact that he has, also, the advantage in leverage because of his position. When he feels that the part has been acted long enough he lets go of the rope and the medicine-men claim that

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by their magic they have saved him and that the tribe need not fear demons for another year.

The Indians were masters of self-extrication. They could wriggle out of any length of rope with which they might be tied. They had a wide knowledge of knots, and were so expert at their work that they could release themselves while every one was watching. This getting out of ropes, although done by stage magicians as a feat of magic, was done more as a stunt by the Indians.

Ever since guns were first given to the Indians they have performed the same trick (which they undoubtedly devised for themselves) which made people believe that Herrmann and other magicians could not be shot. They would have the charge and bullets rammed in their old muzzle-loading rifles and have the rifles aimed at them and fired. They would catch the bullets.

The Indians, at times, used ventriloquism and would apparently have conversations with spirits all about the room. They frequently claimed, also, that a spirit lived in their stomachs, and they would go into trances and talk, although it was always explained that it was the spirit who really did the talking. Some of these men would swallow tobacco to bring on the trance and after it was all over would extract the tobacco from under their ribs. This was a favorite feat of the Hopi.

Apache medicine-men light their pipes merely by holding their hands up toward the sun. This is much

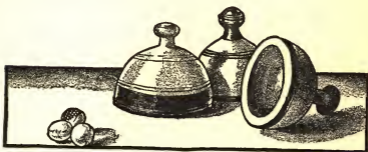
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less remarkable when it is known that many other feats were accomplished by the aid of a burning glass.

The American Indian is much too close a neighbor of ours for us to have any belief in his possession of a magic power, but I have read in old English, French, Spanish and German books of the miracles which these men could perform. Besides the actual tricks which were described they also had weird stories of men who lived in cities at the bottom of lakes, and of tiny horsemen, astride miniature horses, who might be seen galloping the plains at night. These legends are very much like our legends of other parts of the world, and it is interesting to note that those who tell about the magic powers of the Indian either attribute their power to the religious life, or tell, as do some early missionaries, of their association with demons.

CHAPTER IX

ROMANY TRICKS





Romany Tricks

THE Gipsies, or Romanies as they prefer to call themselves, distrust other races. They keep to themselves and try to conceal their ways and their customs. Gipsies have kept their magic doubly dark because all their legerdemain is used in cheating rather than in entertaining.

As a magician, I am, of course, interested in their magic, and at different times I have managed to learn a Gipsy trick or two, but always without their knowing of *my* knowledge of trickery. They never would talk to me about their magic nor would they perform except when they believed me affably gullible. And this has been true of all Gipsies, for I have visited their encampments from San Francisco to the Bronx, and from Spain to England. I have also visited the Bohemian Romany

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on his home grounds, and I have met Russian Gipsies in New Hampshire, who had migrated to the United States by way of Brazil. Among all the Gipsies I would see in a year I have always felt fortunate were I to see one trickster.

Such of their magic as I had seen was done by women. Oddly enough, among the thousands of magicians in the world, other than Gipsies, scarcely more than a score are women. The Gipsy women's tricks were usually done in connection with fortune-telling and supposedly to offset some ill luck foretold in the fortune. One of the most common of these tricks is, in effect, the Gipsy's tying of a piece of your paper money in an unusual knot in your handkerchief. It is explained that this is a certain charm against ill fortune, provided the knot is left tied for twenty-four hours. At the end of that time you first realize the nature of the trick, for the paper in the handkerchief is not your money.

That most Gipsy tricksters are women is due to the better opportunity afforded women to perform successfully these minor swindles. Under the guise of fortune-telling or in making change for the fee they receive for forecasting one's life, they can trick away a dollar here and five there. These dollars add up in the course of a day to fairly large sums. The men tricksters are more wary, for they are suspected of being willing to cheat and to short change. They must use different bait and

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therefore usually work some scheme where, seemingly, the other fellow is getting the best of them. They rely on people's desire to get something for nothing.

The first Romany men magicians that I ever saw were all Roumanian Gipsies, and the performance was given in the headquarters of the Secret Service of Roumania. Inspector-General Romulus Voinescu had these men rounded up so that I could witness their methods. When they were to perform, he had them brought into his office where he, Inspector-General Cristescu, and Commissioner Vladimirescu seemed as much interested as I in the tricks. All the men were crooks, and as the Inspector-General said, "All have been introduced to the various houses of rest at one time or another." They seemed quite honored to be noticed by the National Police, and though they had been commandeered for the performance, willingly took great pains in instructing us in the details of each trick. These men had always had their differences with the city police.

The tricks were shown by twelve different performers. Each man had his own trick at which he was extremely skilful and he did only that one trick. One man who was versatile enough to know two seemed, perhaps on that account, to be head man. Mr. Robert R. Patterson, who introduced me to the Inspector-General, was the only one who had an opportunity to observe one skilful piece of manipulation, and he missed seeing

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it for he was unaware that it had happened until his watch was returned later in the evening. The man who was the adept at watch-taking showed great pride in his skill. The tricksters were all convincing workers, good demonstrators of their respective gambling games, and so plausible that one almost forgot one had no chance to win. As winning was impossible it was gambling only in name. I feel that the Gipsies had no clear idea of the purpose of the demonstration, for I fear that they understood I wanted the swindles for my own use in America.

My reason for studying Gipsy magic was to try to discover its origin, or to trace the magic of other people back to it. As the Gipsy claims originally to have migrated from India I had hoped to find a similarity between Gipsy and Indian magic. It was annoying to find that the one magic differs entirely from the other. There isn't the slightest resemblance in presentation or method between the magic of the Indian and the Gipsy. I believe, however, that the credit, or discredit, must go to the Gipsies as the inventors of the "Shell Game" and "Three Card Monte." Changes have been made, of course, befitting our more advanced civilization, but primarily both tricks are the same.

The shell game is done with three small covers and a tiny ball. At times the half-shells of walnuts are used as the covers and from these shells the trick gets its name.

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In England it has the name "thimble-rigging" because thimbles are used for the covers. As there is no more rigging than there is game, these words must be added to make it hard. The tiny ball is sometimes made of rubber and is at other times a dried pea or paper pellet. The three shells are put on a table and the ball actually and openly placed under one shell. The shells are then casually pushed around the table into a new order. A bet is placed in front of the shell under which is believed to be the ball. The one placing the bet finds he is wrong, and the game begins again. Simple as the process seems, and clearly as the eye can follow the not rapid movements, one is invariably wrong. In case bets are placed in front of all three shells the two betting the most find themselves losers. The operator has entire control because, I almost forgot to mention, at the moment of placing the bets the ball is not under any of the shells.

For twenty-five years the police have kept the shell game from being worked openly in American cities. Of late it has been done so rarely that a man must be most unlucky to have been caught by the demonstrator's inviting sales talk: "Step right up close and get a better view. Come on, just find the little pea—that's all there is to it. The man with the quick eye wins, and it's the easiest way to double your money."

It is interesting how many people can be found eager to play the other fellow's game, to back their belief in

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the location of the pea with money. It is the money side which draws the police's wrath, for the tricksters would never be bothered were they proving merely that the eyes invariably can be fooled.

Three Card Monte is known also as "find the lady" or "pick the red card," because the cards used are either two numbered cards and a Queen, or two black cards and a red card. As in the shell game one seemingly has at least one chance in three of being right and with good eyesight an almost certain chance of winning. The object of the game is to keep track of the odd card while all three are moved about on the table. It isn't possible to win at this game either, although at times the manipulator gives the game to you if he thinks by so doing he can increase the size of your bets.

My first reason for believing these two tricks to be of Gipsy origin is that in none of the old books of magic are they mentioned. As magicians have always made a point of exposing charlatans and sharpers, these two tricks, had they been known, certainly would have been described. There is proof of their age, for even though unknown to the magicians they were mentioned by other writers. Another reason for thinking these are Gipsy tricks is that the manipulation in various parts of the world is so similar they must have a common source. It seems quite logical to believe that they were circulated by the Gipsies in their perpetual traveling.

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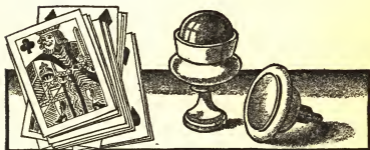
Neither trick needs any apparatus. Shells—thimbles—cards can be had anywhere. With them, and the requisite skill, money comes easily. They are favorites of the sharpers, for in addition to their certainty and their lack of properties, these tricks seem so easy to understand and look so fair.

Two other tricks I saw in company with the Roumanian Secret Service are also old Gipsy tricks, but they both need equipment and time-taking explanation before the bets are placed, which are disadvantages to the man who wishes to work fast and leave quickly. These disadvantages make them less popular, and they are, therefore, less known. One of them requires a table cover decorated with colors and numbers upon which the unwary place the money they hope to double if the dice fall right. The dice never do. The other is a form of roulette in which the ball is as large as a billiard ball and numbers are done away with. This game is interesting because one of the betters always wins, and though it is the one who bet the smallest amount, it is unusual for the Gipsy to be that generous. At one point I noticed in this trick an American swindle and asked the Gipsy sharper where he learned it. "That," he told me, "is an idea I got from the moving pictures."



CHAPTER X

THE GREAT MAGICIANS





The Great Magicians

CARL HERRMANN was the eldest son of a German physician whose hobby was magic. He toured Europe as a professional magician and received great acclaim. When his youngest brother was eleven, Carl kidnaped him because of their father's objections to another child's following the profession of magic. This younger brother was Alexander Herrmann, later known as Herrmann the Great. He traveled for three years with Carl from St. Petersburg to the south of Europe. When he was fourteen, Alexander left his brother and made his *début* in Madrid, before the Queen of Spain. From that day on he was the recognized master of legerdemain, perhaps for all time.

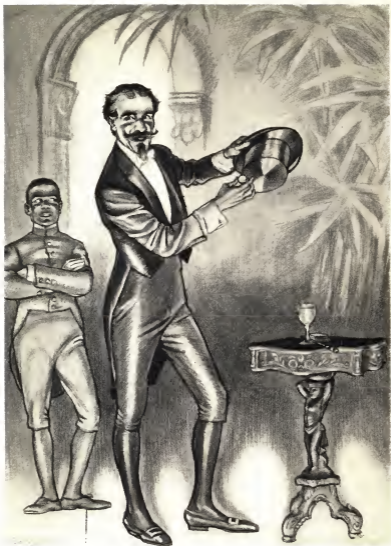
Alexander Herrmann was a charming, polished gentleman who spoke French, German, Spanish and Russian

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as well as he did English. He also had a smattering of Chinese and several other Oriental languages. He made three tours of the world, and held tokens from the rulers of almost every nation. Herrmann not only acted the part of a man endowed with supernormal powers, but as the image of Faust's Mephistopheles he looked the part.

He traveled with all the manner of royalty. In Mexico he demanded and received an escort of soldiers to accompany him from city to city. In America he always used his private car to go from one engagement to another. He was the newspaper man's delight for he always could be relied on to make "good copy." Herrmann would do the most amazing, intimate feats of magic for his reporter friends, until they were in such a daze that they would forget what other assignment they had for the day and devote all their time to writing about him. He would break open a roll at the table only to find a watch in it. The watch would turn out to be one which the reporter thought to be safely in his pocket. Herrmann would drink the health of one of the other reporters and then toss his wine-glass in the air where it would visibly change to an orange.

Mr. Herrmann's genial manner and his ready wit, coupled with his superb sleight of hand, made him famous. In later years he had added to his performance those larger tricks which we term illusions. Tricks in



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which he made his beautiful wife float in air or vanish at the wave of his hand. He also added to his performance, the most thrilling of all magic, catching in bare hands the bullets fired from regulation army rifles. All these larger tricks could be presented, pictorially, so much better than small ones that almost all advertising posters depict them. The poster which showed the gore dripping from the head in a decapitation illusion, which Herrmann featured, caused some trouble for him while in Mexico. There they expected the poster to be entirely accurate. When Herrmann performed the feat, it was quite free from gore and the entire house set up a howl and demanded blood.

The Herrmanns were among the first magicians to come to America who presented a performance entirely of magic designed to interest the intellectuals and people of fashion. The Herrmanns prided themselves on being linguists and scholars, but above all else they endowed the performance of legerdemain with the dignity of a science and profession.

While magic was Mr. Herrmann's profession, it was also his pleasure. It was not so much that he continued off-stage his professional rôle, as that before an audience Herrmann was doing those things which he liked to do for the amusement of his friends. Herrmann delighted to have many people around, and he always had his home filled with guests. As much as their friends

enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Herrmann, they were always expectantly awaiting some bit of magic for which they were never quite prepared. Herrmann's impromptu mysteries were as good-humored as his formal performances. He loved to play friendly jokes on his friends, but was more amused when one was able to turn the joke on him, as did Bill Nye, the humorist. They both were stopping at a small-town hotel and were placed next to each other at dinner. When the salad was served, Herrmann reached across and opened Nye's lettuce and picked out a large diamond ring. Without showing the least surprise, the humorist said, "How careless of me, but I'm always leaving things about," and turning to the waitress he handed her the ring, saying, "Here's a little present for you." Mr. Nye had turned the joke on the magician. It was one of Herrmann's favorite stories.

Because of Mr. Herrmann's continually working extemporaneous feats, many superstitious people thought that his connection with Satan was more than a facial resemblance. When he was introduced to Don Fernando, King of Portugal, His Majesty laughingly said: "I understand, sir, that you are the devil in person." "That is true, Sire," answered Herrmann, with a twinkle in his eye, but without the vestige of a smile, "but I'm a poor devil and nothing more."

At one time Carl and Alexander Herrmann decided,

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that on account of Alexander's enormous popularity in the Western Hemisphere, he should be the representative of the Herrmann Family to play in the Americas. Carl Herrmann was to limit his magic to Europe. From that time on Alexander Herrmann never again publicly appeared in Europe, even though his brother's death occurred soon after. Alexander Herrmann became an American citizen, and he and Madame Herrmann purchased a beautiful estate at Beachhurst, Long Island.

After Mr. Herrmann's death the grounds of his Long Island home were divided, and it is upon part of this land that Howard Thurston, for sentimental reasons, built his home.

Mr. Herrmann relied on the help of his wife to a very great extent. She assisted him in his performances and added greatly to it by her charm and grace and beauty. After her husband's death she continued with his full show for a number of years and brought his nephew, Leon, to America to assist her. She finally gave up the strenuous task of presenting the entire show and has since, by herself, been featured all over America in vaudeville.

Madame Herrmann has told me the most fascinating stories of her travels with her husband. She told me, for example, of a trick which Herrmann did at the presidential palace of Diaz of Mexico. During this trick Herrmann made a lady's glove, which belonged to one

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of the President's guests, disappear, only to be found later in an orange which had been plucked from the air. Before he made the glove disappear he changed it into a miniature glove, while he explained that the easiest way to make something vanish was to make it smaller and smaller until finally you had nothing left. He then squeezed the tiny glove and made it disappear.


"It was a very pretty trick, John," said Madame Herrmann, "and I thought you would like to do it so I have brought the tiny glove for you."

So simple! All that I would need to do would be to borrow a glove, change it to this smaller glove, make the smaller glove disappear, produce an orange from the air, and find the original glove inside. Even proudly possessing the small glove, it still sounds like magic to me!

