

EXHIBITION • EVENTS • FILM SCREENINGS

# STAGING



21 JAN  
TO  
15 JUN

FREE  
ENTRY

# MAGIC

THE STORY BEHIND THE ILLUSION

**EXHIBITION GUIDE  
& EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

---

# STAGING MAGIC

A warm welcome to Senate House Library and to *Staging Magic: The Story Behind the Illusion*, an adventure through the history of conjuring and magic as entertainment, a centuries-long fascination that still excites and inspires today.

The exhibition displays items on the history of magic from Senate House Library's collection. The library houses and cares for more than 2 million books, 50 named special collections and over 1,800 archives. It's one of the UK's largest academic libraries focused on the arts, humanities and social sciences and holds a wealth of primary source material from the medieval period to the modern age.

I hope that you are inspired by the exhibition and accompanying events, as we explore magic's spell on society from illustrious performances in the top theatres, and street and parlour tricks that have sparked the imagination of society.

**Dr Nick Barratt**

Director, Senate House Library



---

# INTRODUCTION

The exhibition features over 60 stories which focus on magic in the form of sleight-of-hand (legerdemain) and stage illusions, from 16<sup>th</sup> century court jugglers to the great masters of the golden age of magic in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These stories are told through the books, manuscripts and ephemera of the Harry Price Library of Magical Literature.

Through five interconnected themes, the exhibition explores how magic has remained a mainstay of popular culture in the western world, how its secrets have been kept and revealed, and how magicians have innovated to continue to surprise and enchant their audiences.

- **Magic's Spell on Society**
- **Magic and Innovation**
- **Magic for All**
- **Masters of Magic and their Influence**
- **Harry Price and his Magical Library**

Each theme features some of the most important books in the history of magic alongside lesser-known works celebrating a range of genres in magic publishing.

---

## **Exhibition Curated by:**

*Tansy Barton* | Research Librarian, Senate House Library

## **Exhibition Design, Planning & Engagement by:**

*Dr Maria Castrillo* and *Rebecca Simpson* | Senate House Library

*Joe Stone* | Illustrator and Graphic Designer – [www.joe-stone.co.uk](http://www.joe-stone.co.uk)

## **Exhibition Conservation by:**

*Yunsun Choi*, *Talitha Wachtelborn* and *Angela Craft* | Senate House Library

## **Acknowledgements:**

*Russell Kennedy*, *Adrian Graham*, *Dave Jackson*, *Image Group*,

*Bob Loomis*, *Richard Wiseman*, *Peter Lamont*, *Gustav Khun*, *Robert Kelly*,

*Drummond Money-Coutts*, *Charles Harrowell*, *Karen Attar* and *Angela Craft*

# HARRY PRICE AND HIS MAGICAL LIBRARY

The book collection of the Harry Price Library alone includes over 13,000 items from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present day on magic, witchcraft, psychical research, parapsychology, the occult, the paranormal and many other subjects. Our exhibition focuses on one aspect of his collection, conjuring and legerdemain, and features several of the collection's rarest titles.

It was on a cold, late 19<sup>th</sup> century morning in Salisbury that a young boy with toothache watched a travelling magic/faith healing show. The Great Sequah 'extracted' the boy's tooth and presented a series of magical wonders, such as producing doves from an empty hat. The boy demanded an explanation from his parents of how an empty hat could contain two doves, and eventually receive a copy of **Professor Hoffmann's *Modern Magic*** (1874). The boy was **Harry Price**, and *Modern Magic* was the beginning of his Magical Library and

a life-long pursuit of books on magic, psychical phenomena and the occult.

**Price** would become best known for his infamous investigations of mediums, hauntings and other supernatural phenomena. He exposed the fakery in spirit photographs and tested psychic mediums, including the **Schneider Brothers, Helen Duncan** and many others, under his own laboratory conditions. He also documented cases of fire-walking and the Indian rope trick, investigated Gef, the talking mongoose, and claimed to have found the most haunted house in England, Borley Rectory.

The collection of books, manuscripts, prints and ephemera **Price** amassed came to the University of London in 1936 and was bequeathed in 1948. It was a great source of pride for him and is one of his greatest legacies. In the 1930s he mounted several exhibitions of his 'rare, old and curious works on magic, witchcraft, legerdemain, charlatanism, and the occult sciences' and published several articles on the rarities of his collection.

**Price** intended his collection to be used for research. He was described by Will Goldston as a talented magician, but his passion was psychical research, and books on magic served as resources for the investigation of alleged phenomena. He did, however, prize rare and first





editions, with his copies of *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) and *Hocus Pocus Junior* (1634) among his treasures. Hints of bibliomania can also be detected by his multiple editions of *Modern Magic* and **Henry Dean's** *The Whole Art of Legerdemain, or, Hocus Pocus in Perfection* (1722). He happily reported in his correspondence the transfer to the University under the grand title of 'The Harry Price Library of Magical Literature.' Through the course of the exhibition, items will be displayed reflecting **Harry Price's** passions as a collector of magical literature alongside material exploring his connections to the world of magic as well as his investigations.

