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THE HUMOURS  
OF  
ENTERTAINING  
BY  
SPITARI.

President of the Associated Wizards of the South (1912).

Editor of the A.W.S. Magazine.

Member of the British Society of Associated Magicians.





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To. Harry Houdini Esq.  
With Best Wishes &  
Regards. from. S. Spittare



18, WINDSOR TERRACE,  
ABOVE BAR,  
SOUTHAMPTON.

June 29<sup>th</sup> 12.

My Dear Mr. Houdini.

Enclose magazine  
& a little book which  
I have just published, &  
which I hope will interest  
you. By the way, your  
books have not arrived  
yet, have you dispatched  
them? If so, I must  
enquire. Hope you are  
still in good health.

Saw your picture on  
Gaumont's Graphia Film



to Harry Houdini Esq.  
With Best Wishes &  
Regards from. W. Spataro

It was good, but too  
short.

kindest Regards.

Yours Sincerely.

W. Spataro



to Harry Houdini Esq.  
With Best Wishes &  
Regards from S. Spitaru

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L. W. SPITARI.



## Interviews with Famous Magicians.

Mr. L. W. SPITARI.

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Mr. Spitari is one of the best known magicians in Southampton and the neighbourhood. Before we met him we had heard him described as a "live man." We can now confirm this description. He is quick in movement, quick in thought, and quick in talk. As a rule we have to give a good many leads to the persons we are interviewing. But Mr. Spitari supplied most of his own leads. We had little to do except to scribble away in our note book.

"You want to know something about my career as a magician?" he said. "Right! I gave my first public performance of magic at the age of seventeen. My show was on the same lines as those I give now—a combination of small effects worked up to a striking finish. Patter? Certainly. However good a show may be, it can be vastly improved by appropriate patter. Most of what I use I invent myself, and I would advise other magicians to do the same."

"Provided that they can," we interpolated.

"Of course. But most magicians find that they can, if only they set to work with a will. It does not want a genius to invent patter. The ordinary man with some sense of humour can get along very well. He has simply to consider the items that make up his show and the items that make up his audiences. His patter must be suitable to both. Funny tricks—funny talk; audience of children—short ordinary words; and so on in all possible combinations. But don't misunderstand me. A magician need not rely exclusively on his own powers in this respect. Indeed he would be foolish to do so. He should avail himself of the patter from time to time written and published by experts. But he should do so intelligently, that is to say with, whenever possible, improvements and adaptations to suit his own particular show. By the way, I must take this opportunity of congratulating your Editor on the article on patter which appeared in the February number of "The Magician."

It was one of the most useful and inspiring articles on the subject I have ever read."

We bowed on behalf of our Editor, and then said :

"And you yourself, Mr. Spitari, are you not also an Editor ?"

"Well, yes," he replied. "I am the Editor of the official magazine of the magical society called "The Associated Wizards of the South." It is a monthly publication, and has just completed its first year. The circulation is limited to the members of the Society, and the subjects dealt with are those most likely to interest them. Here is a copy of the last issue. Perhaps you would like to glance through it."

We did so, and found it to be a very good specimen indeed of a magical society organ.

"Of course," he said, "it is intended for only a section of the magical public, and will not compare with your paper which is for the whole of that public."

Again we bowed on behalf of our Editor.

"As a matter of fact," he continued, "I believe that every subscriber to my magazine is also a subscriber to "The Magician." Between the two they get all the magical news, both local and general. That is to say, the members of my society are kept thoroughly up-to-date. I call it my society because I was its actual founder. But much of the prosperity of "The Associated Wizards of the South" is due to Messrs. Hayes, D'Arville, Applin and others, who have helped it in many ways."

"Your work as an entertainer is not confined to magic ?" we next asked.


"By no means," he replied. As I said just now, I gave my first public performance of magic at the age of seventeen. At an earlier age I presented a ventriloquial entertainment. Indeed, I was only fifteen when I wrote "The Art of Ventriloquism," a book which was published by Cassells, and has been very successful. Nowadays, I put my magic in the front of the battle so to speak. But I call myself an all-round entertainer. Only last night I gave a two hours' show which included conjuring, ventriloquism, mimicry, juggling and chapeaugraphy. To-morrow night I am repeating the programme, with the addition of a couple of humorous songs. Is that sufficiently all-round ?"

"A complete circle!" we assented. "And now, in conclusion, Mr. Spitari, is there any particular advice in respect of magical matters which you would like to give to readers of "The Magician ?"

"I have already expressed my views as to patter," he replied. "They may induce some of your readers to do more thinking work in that direction. I don't know that there is much else that I want to say. Personally, I aim at originality in anything that I do, and I would suggest that this is a good plan for all magicians to follow. Of course we all use many old effects, but we can all improve on them from time to time. At any rate the mere effort to do so is good intellectual stimulus. Any other message for your readers? Simply a cordial invitation to those who live in the south of England to join "The Associated Wizards of the South."