Herrmann excelled in tricks with coins. While other magicians have been content to pluck silver coins from the air Herrmann always caught gold ones. That is, always with one exception. That exception was caused by one of Herrmann's assistants mysteriously disappearing at a time when he was holding the coin. The assistant was colored and his name was Bumsky. I do not know which assistant it was, for Herrmann always had colored assistants and each one would invariably be named Bumsky.

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Harry Kellar, born in Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1849,



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started magic as an assistant to I. H. Hughes in 1860. Hughes was known as the Fakir of Ava and was one of the most successful magicians of his time. Hughes was kind to Kellar and taught him all the rudiments of a magic performance, so that by the time Kellar was eighteen he felt he should go out on his own. The first few years were hard ones, and he had all sorts of experiences. In one town there were so few paying members of the audience that on the final curtain Kellar let himself out a back window by a rope. He left all his tricks still set up on the stage, and took with him only a bright, red-fringed table cover. Once out in the snowy yard, Kellar wrapped this table cover around his shoulders as a shawl and tramped over to the train yard. Here he made friends with some men on a freight train and entertained them so well and made himself so agreeable that he was invited to ride in the caboose. At the destination, next morning, young Kellar made a dull picture in full evening dress with a bright red makeshift shawl around his shoulders. The jeers of the boys and his total lack of funds did not bother him in the least. He set about getting a new show together to give a performance that night. He was able to convince a traveling salesman, who had ready cash and a considerable degree of sportsmanship, that he was, by far, the best magician ever to come to that town. Kellar sold the entire first night's receipts for an advance of fifty dollars. With the

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fifty dollars he hired the local hall for two nights, and had the town printer strike off posters which announced the arrival of "Kellar the Great, the World's Best Magician." For the trick of catching money from the air, he used tin disks which he had the tinsmith make. Instead of the rabbit coming out of the hat, a borrowed kitten was produced. His performance did not require tons of paraphernalia, he told his audience, but depended entirely on his own skill. The salesman got back much more than his fifty dollars on the first night's show, and the second night's receipts were sufficient for Kellar to send back to the town he had so unceremoniously left money enough not only to pay off his debts but to cover the forwarding of his apparatus.

After a number of years of increasingly successful performances, Kellar was offered the position of advance manager of the Davenport Brothers and Fay. The Davenports pretended to be spiritualists and although their seances were entirely the result of trickery, which was known both to Mr. Kellar and to Mr. Fay, there are innumerable people who still believe that the Davenports were aided by spirits. Later Fay and Kellar toured together for years. Kellar gave his own performance and acted as Fay's assistant when Fay showed the Davenport seances.

At another time Kellar joined forces with David and Ferdinand Guerper, Austrians, who traveled under the

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names of Yamadeva and Ling Look, and pretended to be Chinese. These three, calling themselves the Royal Illusionists, performed throughout the Far East. Yamadeva died in Hong Kong. A man named John Hodgkins, who in the billing was called Cunard, continued with Kellar, and he continued his tour as head of the Royal Illusionists up and around the Far East, over to Africa and South Africa, and finally to England. From England Kellar came back to the United States and opened in Boston in 1878. From then on, until he turned over his show to Howard Thurston in 1908, he always was head of his own company.

The first time that I met Kellar was a couple of years after his retirement. I had seen his perfect show many times, but I had never met him. I was in the store of Clyde Powers, a dealer in magical equipment, when Kellar walked out from another room. I was awestruck to see my boyhood idol so close. Before I had a chance to catch my breath, Mr. Powers said: "Harry, this is Mr. Mulholland; Mr. Mulholland, this is Harry." What an introduction for a gawky scared kid! Kellar said: "Son, I'm glad to know you. Let's go back in this other room and talk about magic." For two hours Kellar gave me advice on how to "improve" my magic, and told me of his travels, and of performances before kings and emperors and sultans. Kellar loved children and knew how to talk to them. I still feel as if that after-

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noon were about the grandest in my life. Years afterward I found that Kellar was very much amused because my reason for not asking him about his own tricks was that one magician must never inquire into the methods of another.

Kellar lived in a mansion in Los Angeles during his retirement, and only left the city once a year to come to New York to attend the annual meeting of the Society of American Magicians. He kept up his practise until his last illness and was never quite so delighted as when he would get a new trick with which to fool magicians who visited him.

Kellar was the first of the world's great magicians to be American born. Houdini said of him: "When Harry Kellar was on the stage, he was not merely acting the part of a magician, he was a magician." Every point of Kellar's program was methodically planned and carefully rehearsed, and his magic ran so smoothly that it never occurred to any one to doubt that it was not all due to the mysterious words which he pronounced.

All magicians are grateful to Kellar for his contributions to the art of magic, and the kindly old gentleman is as lovingly remembered by us as by the millions who were made to believe that the doing of the impossible was to him a matter of every-day occurrence.

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Houdini had been made a popular verb and a legend

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before he died. "Houdinize," according to Funk and Wagnalls, means, "to release or extricate oneself." Houdini, the man of legends, was a composite being. He was called a man of psychic power and yet known as the enemy of all things psychic. Undoubtedly the greatest self-advertiser of the show world, yet he was believed to be a recluse, shunning people for his beloved books. He was thought, by some, to be a contortionist who merely writhed out of shackles, while others thought him the world's greatest authority and expert on locks. The legends have all been magnified by the hundreds of articles written about him since his death.

Houdini led a life magical in itself. From a mid-western small-town boy of foreign parentage and no formal education, he became the acclaimed leader of the magicians of America and Europe, and the world's greatest showman. His knowledge of magic was exhaustive. He knew the secrets and the history of all magic, whether performed in the theater for an amused audience, or in the seance room for the gullible. He knew the tricks of the sharper and the fakes of the miracle monger. Probably no one ever lived with so thorough a familiarity with the methods of the mystery workers.

Houdini was not easy to know. He probably held fewer grudges than the average man, but was extremely quick-tempered. His anger would flare up and as quickly cool off. He liked people and liked to entertain

them. He had a tremendous amount of veneration for the magicians of other days. He would work eighteen hours a day, and when he was not working on his own show, he would be delving into the records of magicians of the past, or of other countries. Because of his enormous capacity for work he was able to get out more than ten books about magic or magicians, or those who used magic and pretended otherwise. During the years that he toured every state in the Union, and every country in Europe, as well as many other parts of the world, and with all his work, Houdini still found time to do innumerable little things for other people. He brought a special ear trumpet from Germany for a deaf old print dealer. He sent stamps to a friend who had a stamp collection. He brought me a trick from England, which he knew would fit well in my program. He did countless similar things, many on a more costly scale. No one knew until after his death of the many aged magicians who depended on Houdini's benevolence.

On one of my first visits to Houdini's home I admired a small water-color painting of Phillippe, an old French magician. Houdini, with a most solemn expression, said: "Thank you for telling me, John; I'll remember to watch it." This was in my early teens, and I admit that at that time I was uncertain whether he meant to joke. In the years afterward that I used to run to Houdini's home, where I have had breakfast and lunch and dinner and

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midnight suppers, he never failed to continue the joke about the picture. He would say that he'd put stronger wire on the frame, or that it would do me no good to take it for I should be searched on leaving. Many times he has taken that picture down from the wall and put it in a desk drawer, that, I feel sure, had never been locked since he got the desk. It was after all a trifling childish game, but it shows the humanness of the man whose magic released him from every form of ordinary restraint that was ever devised. Mrs. Houdini generously sent me the little water-color after her husband's death.

For years before his death, Houdini had been one of the highest salaried men of the theater. He could dictate the terms on which he would work. He demanded such things as that no one else on the program should be billed in letters more than half the size of those used to spell the word Houdini. Yet during these years of stardom and power, Houdini worked incessantly for organizations of magicians. He was for years president of the Society of American Magicians, and president of the Magicians' Club of London. He founded the hospital fund of the Society of American Magicians, and organized a benefit performance so as to have it endowed. His interest in the welfare of the magicians of the smaller shows was enormous, and many men have benefited by his counsel and financial aid.

One of the things which made Houdini great was the

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fact that he took advantage of everything with which nature endowed him. He never could understand why I did not try to find some way in which my most generously proportioned ears could serve me in my magic. When he found that I thought he was teasing me he very seriously explained that he saw no reason why I should not use everything at my command, for did not he make use of his great strength, his enormous lung capacity and his bow-legs.

By many who casually knew him Houdini was looked on as a great egotist, but it was rather that he understood his capabilities. He also knew his limitations, and a number of times he has advised me to visit some one else so as to learn from him. He would say: "John, I have visited the man because he knows more than I do, and it is a good plan to talk with those who know what you do not know." Houdini gathered his enormous store of knowledge from talks with authorities and with the most persistent study of written records. I think there is no doubt that Houdini had more knowledge of locks and shackles than any other man who ever lived.

Houdini and I once had a trivial dispute in which he thought that what I tried to tell him had nothing to do with the subject. He finally told me to say no more, with the admonition that in the future I need hold no further conversations with him. The next day he discovered that I had really been talking to the point, and,

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as a typical Houdini act, he selected a choice item from his collection which he knew would have a great sentimental value for me. He sent it to me in an unmarked package. That night at a magicians' meeting, Houdini came over to me and said: "Johnny, didn't you get that package, with an old English book, to-day?" I answered that I had received the package, but that it was unmarked, and that besides, he had asked me not to speak to him again. In a truly sorrowful voice, Houdini said: "Oh, Johnny, isn't that like you to hold a grudge!"

Houdini is dead. He did more than the teachers and the ministers to expose the almost universal belief in superstition. He spent most of the last years of his life as a crusader trying to save people from their own ignorance, and the fraud of those who have no qualms about fleecing the bereaved. It is cruel that he seems destined to be thought of by the world as one whose campaign of enlightenment was brought on by desire to see his name in print. He was honest in his purpose and as truly devoted to his cause as any other missionary has ever been.

Houdini was the supreme showman of the world. That, coupled with his skill and his knowledge, made him the magician who had confounded millions. He had no supernatural power, nor did he receive spirit aid. His secrets did not die with him, but were willed to his brother Hardeen who carries them on. To Mrs. Houdini,

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to Houdini's chief assistant, James Collins, and to Hardeen are known the methods of Houdini's performances.

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In one of the first conversations which I had with Mohammed Bakhsh, the cleverest of the East Indian conjurers, he tried to impress on me that he was familiar with Occidental magic, and a friend of Occidental magicians. As proof of this he offered me a cracked and grimy card which he carried in his wallet. He showed it to me as confidently as a schoolboy shows his first diploma. It was an advertising card of Howard Thurston; one of similar thousands which Thurston had thrown to the audiences on his tour of India twenty-five years before. It was interesting to me to find that the name of Thurston spelled magic in the land where magic is supposed to be in the very air, quite as much as it does to thousands of American children.

Mr. Thurston has taken a full evening of real enchantment to the large and small cities of the United States for over twenty-five years. During the week or the several weeks that Thurston and his magic show are in town children do their homework without parental urging. Magic has a hold on young people which nothing else has, and Thurston magic is traditional. Years ago he started by taking over the renowned Kellar's show, and he has worked ceaselessly to perfect a demon-

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stration of mysteries which would delight children. Of course, grown people in great numbers also attend his performance, though many go each succeeding year to recapture, for an evening, the thrill which they as children felt when they first saw him.

The first time that I saw Howard Thurston on the stage was after an all-morning trip on the train with my mother to attend his Saturday matinée. At the close of the performance I coaxed Mother to go to the restaurant where I had learned Thurston dined. There I sat spellbound at a table across the room from the great magician while I watched him eat every mouthful of his dinner. In Chicago, Buffalo, Philadelphia and all those other places where I have since sat at the same table with Mr. Thurston, I believe that I have never been with him when I didn't think of the thrill I had had, those many years ago, just watching him eat.

There are few of the younger magicians who are not indebted to Thurston for his kindly advice and encouragement. He has many times disorganized the routine of his busy life to help Fred Keating, McDonald Birch and myself. He is the acknowledged leader of the American magicians, and yet he is not above seeking the advice of those of us who have not been in the game nearly so long. He explains that many people have gone further in some special branch of magic than he has ever thought of going, and that these specialists are men

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worth turning to. He particularly loathes those magicians who feel that they know all there is to the subject and says that there is no hope for a man once he gets to believe his own publicity.

Mr. Thurston has traveled with carnivals and circuses and vaudeville, he has shown on street corners, in the bar-room halls of the old wild West and in palaces. He has given his performances throughout the world wherever he can find a theater, and many times when there was not a proper playhouse he has called into service a tent, a palm covered shelter, and even a paper house.

His travels have been fascinating and perhaps the most interesting part of his wanderings were the people he met. He rode in the circus wagon with Billy Burke, the clown, and his infant daughter Billie Burke (the same charming actress Billie who now rides in a Hispano Suiza in preference to a circus van). He not only met the great Sun Yat Sen of Chinese revolutionary fame, but paid a money tribute to him personally. He performed before King Edward, then Prince of Wales, whom he later taught sleight of hand. He became such close friends with Rajah Tagore (the father of Rabindranath), that he was given the use of the royal carriage several hours a day.

A couple of days before I was to start on a trip to Europe I mentioned, during dinner with Mr. Thurston, an idea that I had about an illusion. Mr. Thurston ex-

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pressed interest in my not at all well thought out plan, and asked if he might add the effect to his own show. I told him it would delight me if he found it worth while. The subject was dropped. The next day a messenger brought a letter from Thurston. In the letter he regretted that he would not be in Europe while I was there, and asked if I would not please him by using the enclosed check to buy a few books for my collection.

I wish every one could personally know Thurston, the man whom two generations of children have loved and looked forward to seeing again at his next appearance in their town.

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Travelers mention Old Lung Tung in the same breath as the Temple of Heaven and the Summer Palace and always think of him as one of the wonders of Peking. Stories have been written around him and he has been a character in many others, yet almost nothing is known about him. Tourists see him only in the lobbies of the Grand Hotel De Peking or the Wagon-Lit where occasionally he gives his intimate performances of Oriental conjuring. Most of the stories agree that he was court magician for the Old Empress Dowager until a Republican Government held that funds were no longer available for Royal Mystifiers. As a citizen rather than a subject the old wonder-worker began showing in the foreign hotels for such small change as guests would give.

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Lung Tung's performances were good. He was close to his audience, which always makes magic impressive. He produced fruit, and eggs, and a chicken, and several large bowls of water from under a grimy but innocent enough looking kerchief. He made a much severed piece of rope join together again like the coupling of a train of cars though without the banging and the jarring. He did all the usual legerdemain of the Chinese, in their usual skilful manner, but he did not keep silent as do most when they perform for foreigners. The Chinese performer among natives patters continually about anything and everything—in fact it is the inclusiveness of his topics which prevents translation.

It is by part of his patter that Lung Tung is known, for few know his name. He chants throughout his performance: "Lung Tung—Lung Tung—Iga Lung Tung," which, after a little break, he follows in a subdued voice with: "Dui Dui—Dui Dui—Iga Dui Dui." The Chinese usually tell you that it is meaningless like Hickory, Dickory Dock and the resident foreigner also thinks it is only jumbled words. Almost every one but the performer has forgotten that the phrases once had a meaning.

The old Chinese magic show was a thing of pomp and ceremony. There was no jazzy "The more you watch the less you see" introduction to an effect. Detail by detail the magic would be built until, just before the

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rope was to be rejoined or the largest bowl produced, the maker of magic would chant: "Strike the gong—strike the gong—once." From the background the gong bearer would respond: "It shall be struck—it shall be struck—once," and the gong would boom out. That made a miracle of sorts rather than a performance of hanky-panky.