### **Magic: A Short Film**

**Harry Price** had a keen interest in the potential of film. He was involved in setting up the Shakespeare Film Society and the National Film Library, a forerunner of the BFI's film archive.

He also made his own films and included a cinematograph in his 'ghost hunting' kit (the kit was an idea 'borrowed' from Eric Dingwall). The film was compiled by the National Film Library in 1935 from films shot by **Price** of his experiments in phenomena. Each investigation had its own connection to the world of stage magic. The Indian Rope trick was a cause célèbre in the 1920s and 1930s, and the general consensus of experts was that a genuine version of the trick was a myth. Many magicians performed a version in their acts, including **David Devant**, **Howard Thurston** and **Servais LeRoy**. But the true rope trick, involving a boy climbing a rigid rope in open air and disappearing at the top, was deemed to be impossible. **Price** claimed to have seen a genuine version. The performer was **Karachi** (the stage name of Englishman Arthur Claude Darby) who had his son climb the rope, but the boy did not disappear. Nevertheless, Price was convinced it was a viable solution to the mythical trick. The Rope Trick is followed in the film by an experiment in black magic on the Brocken peak in Germany. **Price** claimed to have found a ritual for the transformation of a goat into a man in a 15<sup>th</sup> century 'High German Black Book.' He pitched the event as a demonstration of the fallacies of belief in the occult, but it was closer to a publicity stunt. The goat went on to be used by magician **Horace Goldin** in an illusion inspired by the experiment. The final part of the film is of experiments in fire-walking with **Kuda Bux**. Bux was also a stage illusionist who performed mind-reading and specialised in eyeless vision.

---

# MAGIC'S SPELL ON SOCIETY



---

Secrets and revelations have been key to the development and tradition of magic as entertainment. Many magicians kept their secrets, but many more shared them with the world, inspiring imitation and innovation. This section shows some of the motivations and effects of these revelations and how conjuring and illusions have been part of culture and society.

One of the first printed records of sleights and illusions in English is **Reginald Scot's** *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584). Although it is not dedicated to conjuring, **Scot** included revelations of the 'art of iuggling' alongside other evidence debunking false and superstitious beliefs in the supernatural. Many of the tricks described are still familiar today, and later works on conjuring that followed often 'borrowed' from **Scot's** chapter.

The first works dedicated to legerdemain did not appear until the 17<sup>th</sup> century with **S.A. Rid's** *The Art of Iuggling or Legerdemaine* (1614) and *Hocus Pocus Junior* (1634), which revealed the secrets of the cups and balls and many other tricks through woodcuts for the first time. These works and their imitators framed legerdemain as a deceptive art, which a good practitioner will use for entertainment, while the reader should use the revelations to guard against tricksters and frauds claiming supernatural powers.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a proliferation of both performers and publications revealing the secrets of legerdemain. **Henry Dean's** much reprinted *The Whole Art of Legerdemain, or, Hocus Pocus in Perfection* (first published in 1722) drew heavily on its predecessors and was issued in more than 15 editions over the centuries. Numerous books exposed the techniques of the most popular performers of the time, including **Comus**, **Pinetti** and **Breslaw** for the amusement of their readers.

This period also saw the publication of the first magazine featuring legerdemain: *The Conjuror's Magazine* (1792). The tricks and deceptions of famous performers featured alongside articles on astrology, the occult, magic and **Lavater's** physiognomy.

Ideas of sleight of hand and claims of impossible feats became a common trope for satire in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in cartoons and prints as well as texts, such as a rare work by **Jonathan Swift** parodying the claims of itinerant conjurers.

The growth in the popularity of magic in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw it adopted in spheres outside the entertainment industry, as shown through pamphlets such as *Tricks for the Trenches and Wards*, written for convalescing troops in the First World War (circa 1915) and *The Conjuror in Church* (1928).

## 1. The Discoverie of Witchcraft

*Reginald Scot* (London: William Brome, 1584)

This is the first book in English to explain the secrets behind the art of conjuring. Reginald Scot wanted the book to dispel myths around witchcraft and belief in the power of the supernatural in favour of a more rational approach to the world. The sections on legerdemain include descriptions of how it has been misused for unscrupulous purposes or to create the illusion of the supernatural. This is followed by detailed descriptions of 'the art of juggling', which Scot describes as commendable in the right hands. This is the section that was used by the many conjuring manuals that followed over the next two centuries. Ball, coin and card tricks, juggling books, making a person dance naked and decapitation are described, although not with practical instructions. The book also includes plates of apparatus used in legerdemain but not to illustrate the tricks themselves. These include trick needles and knives and the table used to perform a decapitation. The book was strongly condemned by King James I for its scepticism towards the existence of witchcraft.