[Reprinted from "The Magician," April, 1912.]

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## The Humours of Entertaining.

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The profession of Society Entertainer leads one to expect that some unusually funny experiences would be met with, and it is so. I recently attended a garden party to give an hour's entertainment, and on my arrival I was met by the lady of the house, who said: "Good-afternoon Mr. S. Now I want you to do something to make my friends laugh, and something to make them cry, but please don't do anything too vulgar because the vicar is here." This was rather rich since my prospectus informs one that the performance is "absolutely refined." Previous to engaging me, patrons will often write asking for a complete programme, which includes conjuring, ventriloquism, mimicry, etc., etc., and when I arrive at the place of entertainment, I am invariably asked "Now what are you going to do?"

A live rabbit, or other pet animal, is a source of much amusement to the younger folk if produced magically from a hat, and I am often asked especially for a rabbit or a guinea-pig.

There is a good story going the rounds concerning an entertainer who was engaged to give an entertainment at a well-known country house. A rabbit was requested and taken. The magician arrived at the house, and the lady approached him without any other greeting but: "Did you



bring a rabbit?" "Yes," replied the man of mystery. "And a guinea-pig?" "No Madam." "I suppose you haven't any tame rats?" "No Madam!" "Or a canary?" "No Madam" replied the conjuror, whose patience was almost exhausted, "mine is a magical performance, not a menagerie."

Whilst waiting to commence at a lunatic asylum I ventured to say to one of the attendants, who acted as stage manager, "I wonder what the lunatics imagine I am when they see me perform tricks and make these figures talk?" "Oh!" said he, "I expect they'll think you are a new patient."

Whilst performing with another entertainer, who was giving a magical performance, a rather funny incident occurred. In one of his tricks he asked the assistance of a small boy to examine a piece of newspaper, saying, "Please see that there is nothing mysterious about this ordinary newspaper." The boy examined the paper, and to the conjuror's surprise said: "Oh! but there is a mystery about this paper, it's the Tichbourne Mystery." The conjuror then found that the paper contained an account of the famous case, which was then attracting so much attention.

Another rather amusing experience happened when I was engaged for a children's Christmas party at the residence of a well-known Peer. The house was some 5 or 6 miles from the station, and a motor car was sent to meet me in the usual way. After we had gone a few hundred yards the chauffeur slowed up, and turning round said: "There are some friends of mine in front sir, and they live about 4 miles out, would you mind my giving them a lift?" I replied "Certainly not, do so by all means." The car stopped, and the driver shouted to his friends, who were a dear old lady and rather pretty girl. They got into the car, and seeing that the old lady was not quite at her ease, I ventured, "It's a nice day Madam." Judge of my surprise when the old soul replied: "Yes My Lord," and for the life of me I couldn't tell her the truth. The rest of the journey was passed in awful silence, and when the time came for them to alight, the old lady said "Good-morning, and thank you very much My Lord." The daughter too said "Thank you My Lord," and it was worth being a Lord for a few minutes just for that.

All ventriloquists have a tale to tell, and here is one!

Whilst performing some years ago at a Hall in the West End of London, I was introduced to what is commonly known as a "young blood," who seemed quite anxious to be friendly. One evening I intimated to my new found friend that, after I had finished, I should like to see a certain turn who was "on" late at a neighbouring Hall, whereupon the new acquaintance

asked to accompany me. The next evening I "cleaned off" quickly, and met the "classy one," who hailed a hansom. We both stepped inside, and my friend directed the "Jehu" to drive to the Metropolitan, Edgware Road. As we rattled along Westbourne Grove I thought I would amuse myself by trying my powers as a ventriloquist, and presently a voice, apparently outside, said: "Where to Sir?" My friend hearing the voice said: "You ass cabby, the Metropolitan." The cabby thinking he was being hailed, lifted the trap and said: "Beg pardon Sir?" "Metropolitan, you ass," "I know Sir" said the cabby, "you told me before." The fare then retorted "Well, why the deuce did you ask again?" The driver grumbled, and both he and my friend mutually decided that the other was drunk. As for me, well! I enjoyed it.

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## The Art of Ventriloquism.

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To attain mastery of the art of ventriloquism, one must devote a certain amount of time to practice.

Experience has proved that the methods I am about to describe, in the plainest possible way, are thoroughly sound and practical.

In the first place, leave out as much as possible the following letters whilst speaking the doll's part, viz. b, m, p, w, f, and v. These letters, especially the b, m, and p, cannot be spoken without a movement of the lips.