To-day the limited receipts do not allow having a keeper of the gong on a magician's staff as did Royal beneficence. But Lung Tung is old; he had learned his chant, and it is difficult to cast aside what is taught one in youth. So he intones the old words, and, without any dramatic striking of gongs and with little enthusiasm gives the response himself. That is the story of the silly-sounding doggerel that the marvelous old magician in the hotel in Peking still repeats.

The most famous of all Chinese magicians is also a North China man. His name is Long Tack Sam. Mr. Long is the only Chinese magician skilled in the magic of the Western World, although in his stage performances he uses only the Chinese feats. He has topped the bill with his Oriental wonders throughout the world for more than twenty-five years. He speaks English so well that in England he uses a British accent, while he uses an American accent on this side of the water. He speaks most of the Continental languages fluently, and, sur-

prising as it may seem in a brocaded-coated Chinese magician, he has a working knowledge of Yiddish.

Long Tack Sam's father was an imperial officer in the service of the Emperor. Long's boyhood was that of the usual Chinese child of his station. It would have been quite different had he not tried, with some other boys, to see who could throw a stone the highest in the air. Long won, but his stone came down among the jade display of a street merchant and broke a jade bracelet. The peddler was furious, and the boy was badly frightened. He began to run. As he ran he became more frightened for he realized that as an official's son he would be recognized. Rather than risk the parental wrath he decided that the only thing to do was to leave home for ever and start out into the world to make his fortune. He was not yet nine years old. He kept on going until finally he came to a river where a crowd who were waiting for a ferry stood watching a boy juggle. This boy was only a little older than Long himself. The crowd seemed amused and gave the boy several coppers, while Long, who could not only throw a stone very high but who could do several simple feats of juggling, watched enviously.

He finally got up enough courage to step into the circle and offer to continue the entertainment. The spectators were greatly amused by his assurance, particularly when he asked the other boy for the balls which

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he had been juggling. He was liked, and because he was such a little fellow they were as generous to him as they had been to the boy who was better trained. As Long was picking up the coins which had been thrown to him the ferry came and the people all got on board. The older boy said: "Have you any money? You need one more copper than they gave you to cross on the ferry." Long admitted that that was all he had, and that he very badly wanted to cross. "Here's the extra coin," said the older boy, "come with me." On the way across the ferry Long found that his young benefactor was an apprentice to a magician who was in Tientsin and that he was returning to his master. Long liked the idea of being a magician's assistant and asked the boy if he could not go with him. The boy not only agreed to that, but assured Long that the master magician would be glad to have another apprentice.

The two boys performed their juggling feats whenever they got hungry and were usually fortunate enough to find people who were sufficiently amused to give money or food. They tramped day after day until at last they made friends with a river boatman with whom they rode the rest of the way. That is, they rode during the time that the wind blew. When the wind gave out they and the boatman would take hold of a rope and walk along the river bank pulling the boat. They arrived at Tientsin early one morning. Long was told

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by the older boy to stand outside the city wall and wait until he went to his master and broke the news that he was to have a new apprentice. All day long the boy stood there and waited and waited and got more hungry by the minute. When night finally came he made up his mind that in all probability the magician did not want another apprentice and started out to find another one who did.

Long Tack Sam, a tired and very hungry little boy, walked along the wall of Tientsin. At the entrance to the next gate he found the fair-grounds and wandered around hunting for a magician. He passed the storyteller, the man who made shadow pictures and the fortune-teller. Finally he came to a large circle of people who were laughing and applauding, but they were standing so close together he couldn't see what the performer was doing. With the ability that only a small boy possesses he wriggled his way into the center of the circle just in time to see the last trick of the magician who was creating so much merriment. The performer seemed to be on fire and was blowing smoke and flame from his mouth. The spectators began to throw coins into the circle and the magician finished his fire-eating with a final grimace as he swallowed a glowing coal. The performer and his assistants picked up the coins and the crowd broke up and walked away to seek other entertainers. Only the boy was left.



LONG TACK SAM

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As the magician began packing his tricks the boy edged closer, until finally he was noticed. The magician knew, by his clothing, that the little fellow had come from another province and saw that he was alone. With a friendly smile, he said: "You have run away from home, boy, and you are hungry. Well, come with me and I'll give you something to eat." Long followed the magician and his troupe across the fair-grounds to a little stand where a man was selling the simplest sort of food. After they had finished eating, Long told his story and told of his desire to be a magician's assistant. Whether or not it was true that the magician needed an assistant, as he said, Long never knew, but he stayed with his benefactor for eight years.

When the master finally felt that his pupil knew all that there was to know, Long started out for himself. His travels took him to Shanghai. There he attracted so much attention that he received a contract to come to America. He was so well liked that offers were made to him to travel through Europe, and it was eighteen years before he finally got back to China again. He had left China a poor boy; he returned a wealthy man. He landed at Shanghai, whence he had set out, and immediately started North to look for his teacher. He found the man old and feeble, and learned that his magic was being carried on by his son. Long tried to give him money, but the old magician insisted that there was no

obligation. All that he could be persuaded to take was a fur coat made like those of the rich merchants. Upon his return to Shanghai, Long had apparatus built for a complete performance of European magic and had it sent to the son of his old master.

I asked Sam what his work had been the first few years of his apprenticeship. He told me that all that he had to do was to polish and keep clean the apparatus for his master's tricks. "I was not permitted to take part in the performance," he said, "until I had passed an examination on the several major principles and the many minor principles of Chinese magic. I also was required to know the salutation to Lu Tisu Bing."

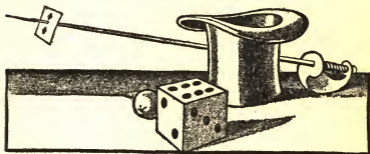
"Who is Lu Tisu Bing, Sam?" I asked.

"He is one of the many gods of China, John—a sort of patron saint of magic."

The next time I saw Long Tack Sam he had an image of Lu Tisu Bing for me. Perhaps I do not address Lu Tisu Bing with the proper reverence, or he may not understand my brand of Chinese, for I still am unable to get the bowl of goldfish out of nothingness as Long Tack Sam does.

CHAPTER XI

THOSE WHO GET NOT
THEIR LIVING THEREBY





Those Who Get Not Their Living Thereby

As IN the sixteenth century an amateur, John Cautares, was one of the most skilful conjurers of his time, so to-day some leaders in magic are men whom the public at large does not know. The dexterity of some of these men is amazing, and they are looked upon as brother magicians by those who of necessity must charge a fee for their art. These men go through the same years of training, to perfect their technique, as do the professionals. Most of them, too, began their studies in childhood.

Probably the most famous of these men is Samuel C. Hooker, Ph.D., a chemist, who all his life has taken a large and active part in the business world. He began practising magic while a schoolboy in England. The performances of the original Maskelyne and other magi-

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cians who performed at the Maskelyne Theatre were all studied and practised. The young Sam Hooker practised not only the conjuring, but also the plate spinning, for which Maskelyne was famous. After he had finished his university work, Doctor Hooker came to America, and, although he was so occupied by his business and professional career that he had little time for his hobby, his interest never diminished. Upon his retirement he decided to carry out the desire which he had held all his life of devising a magic performance which would be completely mystifying to all other magicians. This objective was so fully realized that the performance which Doctor Hooker finally presented for the magicians balked the keenest minds among them.

Doctor Hooker's magic has never been shown outside of his own intimate theater, which is a part of the building behind his home, which houses his private experimental chemical laboratory. The entire show takes little over an hour to present, but it has occasioned weeks of fruitless study by Kellar and Houdini and visiting magicians from all over the world. What is more, all who have witnessed the performance freely admit that they have no solution for any of the mysteries shown. For years Doctor Hooker alone knew his secrets, but three years ago he felt that they should be understood by other magicians, so as to exclude the possibility of their being lost. The secrets were entrusted to another

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scientist, Dr. Shirley L. Quimby, Professor of Physics at Columbia University, and myself. Professor Quimby is another of the outstanding amateurs and one to whom many professionals are indebted for most helpful advice. Doctor Hooker does not tell the magical fraternity at large because he thinks that they will be stimulated to devise more new methods by witnessing his mysteries, than if they were slavishly to follow.

During the performance of Doctor Hooker's super-magic, nothing is used but a pack of cards and a large-size Teddy-bear's head. Among the fifty-three cards of the deck are cards that jump, walk, dance, stand and float; cards that reason, cards with cranky dispositions, cards that need to be awakened, and cards that love. These cards run through their paces as well as any set of trained animals, while needing neither the whip nor barbed hook to urge them on. The cards show that they hear and see, as well as count. Any visitor can bring his own cards and find the mysteries just as perplexing.

The bodyless bear, with more than a bear's intelligence, has a most likable disposition, and a real sense of humor. He is amenable to orders, provided a lump of sugar is given him. He seems to enjoy it as much as real bears do, who have more than just a head. He nods his head, and shakes it, and turns it around, and talks incessantly in a language only his master can understand. He makes it obvious that he feels superior to those who

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watch his antics in astonishment, and at no time is this more apparent than when with no reason for his defiance of gravity, he floats in air as readily as do the cards. Remember that these marvels which confound magicians, and which the public would adore, are performed only in this small theater for experts. The public would delight at this performance, but the secrets have not got out, and probably won't, for this is truly magic for magicians. Except for a few performances in which I was tutored to take the rôle of performer, Doctor Hooker has always shown his magic himself.

There are amateurs who in their working hours are lawyers, and professors, and men of business, and doctors. No profession seems to be immune. There are amateur magicians who in the daytime work oil wells, and there are amateur magicians who are undertakers. Perhaps no one field has so many interested in magic as the profession of medicine. The first really great library on magic was gathered by Dr. Sarem R. Ellison, one time city physician in New York. His collection was finally willed to the New York Public Library, which also houses the collection of the Society of American Magicians. H. M. Lydenberg, director of the reference division of the New York Public Library, is also a member of the society. No one is immune. The urge to be a magician may even strike a member of your own family.

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Dr. Milton A. Bridges, Fellow of the American College of Physicians, has one of the finest libraries of books on conjuring that has ever been collected. He and I each have over three thousand volumes solely on the subject of trickery, and one of our greatest pleasures is arguing with the other as to which is the superior collection. Years ago we reached the satisfactory decision that to his friends his collection was the finer, while to my friends, mine was the better of the two. Getting a collection of books on magic is accomplished by persistent effort and by being recognized by other magicians as one to whom magic books may be trusted. We do not have the competitive difficulties which they have who collect on most other subjects, for there is comparatively little demand for magic books. Doctor Bridges and I attended the same preparatory school and have been friends since boyhood, and we have to acknowledge that neither of our collections would be quite so complete as it is were it not for the work of the other. Doctor Bridges besides being interested in the literature of the art is also a skilled performer.

Other amateurs who have collected books are Harry Price, of London, who has the finest collection in the world of books on the occult, legerdemain and allied subjects; Adolph Blind, of Geneva, Switzerland, who had almost every title ever published in Continental languages; Edwin A. Dearn, of Shanghai, China, and

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Rudolph Reith, of Cologne. R. F. Rybolt and Leo Rullman, both of America, are other outstanding collectors.

Leo Rullman is also extremely well known not only for his magic, but because he has gone through the training which is required of the Oriental performer, and which is so seldom mastered in the Occident. He is a trained equilibrist, and undoubtedly the best amateur juggler in the world. Both these accomplishments, remarkable enough in themselves, he looks on as being the proper background for all magicians. He is an amateur as he has always been. Professionally he works for the United States Government, as Deputy Collector of the port of New York.

Charles Dickens was an ardent amateur magician and there have been many other men of letters interested in the lore and practise of prestidigitation. Brander Matthews, for years Professor of Dramatic Literature at Columbia University, was a noted amateur and authority on magic. Professor Matthews and several of his literary magician friends believed that were the whole story of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood told it would be found that many of their pretensions to locate hidden things, to prolong life and so on, were in reality conjuring. Because of this belief, they, in mock seriousness, banded themselves together, most informally, as modern Rosicrucians. The joke lasted throughout the lives of all of them, and in writing to one another they used, almost

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invariably, to sign R.B. after their names, for Rosicrucian Brotherhood.

Brander Matthews started early in life to practise magic. He developed considerable skill not only in the manipulation of the tricks themselves but in juggling. He gave a number of performances, the first when he was only a schoolboy, and he knew personally most of the great magicians of Europe and America. Doctor Matthews said that in his old age he had the patter but his hands were too stiff for manipulation, while in his boyhood his fingers were trained and he did not know what to say. This, of course, was only a joke, for many stage performers were not only indebted to him for his clever patter, but also for permission to use tricks of his own invention. One of those tricks was used by Robert Heller, whom Professor Matthews believed to be the best magician he had ever seen. The trick consisted in having the face of a card change in the rising card trick, when, seemingly by error, the wrong card rose from the deck. In the performance of the trick a card would rise half-way out of the deck which stood in a glass on a table across the stage from the magician. The magician would ask the person in the audience, who was thinking of a card, if that were not the card selected. It would not be. Then the magician would say, "I make it change," and visibly the card would be transformed into the one selected while the magician was still across

the stage. During Professor Matthews' brilliant lectures on Molière, little did the students suspect this kindly old scholar of being a teacher of card tricks to stage magicians.

David Phelps Abbott is one of the most interesting men of magic and one of the most ardent foes of the tricky mediums. Mr. Abbott has written a number of books, among them an authoritative exposure of the work of fraudulent mediums. The performance of psychic effects which he occasionally gives in his home in Omaha should be seen by all those who are unaware of what apparent miracles can be done by trickery. I had the good fortune to be playing in Omaha at a time when Mr. Abbott was presenting his performance for the benefit of some friends and neighbors. He worked his mysteries surrounded by his guests and quite informally. He made objects float in air, he did a paper trick which was taught to him by Ching Ling Foo, and after several other feats, began on the apparent psychic phenomena. A spoon in a tumbler jumped up and down in order to tell by means of raps the answers to the guests' questions. Writing appeared on unprepared slates which answered further questions, and lastly Mr. Abbott showed his famous talking teakettle. According to the story, a spirit lives inside this kettle, who will orally answer any question asked of him. The kettle is empty when you take off the lid and look at it and you

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hold it in your own hands when it answers your questions. As the spirit's voice is weak it is necessary to put the spout to your ear. One is immediately apt to think of radio, but wonderful as is a wireless set, it takes up some space, and furthermore, it monopolizes the conversation. It will not answer questions. Incidentally, Mr. Abbott had this kettle long before the days of broadcasting. Even when you are told that it is a trick, the uncanniness of the whole proceeding and the correctness of the answers make it more effective than the demonstration of any spook.

One of the most loved men in magic, Bernard M. L. Ernst, is President of the New York Branch of the Society of American Magicians and Vice-President of the Magicians' Club of London. Mr. Ernst is a noted member of the New York Bar and has never performed magic except for his friends, or other magicians, but he has had an enormous influence in the world of magic, not only through his administrative work in our organizations, but through the friendly advice which we individually beg of him. The Houdini Biography was dedicated to him.