## 2. The Art of Iugling or Legerdemaine

*Samuel Rid* (London: George Eld, 1614)

This is one of the earliest texts dedicated to juggling and legerdemain in English. Much of the description of the tricks is taken verbatim from Scot's *Discoverie*, covering ball, coin and card passes, the history of juggling, tricks with knives and needles, charms, fraudulent alchemists and restoring life to a hen, chicken or

capon. It also includes a section on the attributes required by the performer – a bungler will bring the art into disrepute. Tricks must be nimbly and cleanly done so that the spectators do not discern them. He must practise to deceive eye, hand and ear, be ready for all situations and the use of strange words will both impress and lead away the eye of the audience. A version of the book was first printed in 1612 and the author has never been definitively identified. The 1612 edition was sold by a Samuel Rand, who sometimes compiled books under the initials S.R. and could be Rid.



## 3. Hocus Pocus Junior

(London: R. M[ab], 1634)

This is the earliest-recorded illustrated English book devoted to conjuring. The content is taken partly from Scot's and Rid's works, but with alterations, many additions, such as the Bonus Genius and the Magic Kettle, and more detail. It covers the usual tricks with cups and balls, coins, cards and confederates. The woodcut illustrations are mainly



of the cups and balls. There is also an illustration of the decapitation trick, distinctly different to the one in Scot's book. Like Rid the anonymous author promised to teach the reader and warns against the misuse of legerdemain for deceptive purposes. The man behind the book may have been William Vincent, licensed under King James I to 'exercise the art of Legerdemaine'. He used a mixture of Latin and nonsense words in his patter, beginning with 'Hocus Pocus,' and became known as 'the King's most excellent Hocus Pocus.'

#### **4. A Rich Cabinet, with Variety of Inventions**

*John White* (London: William Whitwood, 1677)

This miscellany of recreation activities for 'ingenious spirits at their vacant hours' included fireworks, drawing, painting, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, mathematics and bell ringing. First published in 1651, it featured a few tricks, such as the one displayed here, but did not include a full section on legerdemain until 1658. The section has a mixture of simple tricks, including making juggling books (a book in which the pages go from blank to illustrated as featured in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*), folding paper, conveying money and finding a coin on an audience member using confederates. The book was printed in 1712 with the title *Hocus Pocus: or A Rich Cabinet of Legerdemain Curiosities*, perhaps to capitalise on a growing interest in legerdemain from a general audience.

#### **5. The Whole Art of Legerdemain, or, Hocus Pocus in Perfection**

*Henry Dean* (London: A. Bettesworth, D. Pratt, John Willis and Tho. Pettit, 1727. 2nd ed.)

Henry Dean's *Hocus Pocus* followed in the tradition of Samuel Rid and the *Hocus Pocus Junior* of borrowing much of its content from Scot. Like its predecessors, the book starts by defining the parts of legerdemain and gives a description of the operator. Description of the tricks follows, including a magic lantern, producing eggs and hens from an empty bag and turning water into wine, with many woodcut illustrations. The first edition in Dean's name appeared in 1722. Little is known of the author. He may have been a dealer in magical apparatus with a bookshop in Tower Hill: many editions include notes offering tuition and advertisements for apparatus from H. Dean. However, he does not appear in any of the usual directories and registers of booksellers. The book was reprinted well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century in numerous editions, many unauthorised, by several different publishers in London and elsewhere. An 11<sup>th</sup> edition, published in Philadelphia, was possibly the first magic book published in America.

#### **6. The Wonder of all the Wonders that Ever the World Wonder'd at**

*Jonathan Swift* (London: J. Roberts, 1722)

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century magic's place in popular culture was reflected in increasing use as a tool of satire. With its deceptions, misdirection and illusions, the language and images of magic lent themselves perfectly to political satire.

This pamphlet by Jonathan Swift uses the language of the handbills of travelling conjurers to attack the plans for a Bank of Ireland in 1721. The extravagant claims of impossible feats warn potential subscribers and supporters of the bank not to be taken in by grand promises that will most probably end in disappointment. An artist boasts of wonderful feats involving gruesome assaults on the audience which miraculously cause no pain or damage. The finale involves the conjuror taking 'from any gentlemen, ladies, widows, orphans, all the ready cash they can muster' for his own use and the advantage of 'said widows etc. and the benefit of the whole Kingdom,' and they will receive from this the same satisfaction as from any of his wonders.

### **7. Hocus Pocus: Die Taschenspielerkunst Leicht zu Lernen**

*Elias Piluland (Frankfurt and Leipzig, ca. 1730)*

The content of Scot's book also made its way into European conjuring manuals. German versions and translations of *Hocus Pocus Junior* first appeared in the 1660s. They were often attributed to Elias Piluland in the preface, most likely a pseudonym. The conjuror in the frontispiece of this version from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century is demonstrating Bonus Genius or Hiccius Doctius, in which a small wooden figure is presented within a cloak. He is then sent on an important errand to a distant place or person. The figure then disappears and reappears in the cloak. The success of the trick depended as much on performance and storytelling as sleight-of-hand skills.