If it is essential that these troublesome letters must be used—when, for instance, you are using the word "banjo" or "brother"—in the first case you would say "ganjo," and in the latter case you must say "grother"; or, suppose the letters appear in the centre of the word, like "Sambo," which contains both the letters b and m, then you would say "Sango." In every case use the letters g instead of b, n instead of m, k instead of p.

Of all the letters on the black list, w is certainly the simplest and most easy letter to pronounce, and when using it in "why," "when," "wine," or any other word containing it, you will find it can be said with only a very slight movement of the lips, but to say it with absolute distinctness you



must breathe very hard when pronouncing the "w." The same direction apply to the letters "f" and "v." To get perfect it will no doubt take you a long time, but do not give it up. It will come to you all of a sudden ; at least, I had that experience, and I believe it is an experience common to beginners.

### PRACTICE.

#### When to Practice and How to Practice.

As to when to practice, never practice before noon, as you will find your voice is generally husky, and will not clear until the afternoon. Before commencing practice it is advisable to drink a small tumbler full of luke-warm water, in which you have mixed half a teaspoonful of ordinary table salt ; or, if you are partial to luxuries, a better, but rather an expensive beverage, is honey mixed in vinegar.

Now, to commence the practice, stand in front of a mirror and rehearse a dialogue.

Begin with a one figure dialogue at first, or you will find that you will get muddled up with more than two parts. Watch your lips closely in the mirror while you begin the parts, and as soon as you detect a movement of your lips whilst speaking the doll's part, stop, and then say the word which caused this movement over and over again until you can pronounce it without any movement of the lips whatever. I may as well say that it is useless buying a figure until you are absolutely sure of your parts.

#### DISTANT VOICE WORK.

Now comes the most difficult course of ventriloquism. The best explanation that can be given of the "distant voice" is that it comes from the vocal chord, when it is being strained so much that the full voice cannot be heard, but only a part of it. To do this you must necessarily strain the voice, therefore it is injurious, and unless my reader has a very strong vocal power, I do not advise him to do any of this work. The distant voice is seldom used nowadays.

However, if it be that you are inclined to be good at this sort of work, practice at the top of a staircase at home, when all is quiet (in any case, never allow anyone in the same room when you are practising, as you cannot give your mind to your work). This will give you an idea and help you to learn how to regulate your voice. The best way to show this off is to tell your audience that they must imagine an "old clo' man" coming up the street, and then regulate your voice accordingly.

## THE FIGURES.

**The Best Sort to Use. The Cost. How to Work  
and Where to Buy Them.**

When choosing a ventriloquial figure, it is advisable to get a small one ; a good size is a 36-inch figure, with moving mouth and head to nod and turn, and as time goes on you will feel more capable, and could then get a larger one with moving eyes which are made to wink or close, or with a sensation wig fitted. By pressing a lever the sensation wig can be made to stand up on end, giving the doll a startled look, and thus causing a sensation. The cost of the first named figure is about thirty-five shillings. The figures which are fitted with arm and leg movements cost about five shillings extra for each limb.

They are rather expensive, the making of them being very difficult and delicate. There are heads, which can be fixed to a screen, or you can make the body and clothes yourself, to suit your own requirements. These vary in size, and cost anything from five shillings to two pounds.

To work the figures—starting with one figure—it is best to put one foot on a chair, and then rest the figure on your knee. Then, in the shaft or body, you will find a stick with which you propel the movements of the head, and fixed to this stick is a lever, or if there is the eye and wig movement, you will find three levers, and in time you will get to know these levers, and be able to work them easily without hesitation or fear of a mistake. In the case of a screen, you can work four figures at one time, viz. one with each hand and one with each foot.

You can procure these figures from A. W. Gamage, Limited, of Holborn.

### Stage Fright or Nervousness.

Stage Fright or nervousness whilst giving a ventriloquial entertainment can easily be remedied. Where you have your foot on a chair you will find that your knee trembles, thus shaking the figure. As soon as you feel this, just raise your foot an inch or so from the chair and put it down again sharply ; then you will find the sensation gradually cease.

The blaze of the footlights and the sea of faces is enough to give anyone of a nervous disposition stage fright, and his or her place then is not at all enviable.

### Showy Effects, etc.

No doubt you have seen a ventriloquist who smokes during his show. Well, this no doubt looks very clever, although in reality it is not so, and if you let the smoke get down your throat you will soon find it take effect and will make you cough and splutter, and will very likely spoil your show.

Another showy thing which you really must be very smart and quick to accomplish with success, that is drinking, or appearing to drink, while the figure is speaking its part. You make the figure say something funny, such as "I say, don't eat the glass," and as soon as the sentence is finished, drink the water which you are holding to your mouth so as to give the impression that you are drinking all the time, but you must be very quick indeed or you will spoil the effect.



# SPITARI.

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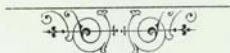
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