A good example of the variety of professional interests found among amateur magicians is shown by those who have banded themselves together to continue the publication of the monthly magazine of the craft, the *Sphinx*, in memory of Dr. Albert M. Wilson, who had

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edited it for more than a quarter of a century. These men include besides Doctor Hooker, Doctor Bridges and Mr. Ernst, Clark B. Allen, Treasurer of the Paines Fireworks Company; I. I. Altman, a director in the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Corporation; Dr. Myron S. Falk, Mechanical Engineer; Royal B. Heath, Member of the New York Stock Exchange; Josh W. Mayer, and Arnold Belais, Manufacturing Jewelers; Gerald L. Kaufman, Architect; Eugene M. Homer, President of the Actual Appraisal Company; Honorable Joseph G. Lightner, Mayor of Odessa, Missouri; Julian J. Proskauer, Vice-President of William C. Popper Company, Printers; Fred F. Singleton, advertising expert; Dr. Maximilian Toch, President of Toch Brothers, paint manufacturers; and Jack Trepel the New York florist. The professional magicians who are members of this group are Mrs. Beatrice Houdini, who was her late husband's assistant in so many of his most famous illusions; Elmer P. Ransom, Fred Keating and myself.

Doctor Wilson had an astoundingly varied professional life. He began as an assistant to a magician and worked up to being a magician himself. He became interested in the work of the Y. M. C. A. and was made a local secretary and finally state secretary. Through his Y. M. C. A. work Doctor Wilson became interested in church work and studied and became an ordained minister. Through his work of ministering to the oppressed,

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he began to inquire about medicine. He finally gave up the ministry to become a druggist and during all this time he studied until finally he was made a doctor of medicine. He was very successful, and for many years was Dean of a Medical College. With all this work Doctor Wilson never lost his interest in magic. He edited the *Sphinx* for twenty-eight years, and was honorary member and honorary officer of more magical societies throughout the entire world than any other man.

W. W. Durbin, head of a large manufacturing concern and one-time candidate for the United States Senate, from Ohio, is another amateur whose name is known throughout the world of magic. Mr. Durbin has near his home an intimate theater which contains hundreds of framed pictures of magician friends from all over the world. On the stage of this theater, Mr. Durbin performs for visiting magicians who in turn do magic for him. He has been unanimously elected President, for a number of years, of the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

The professional magician is indebted for many of his choicest feats to the inventive genius of some amateur. As an example, a card trick invented by M. F. Zens, Assistant Postmaster of Kenosha, Wisconsin, has been featured by professional magicians from Berlin, Wisconsin, to Berlin, Germany.

Many of the men who are now not interested in put-

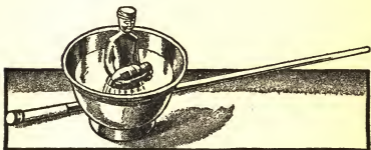
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ting a price on their skill in magic were formerly professionals. Most of these men continue to associate with magicians, and not a few still invent new feats for the use of other magicians rather than for themselves. No one would think of connecting Joseph Freud, the eminent electrical engineer, with Joseffy the magician, who toured the country with a skull which answered questions by a most gruesome snapping of his jaws, and who made a little box, carried on the palm of his hand, grow into a large chest from which stepped a smiling lady, who the audience were quite satisfied was not collapsible.

There are amateur magicians in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, as well as North and South America.

CHAPTER XII

FORECASTING AND ITS FRAUDS





Forecasting and Its Frauds

THERE are only two things that take a person to a fortune-teller—love and money. Of course there are some few who go out of curiosity, but the trained seer easily separates the believers from the idly curious. As long as there are but two subjects upon which he has to prophesy, the dealer in fortunes can touch on both and be certain of giving satisfaction.

Just making a prediction about love and money is not quite all there is to soothsaying, but that is the basis for all prophecies. Science comes into the game, but not in the mathematical calculations of the movements of the stars, nor in the reading of the cards, nor yet in reading the lines, crosses and bumps of the hand. The science as well as the art of the fortune-teller is in keeping hidden how little knowledge he has of his

victim and the source of what he does know. It does not make one bit of difference from what source the fortune-teller pretends to get his knowledge; all that you know is what he tells you. Playing with the cards, or an astrological chart, or holding your hand, or gazing into a crystal, are all merely the hokum accompaniment which the fortune-seeking public demands. The public dictates how it wants its fortune told, and furthermore there are styles in fortune-telling. The age of this system or that is frequently mentioned by way of recommendation, but some of the oldest systems of forecasting are not spoken of at all, for they are out of style. Age has very little to do with a system, but style has a great deal. Styles even vary in different localities. In Atlantic City and various other holiday places where the sucker is expected to come but once to have his horoscope read they tell him his whole life in order to satisfy him. In Wall Street (Oh, yes, big business men fall, too!) steady customers are expected, so one is told his future day by day only.

At present the Four Hundred favor reading the stars or the bumps of the head, as these are sciences. We are told that "astrology is the science of interpreting the influence of the heavenly bodies upon the lives of men," which at least sounds complicated enough to be scientific. The accurately taken measurements of the bumps of the head may give some information to a scientist, but

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hardly about the complexion of a future wife. Yet this mummery and its pseudo-scientific vocabulary are believed by educated people—that is, people educated in other things than the methods of fortune-tellers. Palm-reading, and card-reading, and the reading of the residue in a tea-cup, are still stylish with a less-particular group, though the last is becoming *passé* even with them.

I want to give a sample fortune, but please remember there are many ways of getting information, and because this may not be the way they found out about you does not signify it was not a way just as simple and just as tricky.

A man who had always had little or no interest in the chicanery of fortune-telling had listened to friends' tales of the powers of a certain palmist until he felt he might profit by going. He wanted to know about a business change, and had no other question in mind. He phoned for an appointment and was told he might come in half an hour. The fortune-teller greeted him, and without one question began telling about the man's wife, son and daughter. He told their names, he described the children's school work, and various other personal matters. He told that the man was a college man, and suggested that he would do well to consider no change in business that would necessitate his traveling.

The man went away perfectly satisfied; he knew that the palm-reader had power, for he told so many things

he could not possibly know, and further had answered the man's mental question by saying not to make a change in business. The fortune-teller had no chance to know the man had an opportunity to go in business in another town. The decision was made against the new business on the fortune-teller's advice.

This is what happened. When the man phoned for an appointment he gave his name. Immediately phone books were brought out. The man now lived, the current phone book showed, in a private house in a new development, while an old book showed he lived in an apartment. The fortune-teller telephoned the house and asked if he might take pictures of the children. He claimed to be a photographer and offered to make six pictures free. He got the names of the children and was about to make an appointment when he asked their ages. They weren't the right ages to get free pictures, which he regretted—but he had their names and ages. He then took a school directory and looked up the name of the school for the neighborhood and the name of the principal. He next phoned the University Club and asked if the man was in. The man was not in, but the very fact that they knew him proved him to be a member.

That was all the information he had. Working on the theory that the question was about a loved one he spoke about the family first. As the man had just bought

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the home he evidently did not wish to go to another town, and hence the advice about not accepting a position requiring traveling. The fortune-teller made much of the small amount of information he had and talked upon all those subjects about which he thought his client might be interested. He didn't know which topic upon which he had spoken made the impression, though by the man's manner it was obvious that an impression had been made.

The soothsayer gains most of his knowledge through trained observation and correct thinking, though, as in the example just given, he will use any method at all to get information. When he has knowledge it is the business of the craft to give it out in the most impressive way, and when he has no knowledge at all he must disguise the fact that he is merely giving universally applicable truths. "A change may be expected but not at once." "Some one who you think is your friend is talking behind your back. Be more careful what you say." "The problem in your mind need not worry you for it will come out all right though not as you expected it to." "People do not understand you. You should be more assertive—be the boss in your own home."

Of course the argument will be brought out that Cousin Nellie, or Aunt Nora, went to a fortune-teller and the name was not known and so no telephone, nor directory, could have been used that time. That may

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perhaps be true, but then there were other sign-posts quite as useful. As example, a pretty young widow went to get advice on the advisability of remarrying. She wore a dark dress, a hat of last season, and a pair of new shoes. All the jewelry she had was a wedding-ring and a string of beads. She carried no purse and, as it was summer, wore no coat. And from that the fortune-teller told her everything without her having said one word.

The fortune-teller told the woman she was not used to work and that she had better accept the offer of marriage she was considering, as it would be what her late husband would have wanted her to do. The woman was perfectly satisfied with the seer's power and sang his praises long and loud.

The observations and deductions of the fortune-teller were as follows. The woman had been married—the wedding-ring showed that. Her dress was not as expensive a one as her wedding-ring would indicate she could once afford, and, as the dress looked like one worn for second mourning, a death had probably stopped her income. Her shoes were new and were not as dressy as the rest of her clothing and, furthermore, they were of a make advertised to help foot trouble. Standing all day, for those not used to it, is a very common cause of foot trouble. In other words, she was probably not used to standing and she wouldn't stand were it not re-

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quired in work. As she stood at work and was not used to standing she was not used to work. Of course, all this reasoning might be faulty, but the chance seemed in favor of it, and as long as there is a percentage in favor of the fortune-teller he is satisfied. Her string of beads obviously was new and rather expensive and probably was a gift from some man in love with her. Remember, she was young and pretty. The fortune-teller reasoned that she wanted to marry again and yet felt she had to remain faithful to her husband's memory. He told her what he believed would please her. Perhaps the man was the last person she should have married. The advice may have been as good as, but it was no better than, the advice of any other stranger. She would have done much better, if she had no friends, to go to her minister or employer for advice.

There are subdivisions to the headings love and money, for each is divided into two parts. Love is classified as the love one has and the love one wants. The family—parents, brothers, sisters, husband, or wife and children—is the love one has, and the questions about members of the family are usually concerning health. Is the love reciprocated is the one main question about the love one wants. The two questions concerning money are how to get back what was lost and how to get what was never had. Of course, under the general heading of money come all those things of intrinsic value that

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represent money. The general answer to the whereabouts of money or jewelry thought stolen is that it was neither lost nor stolen, but mislaid. Several places are then named where the person is to look for his money—in the pocket of another suit of clothes, or in back of the bookcase or some other piece of furniture it could slip behind, or in dresser drawers. It is astounding how frequently the seer will be right when he names those places where police statistics show a large part of missing valuables are eventually found. When a definite place or a particular person is named, it is certain that the seer had knowledge of which his victim believes him ignorant. Always remember that many people know many things about you that can be of no concern to them. We are apt to dismiss as unknown those things about ourselves we feel are not the concern of others. It is part of the game of fortunes to put two and two together and get the inevitable four and then present that four in such an alluring way that one does not see that each two is obvious.

All who claim to have supernatural insight and the power of prophecy are conscious frauds. Most excuse their work by saying that they judge people and tell them their weaknesses and how to correct them and that they patch family differences and bring together lovers who have quarreled. They also, though they are not so apt to admit it, break up homes by warning against some non-

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existent blond or a dark man with a mustache. By their very advertisements they lead people on to tell family troubles, and by their answers drive in still further the wedge of family dissension. This is an actual advertisement of a fortune-teller who is continually consulted:

"I am here to help all men and women who are burdened down with sorrows and discontentment. If you have domestic troubles or financial worries, come and I will advise you. Will advise on all matters pertaining to one's life. One visit will convince you. All readings strictly confidential. All welcome. Readings \$1."

Such a sign would be against the law in many states and rightly. The fortune-teller who claims to be in touch with your dear departed mother-in-law and can show by certificate he is a dyed-in-the-wool medium is exempt from the law in New York State. However, even a medium may not charge a fixed fee. They were quite perturbed about that in their recent New York Convention, for passing the hat is not such good business. Nevertheless mediums (though they may not be the ones who belong to the union) do charge fixed fees, and fortunes are bootlegged in states forbidding them.

Not every person can be made to tell unwittingly all those things he wants talked about, though most people

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can. There is another angle to the racket of the dealers in prophecy when a person will talk, for the knowledge thus gained is frequently blackmail material. A man who goes to the fortune-teller to ask why his wife fails to understand him may later have to pay hush money to have the secret kept about the other woman who does understand him. Business secrets are frequently made of use to the medium, or fortune-teller, to whom some nit-wit has prattled. A fortune-teller told me he had much less trouble getting people to talk than to keep them quiet long enough for him to talk. Obviously, all that they are told, or retold, is just what they have been talking about. The wording is changed and a word or two thrown in about what remarkable people they are or that it is too bad they are not understood.

Some of the other forms of prophecy that were stylish in other times were by the color and peculiarities of wine, or by a sacrificial fire or with a red-hot iron. The prophets no longer use the entrails of fishes nor the entrails of animals or humans after they had been offered for sacrifice; but numbers, and dice, and the letters in a name are still occasionally used. Mirrors are the fore-caster's props in some parts of the world, and in other parts are used plates full of sand. The Bible opened at random and a verse selected by a mentally chosen number is believed by many to contain an answer to one's question. Three tries are permitted provided no answer

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is found on the first or second attempt. A minister said he thought it harmless enough, for the type of folk who would do it could not be made to read the Bible any other way.

Jewelry, clothes, eye-glasses, emblems of clubs and businesses, manners and accent all tell the trained observer something. People are inclined to think they are not badged because they do not wear a Rotary Club button, and completely forget other things they wear may be as telltale as a bill-board. For instance, few men wear wrist watches who were not in the war and are old enough to have served. In general, a man gets a watch upon graduation from school, as a wedding present, or as a token of esteem from his business or club associates. If it is an old watch it was probably his father's. Few men buy themselves expensive watches. Firms and clubs seldom give a chain with a watch they present, but almost invariably engrave it. If the fortune-teller can date the watch, or, in other words, can tell by the design of the watch how old it is, he has a fair chance of knowing when a man graduated from college or was married. An engagement-ring or wedding-ring can similarly give away the date of a marriage. The present fad for antique jewelry makes little confusion, for it is taken into account. Several pieces of foreign jewelry usually mean the wearer has made a European trip, and if the designs are studied many places on the itiner-

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ary can be named. Clothing people can tell by materials and cut many things about a suit, a jeweler can tell a great deal from casually looking at jewelry, a doctor can tell much about a person's general health at a glance. Each knows the little signs and where to look for them, and so does the fortune-teller. Naturally it all requires long study, but once known and carefully used and the money will roll in from those in whom confidence is larger than judgment.

The fortune-tellers are going to dismiss this exposure by saying in a big-hearted way that I don't understand the subject at all, and while there are some fakers the majority are gifted and scientific people. The astrologers are going back to Egyptian history and tell how exact is their science—and continue to ignore the fact that they don't agree—and many will continue to use a pamphlet I wrote giving horoscopes for various months. Even though I did make it all up I still will think it is pretty good and I doubt if its sale of a hundred thousand copies prejudiced me. (The pious will excuse me for, when I wrote it, I was just out of high school.) There is only one item in the pamphlet I would change, and that is the note about "a girl born in December should marry a man born in June." While my natal month is still June the girl born in December married another fellow.

If things are not going right for you call in your doctor, your lawyer, or your minister, visit your dentist

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twice a year and take deep breaths before an open window, but don't have your fortune told. If this advice were followed it would save the people of the United States one hundred and twenty-five million dollars every year. Fortune-telling has finally reached the stage of being one of the bigger of the American rackets. Fortune-tellers are heard on the air advising you to break with your husband or wife, advising you about your operation, and all those other subjects which they, in their ignorance, are so little able to know. That they are ignorant no one needs to doubt after listening to a sentence or two of their illiterate chatter. Some of the brighter ones have the speeches written for them by hack writers. One individual has hired, because of her shortage of information, a man who is known as a writer on magic. Of course, the world at large never knows that the lines of her part are not of her own composition.