### **8. Engaños a Ojos Vistas y Diversion de Trabajos Mundanos Fundada en Lícitos Juegos de Manos**

*Pablo Minguet é Irol (Madrid: D. Pedro Joseph Alonso y Padilla, not before 1733)*

This was one of the leading Spanish books on magic in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and served as a manual for many generations of conjurers. The author, Pablo Minguet é Irol, was a publisher, engraver and composer. He published books in Madrid between 1733 and 1775 on a wide variety of subjects for popular consumption, and produced at least five editions of *Engaños a Ojos Vistas*, which was also frequently pirated. His main source for the text was Jacques Ozanam's *Récréations Mathématiques et Physiques*, first published in 1698. The effect described here is a blow book or magic colouring book, one of the earliest pieces of prop magic. It involves the performer showing a blank book. As they flick through its pages, images and colours magically appear.

### **9. Arcana Mirabilia, ou, Magie Blanche et Tours de Physique & d'Escamotage (1824)**

The publication of manuals of legerdemain and the exposure of magician's techniques revealed the secrets of magic to a wider audience. Manuscripts, by their nature, have a much more limited readership. This manuscript has a title page with a date of 1824, a time when printing was entering an era of increasing mechanisation and mass production. This manuscript may have been produced for the personal use of its compiler, possibly commissioned

from a professional book dealer, or to be shared with a select audience. It is written in a neat, clear hand with diagrams also drawn and coloured by hand. The manuscript describes familiar tricks and novelties, mainly involving props. These include transferring a ring into a lemon and cards into eggs, making wine change places with grain, cards in eggs and a magic table, used to conceal props.



## 10. The Conjurer Unmasked

*Henri Decremps* (London: C. Stalker, T. Denton and H. Brookes, 1788)

In 1784 lawyer and diplomat Henri Decremps published *La Magie Blanche Dévoilée* – “White Magic Revealed”. It was an exposure of the methods used by conjurors, one of the most successful artists of the day, Giuseppe Pinetti, in particular. Decremps wanted to expose the fraud of performers who profited from their audience’s ignorance rather than train his readers to perform tricks themselves. His content is based more around his theories rather than on knowing how it was done first hand. Decremps went on to publish a

supplement and several other books on magic that laid down some important principles. This translation of Decremps’ first book has some omissions and many additions, and perhaps set the style for magic books of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by offering a description of a trick followed by an explanation, without illustrations. One of the publishers, Thomas Denton, also published the English translation of Pinetti’s response to Decremps. He was executed in 1789 for possessing coin counterfeiting equipment.

## 11. The Conjuror’s Repository

(London: T. and R. Hughes, 1809)

Publishers and booksellers soon capitalised on the idea of exposing the methods of the popular performers of magic. This is an example of one of the many books produced that used the names of celebrities on the cover to sell the book. It contains dozens of tricks, some harking back to Scot and *Hocus Pocus* such as passing a half-pence through a table and reviving a chicken along with the standard definition of legerdemain. Others are more contemporary, such as Breslaw’s Learned Swan, a model that appeared to move on its own and spell out messages. It is one of the few descriptions to directly credit a performer. The book is presented chiefly for entertainment and the descriptions are not entirely serious. ‘A notable Hocus Pocus trick with a cock’ instructs the reader to ‘get a cock, or, on Dean Swift’s plan, the shoulder of mutton, get one, or if you can’t buy, steal one; no, take it from the roost at night, or off its walk by day.’

## 12. Breslaw's Last Legacy

(London: 1792)

Phillip Breslaw was a German performer who first came to Britain in the 1760s and established an exhibition room at 1 Cockspur Street in London, as well as performing at taverns around the city. His popular performances were noted for his impressive sleight-of-hand skills with cards. Breslaw's death was mistakenly reported for the first time in *The Gentlemans Magazine* in November 1783. Publishers were quick to cash in on this, with multiple brochures and booklets issued under the title *Breslaw's Last Legacy* from 1784. These were often cheaply produced, sometimes from remainder sheets, and had little to do with Breslaw himself. The tricks described were common to many editions of conjuror's secrets from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Breslaw actually died in 1803.

## 13. Table-talk, or, 'Shreds and Patches'

M. Henry (London: John Duncombe, ca 1822)

Monsieur Henry was a Scottish or English performer who had appeared at the Lyceum Theatre and Astley's Amphitheatre in 1788. He toured a show featuring mechanical amusements, conjuring and ventriloquism. In the 1820s he appeared at the Aldephi Theatre, and two pamphlets were produced of his table talks. These may have been souvenirs of his performances, as they simply describe his 'astonishing illusions,' rather than revealing their secrets, along with a record of Henry's narrative or patter. The illusions include transporting a lady's ring into a piece of fruit ('chains

of the House of Orange') and finding a spectator's card with the assistance of a figure of Mercury on a cloud.

## 14. Conjuror's Magazine

(London: W. Locke, 1792)

Vol. 1 (nos. 1-11)

*The Conjuror's Magazine* was the first periodical to feature conjuring and magic tricks. It was produced at a time when periodicals were becoming more common and diverse in their subject matter, with many specialist titles appearing. The magazine featured sleights by popular performers, such as Giuseppe Pinnetti and Phillip Breslaw, alongside astrology, accounts of apparitions and Lavater on physiognomy. The conjuring elements were not present for long and were reduced with each number. By the third volume they had disappeared, and the periodical was renamed *The Astrologer's Magazine*.



## 15. Art of Legerdemain.

(London: J. Pitts, 1832)

Broadsides or broadsheets were produced as cheaply as possible as forms

of mass entertainment. As such they were ephemeral and can be exceedingly rare. They were printed on one side of a single sheet and reused stocks of woodblocks for illustration on multiple sheets. This one on legerdemain promises to give concise instruction in learning the art, including the cups and balls, decapitating and reviving a cockerel, and stunts such as walking on hot iron bars and fire-eating. Imprints often record the printer of this broadside as the proprietor of the wholesale toy warehouse in Seven Dials, an area known for the printing and selling of cheap, crude ballads. This item was printed on half a sheet with a copy of the *Gypsy Fortune Teller*, revealing the secrets of physiognomy and palmistry.

## 16. Mo Shu Ta Kuan

*Wu-Hsi (1916)*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western performance magic frequently adopted Chinese, Japanese and Indian styles in stage sets, dress, tricks and even, in the case of magicians like Chung Ling Soo, in complete personas. Works on Western magic were also adapted and published in the East. This book (*The Devil's Art From Top to Bottom: Exhaustive Exposé of Magic*), features many tricks from western conjuring manuals including magic lanterns, optical illusions, trick tables, the Sphinx, the Cabinet of Proteus and handkerchief and coin magic. The cover shows a trunk transposition, with the female performer being locked in one trunk and then appearing from another.

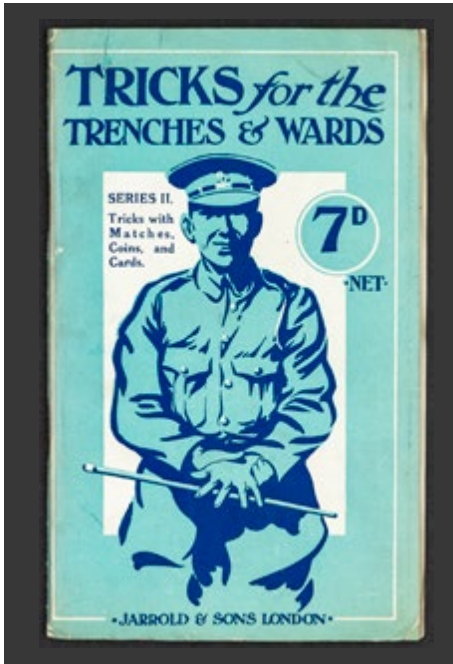


## 17. Rules of the Magic Circle

*Magic Circle – London, England*

*(London: The Magic Circle, 1925)*

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the exposure of magicians' secrets caused problems for many and forced them to adapt and improvise. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century dealing in secrets, much cheaper and easier to distribute through cheap editions, magazines and periodicals and magic dealers, became a threat to many performers' livelihoods. The Magic Circle, founded in 1905, to promote and advance stage magic, holds secrecy among its main tenets. Its motto 'indocilis privata loqui' means 'not apt to disclose secrets'. The importance of secrecy was enshrined in its rules as seen here in a version from 1925. Revealing secrets led to expulsion. Even the Circle's first President, David Devant, was not immune. He was temporarily expelled for the second time in 1937 after publishing a feature in *The Windsor Magazine* on his own illusions.



## 18. Tricks for the Trenches and Wards

*Draklof* [Charles Folkard] (London: Jarrold, 1915)

Charles Folkard had a short-lived career as a professional magician at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century before returning to his main profession, illustration. He illustrated a number children's books and created the 'Teddy Tails' comic strip for the *Daily Mail* in 1915. He returned to magic during the First World War to create this series of two pamphlets under the pseudonym Draklof. They contained simple tricks with basic props, such as matches and coins, that could be mastered easily and performed by nurses or soldiers. The series must have proved popular, as it was reprinted twice. Folkard hoped the tricks would 'provide many a bright moment in a tedious wait or dreary convalescence.'