The National Broadcasting Company will not permit any of these nuisances the use of their system, for it is on record as opposed to the sanctioning of any superstition. Reading the lines of the hand, the bumps of the head, or the pictures which some minds can conjure up in a crystal are all superstition. Astrology and numerology also are rank superstition. No reputable scientist will have anything to do with these subjects, and they are beneath the notice of colleges and uni-

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versities. Many of the most prominent professors of astronomy have stated that astrology is not only not scientific but is pure bunk. The United States Government's Smithsonian Institution has declared that futures are not predictable. Dictionaries define astrology as a pseudo-science.

A record of the difficulties which most fortune-tellers have had with the law would make interesting though rather morbid reading. One of the best known, of a few years ago, one who was trusted with the most intimate of family and business details, had served time for blackmail, forgery and other crimes. When questioned as to why he was a fortune-teller he explained that it was about the safest easy money.

A letter written, attacking my stand, noted that "there are countless thousands who find solace in the forecasts which they, after all, have voluntarily sought to satisfy their own desires." That is always the racketeer's alibi, "a sucker only gets what he asks for." Those who go to fortune-tellers usually get little real comfort, because the seer business demands that the client believe in the prognostications. As my friend, Strickland Gillilan, points out, anybody will believe bad news. So the seer specializes in evil tidings.

One of the biggest sources of income for the radio fortune-teller is the price which he gets for the name of each really gullible person. The radio fortune-teller

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announces that those who are interested in having answers to questions concerning their home, their business, their family, need only send in their names and dates of birth and, absolutely free of charge, an answer will be given on the air. Usually such a request brings thousands of questions. The writers of the questions receive a letter which states that, on account of the great number of questions received and the small amount of time which the seer has at disposal on the air, this letter is written offering a quicker way of having the question answered. Then for a sum of money the questioner is told he may have a book or a personal letter which is certain to answer his particular question. If he happens to be fool enough to send this money his name has a market value to the cheapest type of mail-order houses, for he may be classed as a preferred idiot with the lowest of sales resistance. The book, which he receives for his dollars, seldom costs the fortune-teller more than a few cents, and a multigraphed form letter costs even less.

Another form, which the fortune-telling racket has taken, is the stage performance. In the last several years dozens of such performances have started. They are usually devoid of entertainment and depend on their appeal to those who are willing to wait for an hour while other people's questions are answered, provided their own also receive attention. Poor neighborhoods, which can not support theaters charging admission at fifty

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cents, will fill one at prices from one dollar to three dollars, provided this question-answering bait is offered. The stage soothsayers either require that the question be asked by writing on slips of paper or whispered to an attendant who goes into the audience, or a combination of these two ways. The performers who do this work are magicians, who have forgotten, because of the glitter of gold, that the sum and substance of a stage performance is entertainment. Once something is written on paper it is easy for a magician to discover your secret, and as long as there are so many signal systems in existence, your secrets are quickly known by the magician when they are told to his confederate.

So often people ask why it is that magicians feel competent to talk on the subject of fortune-telling and fraudulent mediumship. A performer of magic is no less a performer of magic because he uses his knowledge to delude the ignorant and the credulous than when he performs merely to entertain. These charlatans depend on the psychology of deception, and frequently use even the same mechanical contrivances which their cousins use for legitimate purposes.

I shall not go on record as saying that spirits do not come back and tip tables, and twitch noses, and un-rhythmically pound on tambourines. Never in my experience have I seen any manifestation which was not produced by the medium or his associates by perfectly

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natural means, but perhaps I have been unfortunate in those mediums whom I have met. As long as mediums persist in doing feats which have been the knowledge and property of magicians for centuries, we magicians shall consider that upon the mediums depends the burden of proof that their effects are supernormal. Furthermore, as long as men who are the acknowledged leaders of spiritism, continue as did Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, J. Hewitt McKenzie and others, to claim that the tricks of the stage magician were really due to spirit manifestations, the testimony of these spiritists must be considered as worthless. Leaders in spiritism have claimed that Houdini, Zanzig and other performers, whose work was admittedly and undeniably accomplished by trickery, received aid from the spirit world. In my opinion the height of absurdity is for some one who is unable to perform the simplest feat of magic to claim, in his ignorance, that he knows more about a trick than a specialist who has worked a lifetime on his training and can perform it. Then to claim the feat is not trickery at all but the work of some itinerant spook is insufferable. The spiritists have done this repeatedly, and yet they wonder why magicians do not take their other statements with solemnity.

The vogue of spiritism would have few followers were it not for the fact that most seances are nothing but fortune-telling orgies. I am perfectly willing to

grant that your long deceased Uncle Algernon will come back and playfully whack you on the head with a guitar, but I deny that your Uncle Ben can tell you your future.

Many people wonder why there are dishonest amateur mediums. Most people are willing to grant the likelihood that a professional will resort to trickery, but they can not understand why some one who does not receive money should even be questioned. Most of these amateur mediums are nervous and pitiful creatures who adopt the rôle of medium because of the thrills and excitement they derive during the hours spent in the dark seance room. They are pathological cases who should be investigated by psychiatrists rather than by psychic investigators. There is another group who have been denied the center of the stage all their life, and, as compensation, go into trances and tell of the type of existence enjoyed by the beloved dead of their friends. It is hard for normal people to understand that this is fact, but it is equally hard to understand the actions of kleptomaniacs.

The simple mediumistic feat of having the speech mechanism supposedly taken over by spirits is extremely old. It has been practised by almost every primitive pagan race. We send missionaries to far-off lands to teach the heathen that belief in such oracles is all irreligious superstition, and at the same time there are voice mediums all over our own country.

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In Hawaii the natives had a demonstration, which as long as the spirit game is being played, always has seemed to me to be the most amusing. The medium, there locally called Kahuna, or Tohunga, explains that spirits are much smaller than men, and that the spirit need not wait for death but may leave a man while he is asleep. I like that idea of not having to wait until my death for my spirit to sow his psychic wild oats. If a medium catches a little unsophisticated spirit out on a lark he can kill it by squeezing it together in his hands until the few drops of blood, necessary for a spirit, are squeezed out. The flattened and bloodless form of the little fellow can then be shown by the medium. The one I saw looked very much like a tiny ginger-bread man who had had an encounter with a steam roller. All during my stay in Hawaii I cautioned my spirit, whom I have named Willie, to go no farther than the hotel porch unless he were holding to my hand.

There are capable investigators in the realm of the occult, and although many of them have found things which they felt were not explainable by our present scientific knowledge, even they do not believe there is any evidence of spirit connection. My friend, Harry Price, the director of the Laboratory for Psychical Research of London, is one of these keen and level-headed delvers. Another is Dr. Walter Franklin Prince, the psychical researcher. These two gentlemen, among

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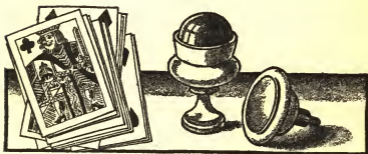
others, not only have evidence that most spiritists are extremely gullible but have accurate data about the work of all scientifically conducted investigations.

Beware of those who give you tips on the stock-market, or who give you the name of a race horse who is sure to win, or tell you just how you should manage your wife, or your business, or how you should bring up your children. Remember the sage advice of Horace, "Cease to inquire what the future has in store, and take as a gift what ever the day brings forth."

Ghosts do not know your future. There never was a lonely little star which could tell you what to do next. When numbers begin to vibrate for you, see an oculist, not a numerologist, and remember that after all the bumps of the head will tell you nothing about your future even though they may about your immediate past.

CHAPTER XIII

A MODERN MOUNTEBANK





A Modern Mountebank

MOST people think of a "mountebank" as a medieval performer, in doublet and hose, roaming from fair to fair over the swarming European roads. They would be surprised to learn that there are as many mountebanks to-day as ever. Doublet and hose have been superseded by a stiff shirt and dinner-coat—or by an evening gown—but the race of mountebanks is still flourishing. And the conditions under which the modern ones perform are essentially similar to those with which their medieval predecessors were familiar.

A mountebank was an entertainer who performed by mounting a "bank," or bench; that is, he performed on a small impromptu stage, and was usually surrounded by his audience. His original haunt was the medieval village square, or the inn-yard, or a busy corner in the city.

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Often he was a quack doctor, a tooth-puller, or a seller of some miraculous cure-all, and his entertainment was for the purpose of gathering the curious and the gullible. If he was a good entertainer he sometimes found it more profitable to pass the hat, and neglect the operation for which his entertainment was originally intended to be the prologue. Thus he became merely an entertainer, a sort of actor. And the term, mountebank, became applied to an entertainer who carried his act on his person, and who did not need any of the paraphernalia of the theater. He may have been a singer of ballads, for which he accompanied himself on the lute or harp; he may have been a juggler, or a tumbler; or his act may have consisted of "grotesque dances and the swallowing of divers liquors of fire without hurt"—which performance has a most modern sound, although it is described in that rare and curious old book, *Hocus Pocus Jr.* Whatever his act, he had to be prepared to perform under all sorts of circumstances and in all sorts of places, and he had to learn to depend on himself alone. And it is in this respect that the modern mountebank most closely resembles his ancestor.

The lord's castle has become the home of the money baron. The wayside inn has become a hotel of two thousand rooms. The village fair has become the social of the Epworth League. But the mountebank is still in constant demand. And now, as in the past, the magi-

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cian is one of the most prominent members of the clan.

For many years I have been a modern mountebank in the guise of an itinerant magician. I have performed on a stage and off a stage, indoors and out, in club-rooms, banquet-halls, and parlors, at dinners and at dances. If there is a profession extant that furnishes more entertainment for the entertainer, I can not imagine what it can be. Queer experiences abound in my profession. And I think I have had my share of them. I can not even remember all the unusual places at which I have given a "show." But there are some that I shall never forget.

Once I was sent by a charitably inclined person to give an entertainment at a home for women ex-convicts. The warden's words of advice were a real help, and were greatly appreciated. "Be sure," he said, "to use nothing of value in your performance. Do no tricks with money or jewelry. These women are all adepts at that work themselves!"

In an insane asylum I was told to give the performance as if the audience were normal. The inmates were a most appreciative audience and I gave no further thought to their being other than rational. At the conclusion the head attendant came and congratulated me on the bravery I had shown during the performance. This was my first thought of alarm, and in a panicky voice I asked:

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"What do you mean—bravery? I was told to act as if before a normal group."

"Yes, yes, I know," replied the doctor, "but we didn't know then that you would do the trick where those heavy steel hoops were passed around for examination. We didn't realize you were going to hand them something they could brain you with."

For a performance at an institute for the deaf it was necessary to learn their sign-language in order to explain the tricks. It was difficult to do tricks while talking with my hands, for every time anything was said my hands had actually to be empty. The audience was amused at my unwittingly making the same sign for both *d* and *f*. It was *diddicult* to believe I was not trying to use baby talk.

A Chinese club offered an engagement on the condition that the performance be in Cantonese. I cut my talk down to the minimum and then wrote in English the few necessary sentences. I had an interpreter translate and write these sentences in phonetics. There was little difficulty in memorizing the one-syllable words for the tricks, but learning the words for the introduction proved impossible. Therefore the interpreter was asked to write a new introduction and to make it as brief as he could. The new one was easy, it was so short. The audience met the introduction with laughter and applause, and with all confidence I finished

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the performance. Later the president of the club, a graduate of an English university, congratulated me on my work and particularly on my typical American manner. When asked to explain, he gave the introduction as an example. It seems that I had not said in the correct Chinese way how honored I was to appear before so august a body of gentlemen to offer my unworthy efforts. Neither did I mention the honor to my ancestors, nor how my descendants would always hold this day as the most momentous in the history of the family. No, instead, in my typical American way, I said: "Gentlemen, watch me. I am darned good." I had failed to inquire what the interpreter's short introduction meant.

Many of my engagements have been as a speaker at dinners given by various organizations and societies. I do a little conjuring as an interlude between the after-dinner speeches. Frequently at these dinners no mention is made of my being a magician, and some apparently serious and appropriate subject is assigned me. Talking on a subject of which one has no knowledge is about the same as talking in a language one does not understand. My tricks are to be brought casually into the talk. Of course to bankers a pseudo-serious speech can be easily made on international exchange, with coin tricks as illustrations. A talk can be given to an association of aniline-dye chemists while showing tricks with

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colored handkerchiefs. Even card tricks might be used to explain to a group of college psychologists some new theory about the workings of the mind. But what feasible excuse can be made to bring tricks into a talk before a lumber merchant's organization or before manufacturers of sanitary ice-boxes? To eliminate the chances of being caught in a situation where I could think of nothing to say, I worked out a stock speech which I was sure would fit every case. It was about quantity production which may be readily proved by magic. However, it had to be discarded at the very next dinner when I spoke before an association of directors of mothers' clubs.

Frequently I have performed in private homes, and I have sometimes had a rare insight into the character and home life of the socially prominent. Millions have little to do with the manners of boys! During my entertainment at a children's party in the mansion of one of the several richest men in the world, a young guest's behavior reached the point of being annoying to every one. One of the little hosts quietly spoke to him. "Bill, you just have to behave or you won't get any ice-cream and cake." At another wealthy home I asked the son of an overnight millionaire to assist in the performance by holding a pack of cards. He put his hands behind him and indignantly asked: "Whatcha tink I yam, a servant?" Both types are met among the grown-ups, too.

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One hostess announced before her guests that I had been noticed coming in the front door, though all of her regular staff were made to use the servants' entrance. In private she asked if she need pay for overtime in case her guests asked for an encore. Of quite the contrary sort was the host who insisted that no man with so high-sounding a title as *prestidigitator* could be permitted to leave before he had joined the other guests at supper. We get to know these people as only the servants and the family doctor ever know them.

Frequently I am requested to join a group and during or after dinner, or perhaps a dance, to entertain them. Often I am considered one of the guests, and have to keep secret the fact that I came as a paid entertainer. On one such occasion a guest asked the host my profession. The host gave either the first thing that came into his mind or else the work his guests would presumably know least about. He said I was government volcanologist at Hilo in Hawaii. It has since occurred to me that other jobs, satisfying the condition of being little known and yet easier to bluff, might have been chosen. There was no chance for reflection then, as I was too busy inventing details of my supposed work.

However, bluffing is no novelty to us, for it is strange how far some hosts go in their attempt to keep secret that they have hired an entertainer. Often they do this in an endeavor to make everything informal. With others

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it is a pose of fellowship with people of widely varying interests. One host had me escort his daughter to the dance, for who would dream of her going with a showman! Another man introduced me as a college mate, though he was at least twenty years my senior. Recalling incidents in the daughter's childhood and remembering the ways in which the history class cut up in Professor Wight's room made my preparations for my acts very hurried.

As in medieval times, we must be constantly alert to seize the chance occurrences during our performances, and unfortunately chance is not always reliable. We have odd accidents. In one trick a large number of silk handkerchiefs were tightly rolled together and pushed down inside my waistcoat so as to be easily accessible for a later mysterious production. The handkerchiefs, having been produced, were being allowed to untwist when in among the colored silk I noticed a white linen handkerchief. Not needing this linen one, I started to pull it away from the rest, but not all of it was clear of my waistcoat. Nor could I pull it away, for it was part of my dress-shirt—the part only Chinese wear outside.