## 19. The Conjurer in Church

*T.V. Voorhees* (Venetia, Pa.: The author, 1928)

Methodist minister, the Rev. Ted V. Voorhees, was inspired to use magic in his preaching after seeing a performance by Houdini in Erie, Pennsylvania. He started to use tricks in his sermons, to illustrate Biblical miracles. This book of religious-themed patter was self-published by Voorhees and features stories to accompany a particular effect. For example, he used the Inexhaustible Box to explain a story of the divine light enriching people's lives. The book covers patter only with the tricks themselves in a separate publication *Magic for Ministers*. Voorhees included a note to warn potential readers that this was not the book for them if they were looking for tricks.

## 20. Davenport's The Demon Telegraph

(London, 1933 )

Davenports is one of London's oldest and most famous magic shops. *The Demon Telegraph* was a serial publication with news items as well as adverts for its latest tricks and novelties. The Demon Silks were a series of popular handkerchief props often with elaborate decoration. With this series, Davenports featured one of the celebrities of the day, a genuine Walt Disney Mickey Mouse.

## Prints

### 1. Bartholomew Fair

*J.F. Setchel (London, c. 1820)*

Bartholomew Fair was one of London's oldest summer charter fairs. Starting in 1133, the annual Fair took place for three days around St Bartholomew's Day. Its original purpose was as a cloth fair, but it is best known as a pleasure fair, offering its visitors a range of popular entertainments. This print depicts the fair of 1721. To the right is the booth of Isaac Fawkes, the most popular conjuror of his day. In the banner above the booth he is shown performing the Egg Bag trick, in which a multitude of eggs are produced from an empty bag.

### 2. 'La Fameux Romain'

*Prévost (n.d.)*

In this print the 18<sup>th</sup> century conjuror 'La Fameux Romain' performs a range of tricks in a refined setting, including an extra-large version of the cups and balls with a child and pig. The depictions are notable for having an uncovered table, exposing the conjuror to greater scrutiny.

### 3. I. Calculator Esq: The Celebrated Conjuror

*A.B. (1776)*

A satire on John Molesworth, who offered tickets for state lotteries in the 1770s with numbers selected by a machine. He claimed that his 'curious calculations' offered better odds for success than randomly selected

numbers. By associating Molesworth with conjuring, the satirist suggests the calculations are just another trick.

### 4. L'Escamoteur

*Louis Charles Ruotte, after Jean-François Bosio (Early 19th c.)*

A conjuror performs tricks, including the cups and balls for the amusement of a mixed audience. A small animal is included as one of the items emerging from the cups.

### 5. Caroline Fair, or Mat Pudding and his Mountebank

*Theodore Lane (George Humphrey, 16 April 1821)*

The imagery of a conjuror's booth at a fair is used in a satirical attack on Caroline of Brunswick, here taking the role of a conjureess with her supporters Henry Brougham and Thomas Denman in attendance as beefeaters.

### 6. Flyer for a performance by 'learned cats'

*Signor Cappelli at Bartholomew Fair (1832)*

Cappelli was one of the last conjurors to perform at Bartholomew Fair. He presented sleight-of-hand alongside his trained cats and a learned dog, and later took his show to the Cosmorama Rooms in Regent Street. Cappelli's cats would beat a drum, turn a spit, grind knives, play music, strike upon an anvil, roast coffee, ring bells, and the cleverest would draw water from a well at her master's command in French and Italian.

The returns for magic booths were falling in the 1830s and the last Bartholomew Fair was held in 1855 after years of decline.

### 7. Mr Bosco, Prestidigitateur une Taitbout, no.9

From 'La Caricature No. 108 (29 Nov. 1832)

The famous 19<sup>th</sup> century conjuror Bartolomeo Bosco is alluded to here in a satire on King Louis-Philippe from the French magazine *La Caricature*. The prestidigitateur's patter begins with 'nothing in the hands, nothing in the pockets, nothing in the pistol' before offering the audience 'explosion, detonation, conjuration, conspiracy, arrest, emotion, reception, acclamation, deputation, and... amazement!!!'

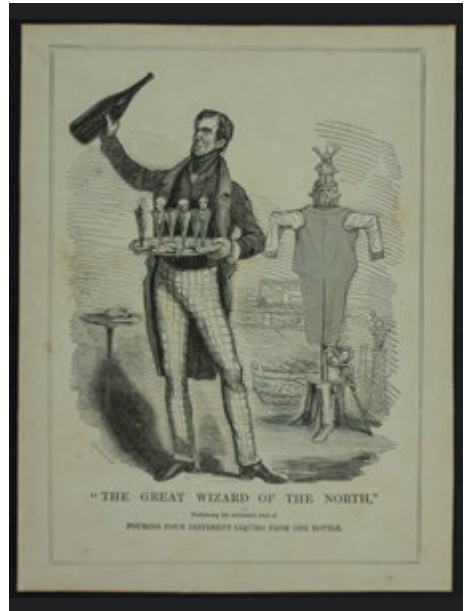
were closed, and the instruments could be heard by the audience. When the doors were opened, the brothers were in the same position. The Davenports quickly became associated with spiritualism, which was becoming more popular in both America and Britain. The performance was presented as being a genuine supernatural phenomenon. The Davenports' spirit effects were repeatedly exposed as trickery, including by magicians John Henry Anderson, Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin and John Neville Maskelyne but they continued to tour until William Henry's death in 1877. Many magicians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century introduced spirit phenomena into their acts, reflecting the popularity of the Davenports and a growing interest in spiritualism.



### 8. Sketches at the Davenports' Performances

*Australian Sketcher* (30 September 1876)

Ira Erastus and William Henry Davenport had a huge influence on 19<sup>th</sup> century magic and society. From the mid-1850s they toured America, and later the world, with their spirit cabinet routine. They were tied within a box with musical instruments, the doors







---

# MAGIC AND INNOVATION



---

As the secrets behind the conjuror's illusions increasingly became common knowledge, performers had to innovate in order to keep audiences entertained. This section shows how the art of magic embraced science and technical innovation to present ever more impossible feats and used the language and imagery of science in performance.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, magicians began to present well-known tricks of sleight-of-hand alongside innovative new amusements. Automata, used by **Isaac Fawkes** at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and scientific demonstrations became key features and the subject of public fascination. Magic's jugglers and street performers were transforming into professors and magicians and moving on to the stage and into the chambers of high society.

Magic as a refined theatrical entertainment culminated in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with one of the first great performers of magic's golden age, **Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin**, who combined artistic sleight of hand with technical innovations and highly refined automata. **Robert-Houdin** examined and postulated on many of the most popular stage illusions of the day in one of his late works, *Magie et Physique Amusante* (1877). He offered his own theories on Pepper's

Ghost, the Indian Basket trick, the Cabinet of Proteus and the séance act of the **Davenport Brothers**.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century performers continued to demonstrate effects and tricks that had been in use for hundreds of years, but innovations also made large-scale spectacular stage illusions increasingly common and popular with audiences. During this period, many of the types of effects familiar with audiences today were established.

Magicians made people and objects disappear and reappear, disembodied heads spoke, people levitated and 'ghosts' walked the stage. Invention was key to ensuring magic's enduring relevance in popular culture and to audiences. As an art form, it had to embrace both new styles of presentation and revolutionary techniques to survive and thrive.

Although books often revealed the techniques of familiar tricks to a wider audience, it is in the magazines and journals produced for and by magicians that many innovations are found. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, reports on new illusions, theories on how they were performed, technical specifications and disputes over attribution filled the pages of magazines such as *Mahatma*, *The Sphinx* and *The Magician Annual*.

## 1. Magie et Physique Amusante

Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin (Paris: Calmann Lévy, éditeur, Ancienne Maison Michel Lévy Frères, 1877)

This posthumously published work was a sequel to Robert-Houdin's *Les Secrets de la Prestidigitation et de la Magie*. Here Robert-Houdin examined and offered explanations of some of the most famous and innovative stage illusions of the age. The book covers the secrets of the Davenport Brothers' séances and the manifestations of spiritualists, illusions from the Egyptian Hall which included the Indian Basket Trick, the Protean Cabinet and the Sphinx Illusion. It also features his own Magic Portfolio, in which increasingly elaborate productions are made from a portfolio of engravings, from a bonnet, to doves, to pans of beans, water and fire and finally, a child. The book was translated into English by Professor Hoffman in 1879 and first published in parts in Routledge's *Every Boy's Annual*.

## 2. Playbill for performances by Robert Houdin and his 'soirees fantastiques featuring automates, prestidigitation et magie' at the St James's Theatre, London

(1848)

Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin is widely credited as 'the father of modern magic'. During his relatively short career as a performer he changed the way magic was presented and dazzled audiences with technical innovations and skilful storytelling. He started out performing in amateur troops and at private parties and producing highly refined automata.

He opened his 'Soirées Fantastiques' in Paris in 1845, a small, elegant space where the magician would perform in evening dress. He would retire from performing less than ten years later at the age of 48. Robert-Houdin's programme was structured around increasingly complex and surprising illusions. This playbill is from his first engagement in London in 1848 and features some of his most famous illusions, including a second sight act which his blindfolded son would describe objects provided by the audience and the Ethereal Suspension. Another son would be dosed with 'ether', which Robert-Houdin claimed would make him as light as a balloon. He was placed on supports which were gradually removed until he appeared to be floating in mid-air!