My most uncomfortable accident happened during a performance given in the community house of a suburban town. I was asked to do the trick of making myself vanish and reappear at the back of the auditorium. The

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correct method could not be used, as I had none of the paraphernalia with me. I devised a method whereby my stuffed overcoat would be believed to be me long enough for me to run around the building and come in the front door. The only door to the stage was in the proscenium arch in plain sight of the entire audience, but back-stage there was a window barely large enough to jump through. I planned to leave that way, as it was not far to the ground. By the time the performance began, a hard rain-storm started, but, nevertheless, at the proper time I jumped through the window. I did not know the rain-water was saved in a hogshead placed under the eaves—and under the window. My aim couldn't have been better if I had been aware of the tank, but the jump would have been made less quickly had I known of the cold rain-water. It ended well, for as I came down the aisle a man said loud enough for the hushed audience to hear: "Great guns! He must have come twenty miles to have gotten that wet!"

Rain customarily comes on the night of a special show, though never invited. At another town the roof of the hall leaked. The leak was right over the table upon which were laid the pack of cards, the silk handkerchiefs, and the box of chocolates, which were to be used later in my performance. When announced, I confidently went to the table to begin. I found the cards stuck together, the silks a wet mass with their colors all run,

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and the chocolates gooey. Coin tricks alone were shown that evening, and nothing was up my sleeves but rain-water.

Rain is, of course, the bugaboo of outdoor performances, but even on a glorious warm, cloudless day things may happen. Once I performed before a large number of Boy Scouts at their suburban camp. It was an excellent camp site, high and flat. But because of that flatness many could not see my show, for we all stood on the same level. The scout-master gave instructions to take down a tent and have the wooden floor held as a platform. The idea was admirable, and the twenty-five or thirty boys who held the platform felt privileged to be that much nearer the show. The performance went off nicely except for one interruption caused by the boys at the rear letting go to come around front for a better view. The platform went down with the sensation of an earthquake.

The most remarkable incident during any of my performances was an almost unbelievable coincidence. The audience was composed of a small group of men who, being in their own club, felt free to call back and forth to one another. I had just shown the trick of making each of several people choose the same card from the deck, although seemingly granted a free choice. As the applause stopped, one man called out: "Can you do that trick with any pack of cards?" The deck makes

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no difference to me, for they vary little, and I do not need prepared cards. So I said that I was quite willing to repeat the trick with any pack of cards. The man called for club cards. These had the club's seal printed on the backs. "Now," he challenged, "here is an unopened pack. Let's see you do the trick with it." To my amazement, on opening the wrapper I found every card was an ace of hearts. It wouldn't happen once in a million packs. That trick became a positive miracle.

It is amusing—the way people come to us with their original ideas for entertainments. These ideas are always imparted in a hushed voice, after a promise of inviolable secrecy has been extracted. It would be poor business to explain that these ideas are not new, and, besides, there are so very few novelties in giving entertainments that near novelties are welcome. Then, too, the mere fact of others' having the same thought shows its appropriateness and speaks well for its success. The inspiration of having a magician for a Hallowe'en party is often encountered. "You know, one always connects that night with ghosts, and hobgoblins, and mysteries! And it would be so novel to have a magician perform actual mysteries." At another time of year we are approached with: "I want to hire you for April first. What could be better than a magician for an All Fools' Day party?" By wheedling these patrons into arranging to have our part of the program at a particular hour,

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we often give three or four shows in one evening to different parties whose hostesses have at last thought up something new.

We enjoy entering into the spirit of the occasion, and do our best to follow whatever plans are made. At times, however, some of these may be trying. One night it was decided I was to dress and make up as an East Indian. The hostess did not devise this program until just before my arrival. She hurriedly ransacked the house and had everything necessary for my complete disguise, including make-up. The costume, while too small, I didn't mind; but the make-up supplied was objectionable. At least it was objectionable as make-up, for it was Johnson's Penetrating Wood Dye. At a number of performances thereafter I had to go as a gradually fading Hindu.

We seldom actually suffer, however, through thoughtlessness, for as a rule every one is very considerate. The inconsiderate thing we mind is being not allowed to give our performance at the time designated. It means that in the suburbs we sometimes have to wait three or four hours for a train. At times in the smaller towns we wait in the snow or rain with only a shed for cover. In the city I have been hired with the understanding that I was to begin at nine o'clock. At nine all the guests had not arrived, so I was asked to wait. Several did not come until just before ten, and then some

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amateur lecturer talked until eleven-thirty. He was not being paid for his work, so of course he could not be asked to wait. Refreshments were served until twelve-fifteen, when I actually began. Providence has mercifully provided few thoughtless hostesses, and anyway it is all in the magician's night's work.

In one suburban town I missed the eleven o'clock train by the fraction of a minute. The chairman had misplaced my check. The next train was two-eight. I went resignedly into the station to serve my three-hour sentence, and settled myself as comfortably as I could. After a short while the station-master came out of the ticket-office and told me he had to go home and wanted to lock up. I protested at being put out in the cold to wait for the train, and he asked if I thought he was going to stay up all night to keep me warm. We finally made a dicker whereby he would leave me in charge of the station and I was to leave my magazine behind when I left. As the train whistled, I put the magazine on the ticket-window, turned out the lights, locked the station, and put the key under the mat.

The late hours I am forced to keep coupled with the small black-leather box of tricks under my arm leads to a great deal of suspicion and a little expectation. During the week of police watchfulness after a crime wave, I was walking in a restricted neighborhood from the house where my performance had been given. A

voice behind me demanded: "Stand still! Put up your hands! Let's see that box." The owner of the voice was a policeman. The contents of the box were minutely examined and proved more suspicious than the box itself. Under a street-lamp I gave part of my show to allay the cop's suspicion, and then had to very nearly finish it to satisfy his curiosity.

Another policeman astonished me as I was leaving a private entertainment with the greeting: "Sure and wasn't it too bad, Doctor, just the night of the party to have some one taken sick."

That black box helped to place me in a very different rôle one night on the last city-bound train. As I sat in the empty car, I was folding the colored handkerchiefs and long ribbons used that evening. Both the handkerchiefs and ribbons had been knotted many times. I had to untie these knots before putting the silk away in the box. The conductor collected my ticket just as I was busy picking knots from bright-colored silk handkerchiefs. He stood and watched me a minute. A little later he walked by and again asked for my ticket. Before I could reply, he said: "Oh, yes, you gave it to me, didn't you?" A third time he stopped and asked: "You were the one that gave me the ticket, weren't you?" Each time he stood by the seat a minute. As I was the only one in the car, I thought he must be mildly insane. It never occurred to me that he might

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think I was. The next time the conductor came through the car he brought the brakeman with him, and they both stood just behind me and whispered. By that time I had folded the ribbons and handkerchiefs and put them away, and had begun to go over five hundred small numbered cards. These cards were in order at the start of one of the tricks, but became mixed during the trick, so I was again arranging them in order. To do this I laid the cards out first in piles of fifty, and then put each pile in numerical order. After a few piles were laid out, the brakeman slapped the conductor on the back and exclaimed: "Oh, he's all right! It's some sort of a new-fangled solitaire he's playing."

The chairmen of entertainment committees are as interesting a class of people as I have ever met. They are almost invariably chosen because of their popularity, and also, seemingly, because of a couple of ideas common to them all. The first is that problems concerning the entertainment will work out automatically before the appointed day, and the few remaining details can be easily taken care of then. The second idea commonly held is that a chairman must not address the gathering in his natural manner. The one completely lacking a sense of humor must be funny. The quiet man must make all introductions in an inflated eloquent style. The following examples are typical:

The chairman had asked his two assistants to arrange

to bring one entertainer each. The entertainment was given by the Men's Club for the Boy Scouts. One man brought a most interesting travelogue lecturer, and the other man had arranged with me. The chairman was told our respective programs and our names as we were introduced to him. He failed to inquire which was the lecturer and which was the magician, and it did not occur to any one to tell him. When the audience, the combined Scout troops of the city, were seated, the chairman, the lecturer and I took seats on the platform. As is often the case with a modern mountebank, all appurtenances for my tricks were in my pockets, and the lecturer likewise had no distinguishing marks. The chairman believed, unknown to us, that I was the lecturer. He merely said in introducing me: "Boys, this is Mr. Mulholland, who will talk to you." When my tricks were finished the chairman, still believing the other chap to be a magician, said: "Well, boys, you surely are in luck to-night, for I know you haven't had enough magic. I didn't know the first gentleman knew tricks, too. Now I introduce another magician, Mr. Brown." The boys lost most of Mr. Brown's talk because they were concentrating on his gestures, expecting a trick to happen at any moment.

When introducing a magician, many a chairman, whose humor is not a gift of nature, prophesies the instant disappearance of all valuables held by the

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audience. This idea of warning every one to hold tight to his wealth because a magician is present is something for which I cherish hatred.

Lack of humor is not nearly so bad as lack of preparation. The man who extemporaneously gives a detailed outline of his organization during his introduction usually leaves stranded both the audience and the entertainers. In this introduction one chairman left us all wondering how the program was to start. "Ladies and Gentlemen: To-night we Valleyrock residents are gathered together in the Valleyrock Community Church. As so many of you know, a number of men of the town formed a men's club several years ago. This club is connected with the Valleyrock Community Church, and so we call it the Valleyrock Community Church Men's Club. The club holds several entertainments a year and at one of the entertainments ladies are invited. To-night is that night. It is the Valleyrock Community Church Men's Club Ladies' Night Entertainment. I am sure that you will enjoy the evening, for I am told that all the entertainers are quite good. Oh, yes—and one more word—may we see you all again next year."

The variety of introductions makes our life interesting. An introduction is to introduce an audience to a known speaker or introduce an unknown speaker to his audience. I'm still wondering about the purpose of this introduction which I had a number of years ago.

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"I do not know why I have been chosen for this task as chairman; every one knows I loathe it. Furthermore, I know nothing whatsoever about the subject of the evening. It can be looked at from so many varied angles that I do not know how any one could be expected to know anything about it. I have spent the afternoon looking in various biographical works and I found nothing whatsoever about the speaker. All that I can say is that the subject is magic. The speaker, John Mulholland." The chairman then turned around and looked me straight in the eye and said, "He is introduced."

It is strange what appeals to the chairmen of lecture committees as the all-important question of an evening. One chairman wrote me, six months before I was to give my lecture, to ask me if it would be all right to have lamb for the meat course at the dinner that was to be arranged for me. A man wrote to me to find with what kind of flowers I would like to have the stage decorated. Almost invariably the committee will worry about whether the lecturer will have sense enough to board the right train. It is strange, too, how often people will stress the fact that the members of their club are really very fine people and feel that it is quite unnecessary to choose the subject of the evening ahead of time. Once the lecturer knows that his club will be composed of the finest people, they feel that all other details, such as where the lecture will be held, the number

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of people who will attend, and the equipment of the hall are beside the point.

In a theater a magician appears at a stated time to give his performance. He is in complete charge of his work and does what he considers will please his audience most. All stages are very much alike and as he travels around the country he finds few technical difficulties. Those of us who give most of our performances under the auspices of organizations find new conditions on each engagement.

For several years almost all of my work has been on what is called the lecture platform. I give a talk on some phase of magic or on the fraudulent methods of fortune-tellers and illustrate my talk by showing various feats of magic. William B. Feakins, my lecture manager, sends me the most minutely detailed instructions of how to get to my engagements and where they are. One of the first of my lecture engagements took place in a suburban town. It was scheduled for early in the evening and at that time I was an instructor in a boys' school during the day. The instructions read that I was to reach this town dressed and ready to speak. My work at the school lasted until such an hour that I had barely time to make the train. Once on the train I retired to the little two-by-two washroom, at the end of the car, to change my clothes. Because of the cramped quarters it took me longer to dress than I had anticipated and as

the train began to leave one of the stations I looked out of the window only to find, to my horror, that it was where I was to get off. I had reached the stage, in my dressing, of having just finished tying my tie. I grabbed my coat and waistcoat and hat, stuck them into my overcoat, which I held under one arm, and grabbed my bag with the other and ran to the vestibule. The train, by this time, was beginning to gain momentum. I dropped my bag off the train, tossed the bundled coat after it and then jumped off myself. In my excitement I got off on the side opposite the station. I walked back to the overcoat, which I opened carefully, put on my hat, my waistcoat and my coat, picked up the overcoat, shook out the cinders and put it on. Still farther back I found my bag, which had opened. I kneeled on it, fastened it again, picked up the bag and for the first time looked at the platform. There was the committee from the ladies' club, waiting to meet me. I walked over to them and asked if they were looking for me. They agreed that they were and took me over to a waiting automobile. I never mentioned my strange arrival nor did they. Perhaps they believed that a magician always arrives that way.

In China the newspaper advertisements, announcing my appearance, used only the first syllable of my name, and that was changed from Mul to Mo. It was felt that Mo was a better name for a magician, largely because it

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meant the devil. I have often wondered whether my Chinese audiences thought it likely that the devil made his home in America. My name can not be pronounced in Chinese syllables and the nearest to it is Chong Mo Haw Liang for John Mul hol land. Those words mean in Mandarin "Controller of the devil's knowledge and skill." Which would allow me to go back to the old magician's pretense were I to advertise that fact in China.

The magician has had of necessity to keep apart, for once his secrets are known much of the glamour of magic is lost. An old English law forbade Gipsies, blasphemers and magicians the right to be in English territory. The magicians to which the law had reference were those supposed to have contracted with devils and evil spirits, but the sleight-of-hand performer never knew when he might be believed to have recourse to diabolical aid when one of his audience failed to realize what could be accomplished by trickery. At that time magicians had no one whom they could trust, except other magicians, for they never could tell when some layman might think them in league with Satan and his associates.

The desire to believe that magicians are not as are other men still persists. It persists to the extent that really large incomes come from admitting supernormal power and answering questions by trickery and sleight

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of hand about the way to retrieve lost loves, lost money and lost opportunity.

Few magicians have attained much skill who did not start in their early childhood. Most of us have started before we were ten. I started at half that age. Alexander Herrmann, claimed that a magician was born and not made. He was right in his belief that there must be an aptitude for the art of magic. But a magician does not suddenly discover that he can do tricks. A boy starts magic because the subject interests him, and through a book, or another boy, or some older friend he learns the manipulation or the mechanism of some simple trick. If he finds that this trick amuses others he looks for more tricks and after he has collected eight or ten and has practised them faithfully until they too are mystifying and amusing then he is looked on as a magician. If he keeps on performing for his friends, schoolmates and at the church social parties, sooner or later some other magician will hear of him.

The young magician then makes friends with the older one and is told where magicians purchase their apparatus, which magician will give lessons, and where other magicians are performing so that he may study the way the masters conduct their performances. Those boys who still find it amusing and a subject so absorbing that they are willing to practise the hours, weeks and years that are necessary find that there is so much demand

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on their time and that so many invitations are extended that it is impossible to accept them all. Then as a method of self-protection they put a fee on their services. If they still are invited to parties they are professionals. The majority of professionals never go past this stage and most of them have other occupations at which they work during the day. A few find their time so thoroughly filled that they have no need for other work. From these club shows, so-called, where they perform at club affairs, and all those social meetings where professional entertainers are provided, they go into vaudeville and Chautauquas, or branch out for themselves with full evening performances. This transition usually takes fifteen to twenty years. Old Ching Ling Foo, one of the greatest of the Chinese conjurers, claimed that it took forty years to become a good magician.

Several years ago during the time of floods in Vermont I was scheduled to appear in a small town. I took the train from New York to Albany and was to change trains there. In Albany no train came and two hours afterward when a second train was to have left the first one had not even started. By that time there were about twenty people standing on the platform in the early morning chill when we were told that the Vermont trains had been taken off because of a washout. I found that most of the people wanted to go to within a few miles

of where I was to give my show. I suggested that they wait a few minutes more and went out to a telephone and engaged a motor-bus to take us from the nearest town on a divergent line. Having hired a motor-bus I went back and arranged a personally escorted tour of the others who were stranded. We split the cost of the bus among us. I felt quite like a Boy Scout having done his day's good turn until some one asked me if it were true I worked for the motor-bus company.

At times people in the audiences are a great help in the success of a performance. Alexander Woollcott "made" one of mine. I wanted one of two coins chosen, but as I had found that if I said, "Choose one," the person so addressed would invariably grab for that coin. I therefore had changed it to, "Name one." Mr. Woollcott, with a twinkle in his eye but without the vestige of a smile, said, "All right, I name this one Elmer."

In Honolulu I had been performing for several weeks and the day before I was to leave an Army officer from the cantonment on the other side of the island of Oahu came into the dining-room of the Moano Hotel during dinner to ask me to perform at the Army base the next day. I told him I regretted that I couldn't for I was to sail for Japan the next evening. "That," said the Army man, "is very simple, for the ship doesn't start until quite late." I replied that it was true that the ship didn't start until late but it took several hours to drive

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over the mountains and it would take even longer at night so though the ship did not go until late the performance was out of the question. "Not at all," continued the officer, "for after the performance we shall put an aquaplane at your service and that will take but a few minutes. Even if the boat has started the plane can follow until it catches up with it." Anything goes with a showman! I regret I had to refuse that performance but I did get the boat.

A few months ago I was to speak at a business men's organization at a meeting during the week the Thurston Show was in the city. Mr. Thurston was invited to the luncheon at which the talk was to be given. I was seated at the table on the dais between the president of the club and Thurston. A microphone stood on the table just in front of me so that my address could be broadcast. During the talk I illustrated several different points by performing some feat of magic and finished the program by picking up a cage in which was a canary bird and caused both bird and cage to vanish. To do this trick I stood on a chair so as to be better seen, but I forgot that it was taking me farther away from the microphone. In fact Thurston was nearer than I was. He was surprised to see me attempt this stage trick while standing on a chair and said for the benefit of the radio listening world, "My, Johnny, what a nerve you have!"

The cage which I use to "disappear" with the canary

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was formerly the property of Carl Hertz, an American magician who made his big success in England. I first saw him do the trick in the program which followed the dinner of the Magicians' Club of London which was given for me. Mr. Hertz came to London from the Isle of Man just for the purpose of being chairman at the dinner. A month previously he had performed the bird-cage trick before the members of Parliament to prove to their satisfaction that nothing was done which was cruel to the bird.

This dinner of the Magicians' Club gave me the first opportunity to see several of the famous magicians of England perform. My friend, Will Goldston, the organizer of the club, arranged both the dinner and the show. The first book on magic that I owned was written by Mr. Goldston. At the time I got the book it did not occur to me that I would ever have the opportunity to meet the author and I should have laughed at the man who suggested that some day that author would arrange a dinner with magicians in my honor.

I have been honored with such dinners in a number of countries. One of them took place the day after the annual meeting of the Magischer Zirkel in Leipzig. The dinner was held at a cabaret where Franz Hugo, one of the members, was playing. Another dinner was with the Magischer Klub in Wien in Nagl's Restaurant when I was made a member of the club and initiated with a

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ceremony which was conducted in the words of Göethe's *Faust*: "I have studied philosophy, law, medicine, and unfortunately too theology. All these things I have pursued with great endeavor, nevertheless, I am as ignorant as ever and, therefore, I have devoted myself to magic."

The "Magyar Magusok Egyesulete" dinner in Budapest at the Belvarosi Kavehas was one of the most delightful of them all. In the show afterward my friend, Harry Silan, did the feature trick of the evening, which was to make several varicolored bits of silk into the stars and stripes of the American flag. Dr. Vilmos Lenard, one of the foremost of the Hungarian doctors of medicine, is the president of the club. It is true in Europe, as it is in America, that more amateur magicians are found among physicians than in any other profession. A physician in Germany, Dr. Arthur Kollman, who is also a professor in the University of Leipzig, is another of those who practise medicine and at the same time have a deep interest in magic. Doctor Kollman gave to the university an interesting and very valuable collection of apparatus made to help magicians in the performance of their magic. Among the different pieces of equipment which he has in the collection are the center table of Robert-Houdin and a sword of Carl Herrmann. This museum is under the direction of the Department of Psychology. The first chair of psychology in any uni-

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versity in the world is claimed by the University of Leipzig. I visited that museum in company with my friend, the magician Franz Bachmann.

The president and founder of the Magischer Zirkel is Carl Schroeder, who spent a number of years in the Far East and is fully conversant with not only the magic of the Orient but the methods of the magicians. At his home one evening he told me that Oriental magic could never be a matter of awe to him though it would be an everlasting mystery why so many people believed it to be more than trickery.

In some of those countries where the magicians were not organized and there were no clubs I had considerable difficulty in seeing any great number away from their work. There was one magician in Peking who did not want to have anything to do with me because I addressed him incorrectly. I said to him that I was a magician and I should have said, "I had the honor to have had Mr. Sargent as my master." According to the fame of the master is the man received. Because I did not at that time know the proper procedure it never occurred to me to mention my teacher's name. After making that error I failed to show a certificate from my master and the magician believed I was a rank impostor. I wanted to see him and therefore made it a point to find why he would not meet me. After I found the formal way of introducing oneself I went back to him

and began all over. I even had a certificate certifying to my excellence which I went to the trouble to write for myself. Then he was satisfied. We became great friends. He took me to an actors' tea house and we went to an upper floor and mixed tea and magic for the better part of a day. It was that man who gave me the pleasure of being completely fooled by a trick which I had shown professionally around America for a number of years. The trick is called the Chinese Linking Rings and is a favorite with magicians all over the world. It was originally a Chinese trick and they do it there as it was done hundreds of years ago. In the Occident several small changes are made in the performance of the trick, perhaps because of misunderstanding the correct method. I had learned to do it in the European way and when I first saw the Chinese method it mystified me.

Perhaps we Europeans changed the trick as one old Chinese changed his routine on several of his tricks. He had asked why I was visiting the magicians of the world and I told him that I was an American and had of course come to tell the magicians of the rest of the world how to better their magic. The Chinese are so used to that that he did not know I intended to be funny, and he asked to have several of his pet tricks improved. He then proceeded to do very slowly a number of typical Chinese feats of magic. As I saw how serious he was I felt that the only way to satisfy him was to show him

several changes in method. As he went through his tricks I would stop him every once in a while to alter his magic. As all my suggestions were extemporaneous and about a kind of magic of which I knew little I am fairly certain they were not improvements. The old man was delighted however for new ideas are always thought to be improvements on old ideas, even in magic.

When variations are taken into consideration the number of tricks becomes limitless. No one magician knows all the methods even in one branch of magic. As an example, three of us one morning began talking about card tricks. To illustrate our points one or another of us would show the trick we were describing. The cards were passed around from one to the other as each trick shown would remind us of some other. Even during meals that day one man was working at a trick while the other two ate. He would finish and pass the cards on. It was really a matter of interest; there was no thought of an endurance contest. After fifteen hours of card tricks we stopped and as far as we could recall no trick had been repeated during all that time. There are literally thousands upon thousands of card tricks and as many more coin tricks. There are also other thousands with paper, and rope, and handkerchiefs. Each man is limited in the performance of tricks when it comes to performing before an audience, for then it becomes more a matter of pleasing the audience than of

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merely fooling it. One of the most ingenious and skilled magicians I know can not interest a lay audience in his work, though before a group of magicians who can appreciate his skill he is a sensation. Some of these amateurs with inventive turns of mind and a sense of showmanship who do little in the way of performing furnish a great many of the tricks of the professional magician and were they to practise and perform more would themselves become known to the layman. One such man is Charles Harris, a New York jeweler, who because of friendship has given me three of his inventions. These three tricks are favorites of mine and have always been popular with audiences.

Nate Leipzig, who in my opinion as well as in the opinion of many other professional magicians is the world's most skilful sleight-of-hand man, can perform for hours with the silverware and glasses and napkins and corks at a dinner table without using a single bit of his stage magic. These intimate tricks he has perfected because of the amusement he derives from their performance, though they have been of great value to him in entertaining newspaper men and other friends. The first time I saw some of his close-up effects was shortly after he had returned from one of his trips to Australia. I was in his dressing-room at the theater, as he was dressing after his performance, when I asked to see him make a coin disappear in the way it had been described to me.

He had just a pair of trunks on at that moment, and it was obvious that there were no pockets nor sleeves in which to hide anything. He showed me his hands and with no movement at all except to close one hand slowly and as slowly open it he made a coin appear in that hand. My face was within a few feet of his hands and yet it was impossible to discover how he produced the coin. I fully realize every time I see him do his magic why so many people feel about a magician's work that "there's more than a trick to that."

Many people want to believe that the trick of apparent thought transference more than any other trick of magic is not conjuring. The late Julius Zancig and his wife were almost universally supposed to have some occult power and were given a letter by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle certifying this to be his conviction. Doctor Doyle wrote: "I have tested Prof. and Mrs. Zancig to-day, and am quite assured that their remarkable performance, as I saw it, was due to psychic causes [thought transference] and not to trickery." Zancig was a member of magicians' societies in both England and America and sold his method to a number of other magicians. He was grateful to Doyle for his publicity but at the same time very much amused at his credulity. At one time, after the death of his wife, Zancig worked with David Bamberg, the youngest magician in that famous family. David was only a boy at the time and, though

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I knew his father well, I did not know him and furthermore did not realize that he knew me. When I went to see Zancig's performance on this occasion I arrived just as the curtain was going up. As I walked down the aisle David saw me and recognized me. Later in the performance he began describing my watch and then located it, by telling in which seat I was sitting and in which pocket the watch was. I was amazed and did not know that David had not been told all this by Zancig but was just adding a little extra mystification to the performance on his own account. The next time I saw his father he said to me: "I understand David used you in his act the other day—made you stand up and show your watch. I had described it to him, for you told me you were going down to see him that day and he has an excellent memory for faces." Zancig had been as much amazed by David's performance as had I.

Harry and Frances Usher are exceptionally rapid with their thought-transference act. Frances had failed only once in ten years to name the article which was shown to Harry. That was a small, newly purchased gas stove which a woman brought with her to the theater before she went home. Frances got the cue but was afraid to say stove for all she could think of was a large kitchen range. I thought I would be funny with them one night and brought a pair of chop-sticks in my pocket. I was certain they would answer correctly, but I thought it

would take a moment's hesitation. As Harry came down the aisle I showed the sticks. Without even slowing down in his stride he walked on to the next person, but Frances called out, "A pair of ivory chop-sticks." After the show I went back-stage and the Ushers told me that of all the unusual things brought to the theater chop-sticks were brought most frequently.

Al Baker, a very inventive magician, and I were talking about a new trick which he had worked out. He said it would be marvelous for a medicine show. I laughed at him and said that there were few medicine shows traveling any more.

"Yes," said Al, "that's true, but when I was a youngster the 'medicine show' was just as much a part of our summer amusements and recreation as the circus or county fair. You saw the advertisements in the *Clipper* just as much a matter of course as for 'Tom' shows or any other. That's how I got into the game, as a matter of fact; just an ad in the *Clipper* that caught the eye of a young fellow just nearing the end of his apprenticeship as a cigar maker in Poughkeepsie. That was about thirty-five years ago.

"They wanted a man to travel with them, give a bit of amusement now and then, help with the sales of medicine; a man capable of showing a trick or

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two, and willing to take the lean with the fat and not belly-ache too much if everything did not go his way all the time. They let me sing and talk, play the mandolin, and we were off.

"Seems to me our first stop was at New Paltz or somewhere in Ulster County. We had a good tent, a good crew, good weather and a good time. The doctor would do the talking, you understand, just to catch their attention at first. Then he'd introduce one of us to do a trick or two, and after we'd got the crowd's attention, and more seemed to be coming, he'd open up about what the medicine would cure. There wasn't much it wouldn't cure, to be sure there weren't many diseases he didn't talk about; 'tired in the back,' spots in your eyes, fallen arches, falling hair, warts, skin too dry, fainting spells, ague, malaria, loss of hearing, of memory, oh, anything you please. There's not a man alive who can hear one of those fellows reeling off those symptoms without remembering if that's not just about the way he was feeling the other day, wondering if that bottle really has stuff sure to make him feel as he did a few years ago, wondering if he'd not better risk a quarter or half a dollar now that he's seen Jim Jones try one. And so on and on; you know how it is yourself.

"Oh, no, the medicine really wouldn't do any

harm to any one, really was good and helpful; little more than some kind of physic put up in a fancy bottle with a pretty label and a bit of scent added. Sometimes we'd not try to sell it on the street corners, but simply told the folks that they'd see many more tricks and hear much better music if they'd only come along to the big tent. Sometimes we'd have to get a permit from the police, sometimes it meant little more than squaring ourselves with the constable or the justice of the peace or the single policeman the town boasted, but sometimes we had to go to the City Hall and fill out all sorts of papers. I never had much of that to do myself.

"When we'd get them in the tent and the doctor was telling how he came to get this remedy from the old Indian who had taken a fancy to him because his father—one of the Iowa or Kansas or Minnesota pioneers—had befriended the Indian when luck had turned and it looked as if he would have to go to the happy hunting-ground much sooner than he'd expected, and how the youngsters had fallen into the good graces of the old battle-scarred warrior or the grizzled old medicine-man, the pride of the tribe, and how the doctor had come to spend weeks and months and years with the Indian when he was strong enough to guide his people once more; how he took the youngster along

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and told him all about this yarb and that, how to pull the willow along the creek just when the moon was right and how to dig for these roots just when the weather was not too dry to shrivel them up nor too wet to make them rot. And so on and on. You know how it goes.

"And then when he began selling we had to run up and down the aisles with the bottles, making change and calling out, 'Here's another one here, Doctor,' or 'One more down this way, and be quick about it,' or 'Come along with those bottles down in this corner.' Funny to me then, kid as I was, how the whole tent would get worked up just by our exciting them with rushing up and down and waving our arms and scampering around to make change.

"Some nights the show was free and sometimes we'd charge fifteen cents or a quarter. On pay nights we'd all have parts after the doctor had finished selling, and it was good experience for any youngster. Taught him to think quickly, not to be afraid of an audience, to be sure of his trick before letting it go in public, what to do when things didn't work out as planned, how to handle a hostile audience.

"Yes, in that way I came to see a good part of the country, east and west, north and south. Most

of the time we made our jumps by trains though there were parts of the country where we found it better to use buggies. We had to leave the tents behind then, for we had no such thing as the circus wagon. When we traveled by train we put up at country hotels, and lived very well for a dollar a day. When we were in tents the doctor's wife cooked for us. That was a welcome change from the cooking of the average country hotel of that time.

"And so it went from New England to western desert towns and from places close to the Canada line down to the very heart of Dixie. As I look back on it now it seems to me a pretty good introduction to the Chautauquas that came along later. I don't know whether I rolled off more miles with the medicine show or with the Chautauquas. Glad I had both, just as I am glad that I can settle down a bit now and not have to count on being on the go all summer. But maybe that's because I was younger then than now."

Many of the most famous of the magicians have had circus or medicine-show experience. Houdini was among that number. Fred Keating also spent one summer with a circus. Of course the magician works in the side-show where his magic is all mixed up with the

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queer people. Fred was with the "101 Ranch Wild West Show." He wore a wide brimmed hat and a khaki shirt all summer. It seems odd to picture Fred, that suave gentleman in evening dress who is so popular with theater-goers now, standing on a platform in front of a circus tent selling ten-cent books of magic.

Fred's dress clothes are the source of a joke between us. The first time he went to the magicians' dinner he was just a little boy and he borrowed his cousin's dress clothes. I was there also. I am a couple of years older than Fred and I was the object of considerable envy because I had my own dress clothes—so he thought. I was equally envious because I was wearing borrowed clothes, and here was Fred younger than I wearing his own! We did not learn until we were both men that both suits were borrowed.

Recently I was much amused to find that Fred considers that I am the first magician he ever knew. I was about twelve, at the time we met and I imagine that Fred and I were alone in thinking me a magician.

Patter is one of the most difficult things for a boy to tackle. When I was in high school I had the good fortune to find that my instructor in English, who was just out of college himself, was interested in dramatics and magic. Practically all my themes, though in story form, were in reality patter for my tricks which I not only got credit for, but which—much more important

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to me—he edited. This long-suffering teacher, Milton Smith, now Doctor Smith, a professor at Columbia University, not only corrected my patter but spent a great deal of time advising me on ways to improve it all. After I left school our conferences kept up and finally resulted in a book of magic for boys which included patter.

In India, where they have the caste system and the magicians are magicians because their fathers were, I made friends with Mohammed Bakhsh and through him I met his family and went to their home in Cawnpore as I have already said. There is no Indian society. While I was with them I learned several of their feats and showed to them a number of tricks of the Western World including a few of my own. I also explained to them the construction of several pieces of apparatus which were inadequately described in a magic book which they had. The book was in English, and furthermore I knew the tricks, but they were most grateful anyway, and told me that they would always consider me as one of their family. When one of them later came to America to appear at an exposition he called on me at my home in New York. The colored elevator boy tried to send him by way of the servants' entrance because of his dark skin. But Bakhsh spoke up and said that he was my cousin and did not need to go that way. The outcome was that he was taken up in the elevator, but the

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elevator boy later told the landlord that I was a half-caste.

I learned one of the tricks, which was a favorite with the Bakhshes, not only move for move but learned their patter as well. Of course I did not know what it meant except in a general way, but it made the trick more effective. I learned later that I had not merely told the coin to go but to "get the hell out of here." I don't show the trick to those who speak Bengali.

Doing the trick of another country reminds me of a friend of mine, Silent Mora, who did the Chinese trick of finding goldfish in the air. He did not know how to take care of goldfish, however, and he found one of his two fish dead just as he was about to go on the stage. He quickly conceived the idea of having the assistant stir the water in the fish bowl so that the corpse would look lively when it was dropped in. The fish was found in the air and the bowl quickly brought forward and the fish dropped in. Sure enough, carried by the water it went around the bowl twice—tail first.

It is the rule of show business that no matter what happens the performance must continue, and it is almost as strict a law in the magician's code that he must bring a trick to a successful conclusion. Of course, as when the rabbit came from his secret hiding-place just at the moment I was crumbling a number of silk handkerchiefs, preparing to make them vanish, the end of the

trick may not be the expected one, but a magician may not admit failure. Instead of saying that I was dematerializing the silks into the thinnest of air I said: "And from parts of these various pieces of silk is materialized a very lively little rabbit." The audience never knew with what venom I used the word "lively."

At other times even a modification of patter will not allow the magician to continue the performance uninterrupted, but no matter what happens he has to laugh and go on. Chris Charlton, the famous English magician, told me of an interruption that could neither be ignored nor concealed which occurred to him when he was appearing in the Deutsches Theater in Munich. He was standing in front of the "Tab," the front curtain of the theater, showing a trick with an orange, when a large-size cleaning woman behind the curtain stooped to pick up her broom. She failed to realize how near the curtain she was, and also how amply she was built. In stooping she hit the curtain which in turn hit Charlton and knocked him into the band. He called out from the orchestra pit that he still had the orange and asked every one to notice that neither the bass horn nor the piccolo were used in the trick. By turning it into comedy he made capital of the accident; and luckily he wasn't hurt.

I know of another time when Chris had a fall in a theater, but kept on going though one of the bones in

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his leg was broken. The runway to the audience was insecure and, the moment he stepped on it, gave way, and he twisted his leg in the fall. It was at the South London Palace Theater on a Christmas Eve and every one was in holiday spirit. He finished the performance, took his bows, walked to the wings, and the only ones in the theater to lose their happy mood were his assistants, for no one else knew.

Houdini broke his arm during one of his engagements and not only finished the show but was on time for the next one, and except that his arm was in splints and he was pale even under his make-up, no one could have known. He even added to his usual show for the inmates of a children's hospital that week a special one for the little sufferers in the home for the crippled.

People get pleasure from our performances, and we enjoy meeting people. The people change, but the work varies but little. At my next show my tricks will all be different from those I performed last year, and the audience will have many new members, but the magician's job will be the same. I shall use the same methods, and the audience will respond in the same ways, as at the other performances. In fact, my methods then will be those of the mountebank conjurer of hundreds of years ago, and just as surely the audience will react as did those audiences of the past. And I wonder, were it possible for one of my medieval predecessors to be present on this

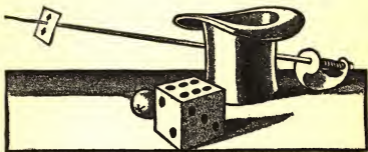
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occasion, if he would not shake hands with me across the years, and join his loathing to mine as our ears catch the familiar words:

“Ladies and Gentlemen: Before introducing our entertainer, let me warn you with just this word of advice—watch your watches!—Mr. Mulholland.”

CHAPTER XIV

NEAR ROYALTY AND REAL





Near Royalty and Real

THE ship which runs between Zamboango, Mindanao and Kudat, put in one day at Jolo, on the Island of Sulu, and gave me the opportunity for my first performance before royalty; near royalty as a matter of fact, but then it was my first attempt. A famous doctor was traveling on an official tour of inspection on the same tiny steamer. The ship was being fastened to the dock when the doctor said:

"Are you going to call on the Sultan of Sulu? If you are you had better start soon, for his palace is quite a distance out."

"Is the Sultan a real person?" I asked. "I had the idea he was only the lead in a musical comedy. And how would I get in to see him?"

The doctor ignored the flippancy and suggested that

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if I were to offer to show some magic the Sultan would undoubtedly receive me. I gathered a few things together for a show, and we started out.

We hired a 1912 Ford manned by a Moro chauffeur whose short brown jacket, skin-tight black trousers and bright scarf over one shoulder made up for the lack of paint on the car. His feet and chest were both bare, but he carried a marvelous silver knife in his belt, and luckily his English was excellent. After we explained what we wanted to do he humored the engine into running and we started. As we rode along a fair dirt road out of town the doctor told us about the Sultan of Sulu.

"This betel-leaf-chewing native we're going to see is the Sultan of the race of Moros who are found throughout all these southern islands of the Philippines. He has little actual power, for the Philippine Legislature, the constabulary and the American Administration are tending to duties which used to be his. Although his right of ruling has been largely usurped since the American occupation, he is nevertheless grateful to the United States, for he so dislikes the Filipinos that his distaste for other foreigners is overshadowed. He has a limited knowledge of English, but that doesn't bother him, as he has so few dealings with the outside world."

After going about ten miles we turned off into a field resembling a Vermont meadow in a poor hay year, and followed along two faint ruts. Less than a mile

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from the road we came on an open thatched shed and a large thatched house. A single shade tree on one side of the house and a lean-to on the other seemed out of place in the tropics. The house was so much larger than the usual Moro home that it was unmistakably the palace, even though, like them, it was built on stilts. A palatial exception were the substantial steps going up from the ground, instead of the usual rickety ladder.

Our Ford's Moro pilot went in to inquire if the performance of a few minor miracles would be of passing interest to his Sultanic Excellency. Miracles must be novelties in Jolo, for, as the doctor had prophesied, we were invited in. We walked up the stairs and stood on the porch until the pilot insisted that we enter. The room was nearly dark, for there were no windows, and the only light came in through the curtained door by which we had entered and another door at the back. There was little furniture in the room, and what there was seemed to have been chosen by number from a mail-order catalogue.

No blare of trumpets, no sounding of gongs, announced America's only Sultan when he entered his audience room. Neither did he have the stately tread with which writers invest royalty. The Sultan burst into the room on a run—and lost one slipper. He turned around, walked back, retrieved it quite unconcernedly and again came toward us. His smile of greet-

ing, through his betel-stained lips, was friendly, although his "How to do" was non-committal.

He shook hands with us and told us to sit down. He sat on a couch and asked at the total expense of about fifteen words where we were going, and when, and why, and added that he had been to the St. Louis World's Fair. As we answered his question, in our best single-syllable English, we noticed the odd modernity of his clothing. His shirt and breeches were of the Army pattern and made of heavy wool, a very untropical material. Instead of leggings he wore brilliant purple silk socks outside of his breeches, and, as if this were not bad enough, he wore garters also outside and wrong side front. His heelless red velvet slippers were his only concession to Moslem styles, for he had no head covering.

I asked if it was time for my magic, and he agreed that it was. So I performed for perhaps twenty minutes. At each trick he would snicker like a boy, then look up, smile and applaud. After the first trick he came and stood beside me to watch more closely. Three tricks he must have particularly liked, for he said "Fine!" after each. These tricks were picking coins from the air (I think it was the idea he liked), the knot which dissolved from the handkerchief and the illusion of removing my thumb.

Several women came and stood in the doorway during the performance, and came even closer while each trick

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was going on. At the completion of a trick they would patter back to the doorway. The Sultan seemed totally unaware of their presence and did not introduce us to any of them, although he did introduce a man later. I believe he said the man was his brother, but, whatever his relationship, he had come to see magic, so I began again. The brother had a tarboosh on his head and wore a mixture of native and European clothing.

After the second performance the Sultan consented to have his picture taken, provided I would keep on showing magic, so while I repeated one of the tricks the camera was snapped. The photography over, he bade us good-by. On the way back to the wharf we took a picture of the palace—though we had to get out of the shivering Ford to do it.

Back aboard ship the doctor said: "You know, 'John Mulholland, Magician to His Highness Hadji Mohammed Jamalul Kiram II' is not such a bad title."

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Americans have always confused flesh-and-blood royalty with the fairy-story brand. The king's palace must be high up in the mountains, have turrets and moats and a brilliantly uniformed guard. There must be several beautiful princesses and a boy prince. In these beliefs I found Americans to be right, with one exception: the boy was not just a prince,—he was a king.

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On September 23, 1928, a member of the American Legation in Roumania sent word to me that His Majesty Mihai I, the boy King of Roumania, desired that in two days I would do my magic for him. I was to go to his palace in Sinaia. The King's wish had been sent by way of the Roumanian Foreign Minister to the American Chargé d' Affaires. The high government officials of two great nations arranged the magic show for the little boy.

Next day Mr. McVeigh and Mr. Patterson, the two ranking members of the American Legation, and I started for Sinaia. My mother and Mrs. McVeigh and Mrs. Patterson were also in the party. We arrived in the mountain resort late in the evening. The next morning a courier brought a message that the King's aide wished me to be at the palace at eleven o'clock. The gentlemen of the Legation and I therefore drove to the palace, where we were told that it was arranged to have the magic at four o'clock in the afternoon. We were shown a little theater in the palace where the performance was to be given. It was truly an intimate playhouse, for it would seat but fifty persons. It was beautifully decorated on the style of the old European opera-houses. The stage was only about twenty feet across, but perfectly appointed. After we had seen the theater we left the palace.

Shortly before four we returned, this time accom-

panied by the ladies. The King's aide told us that Princess Helene had graciously asked us to have tea before the magic.

We were led through long halls, filled with armor, to a large living-room. At one end of the room was a table with places for eighteen people. We were introduced to Queen Elizabeth, the last Queen of Greece, and to Queen Sophie, who is the sister of the former Kaiser. At a signal from outside the room one of the aides told us to form a line and face the door, which was in the opposite end of the room from the table. The door opened and the beautiful Princess Helene, the happy-looking little boy King, and several other members of the royal families of Roumania, Bulgaria and Greece came into the room. They walked along the line and we were introduced to them. The King gravely shook hands with us. When he reached the end of the line, in a loud stage whisper, he called to little Prince Peter: "Come on, I'm going to see where the magic is going to be," and ran out of the room, in a way which showed that even though he was the King, he was a real boy.

After the introductions we all went over to the table and sat down and Princess Helene poured tea. I sat between Queen Sophie and Queen Elizabeth.

It was a nice tea and very informal. One of the young Princesses told of having just been to Paris for the first

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time in her life, how the trip had thrilled her. Queen Elizabeth laid her jeweled, crested cigarette case on the table and then laughingly said she didn't care to have me perform magic on it. I assured her that magicians were quite harmless.

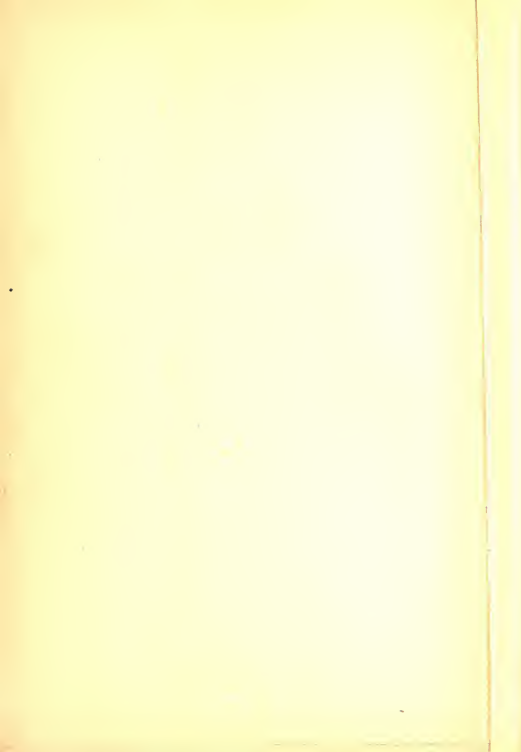
The aide and I were excused to go to the theater and arrange the magic and the rest of the party came after a few minutes. The King sat in the first row, his mother just behind him. He seemed to be very enthusiastic about the tricks and insisted that I do each one over several times, which made a number of technical difficulties, hard to get around. I performed one trick which had been invented for the occasion. The King was asked to choose one card from a pack. He chose the one of hearts. In Roumania the ace is marked with a One, not with an A. I asked him which card he had chosen and he said: "One heart." I asked him to hold that one heart next to his one heart. I reached in the air and found the card which the King felt sure he was holding. The card which he held turned out to be a picture of himself.

After the performance was over the King graciously retired, if that is the proper way to say that the little boy was sent to bed. I was then asked to go into another room and perform more grown-up tricks for the adult members of the party. The second show took place in an audience room with every one sitting around me.

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When that was over we all said good night and the royal party left the room. Before we left the palace the King's aide showed us over other audience chambers and a Moorish room, a Turkish room, and the study of the King's grandfather which was left, even to the calendar, just as it had been when the late king died. As we left the palace we were saluted by the white uniformed guards. We got into the car and drove down the mountain. The last view we had of the palace showed its turrets and its towers silhouetted against the sky by the setting sun.

THE END



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