## 3. An Attempt to Analyse the Automaton Chess Player of Mr De Kempelen

(1821)

Automata were a common feature of magic shows from at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The chess-playing Turk was a sensation of the age. Wolfgang von Kempelen presented what he claimed was an automaton to Maria Theresa of Austria in 1770, the figure dressed in Turkish robes behind a large cabinet took on human opponents and defeated most of them. The Turk went on to tour Europe and America, including playing Benjamin Franklin in Paris. The Turk was not a true automaton but was an illusion of an intelligent machine with a human operator concealed within the cabinet. During its tours, many theories

on the Turk's secrets were published, including this book on display from 1821 following its exhibition by Johann Nepomuk Mälzel in 1821. The author concluded that the Chess Player involved no machinery and derived 'its merit solely from the very ingenious mode by which the living agent is effected.'

#### **4. Head and shoulders pencil sketch of Nicolas Philippe Ledru, known as 'Comus', 'quack' doctor.**

#### **5. Series of cuttings for performances by 'The Sieur Comus', with handwritten annotations (1793-1795)**

Nicolas-Philippe Ledru was a magician and physicist. His exhibitions of 'physical, mechanical, and mathematical recreations' combined scientific demonstrations with prestidigitation which involved light, electricity and automata, including a hand that wrote down the audience's thoughts. He first appeared in London in 1765 in a small exhibition room, and the *Gentleman's Magazine* noted that he made £5,000 during his stay! Comus performed for European Royalty and Louis XV appointed him as his physician, giving him the title 'Professeur de Physique des Enfants de France'. Following the French Revolution, Comus was imprisoned during the Reign of Terror but survived and died a wealthy man in 1807. His success inspired imitators, as these notices show, for another Comus, known as 'Comus II'. He called himself the 'Premier Physicien de France' and his performances included conjuring tricks, miraculous machines and a thought reading mechanical swan.

#### **6. Cuttings concerning a philosophical exhibition by Signor Pinetti at the Theatre Royal, London November 1784 - February 1785**

#### **7. Physical Amusements and Diverting Experiments: Composed and Performed in Different Capitals of Europe, and in London**

*Giuseppe Pinetti (London: 1784)*

Chevalier Giuseppe Pinetti was one of the most successful and celebrated performers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He had sold-out performances across Europe, was the court magician of Louis XVI and pioneered combining magic tricks and science in his 'philosophical exhibitions'. He was billed as the Professor of Natural Magic but started as a teacher performing tricks and physics demonstrations for students in Rome. He was one of the first magicians to establish himself on theatre stages with his 'cabinet of curiosities' presenting magic tricks, automata and experiments. Pinetti published his only book in 1784 possibly in response to an exposé of conjurors published by Henri Decremps, *La Magie Blanche Dévoilée*, in the same year. The content is distinctly different from earlier conjuring books, including card tricks as well as mathematical, electrical and physics demonstrations. It is the first printed record of several tricks such as making a ring move between hands and fingers while the arms are restrained.

## 8. Natural Magic, or, Physical Amusements Revealed

*Philip Astley* (London: Printed for the author, 1785)

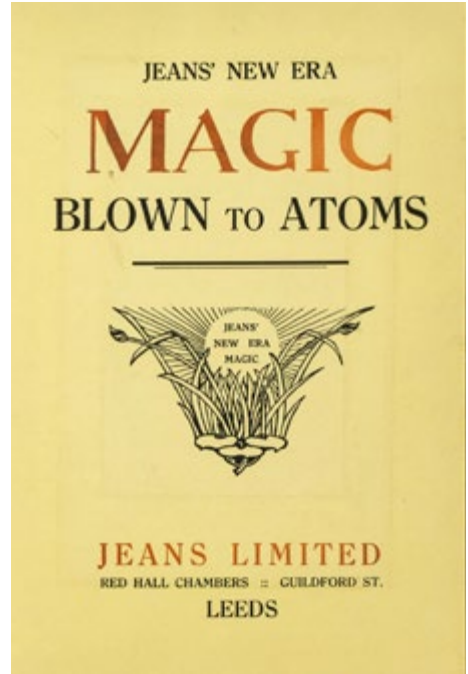
The name Astley is more associated with the circus than magic. Philip Astley started out as an equestrian performer at his own riding school before adding a variety of performance acts to exhibitions to attract bigger audiences. His successful amphitheatres in both London and Paris and his touring company earned him the moniker 'the father of the modern circus.' Astley also exhibited automata and tried his hand at conjuring with limited success. The content of Astley's book is close to Henri Decremps' *La Magie Blanche Dévoilée* (1784), and presents sleights, automata, gun and card tricks as experiments. The frontispiece depicts 'The card nailed to the wall with a pistol shot', which involves the conjuror firing a nail at a pack of cards that have been thrown into the air and skewering the card selected by the audience. The book also includes an early description of the famous Bullet Catch routine.

## 9. Playbill regarding rearrangements in performances by Ching Lau Lauro after suffering a sprain at the Royal Coburg Theatre

(18 March 1828)

Ching Lau Lauro was a popular entertainer in the 1820s and 1830s in England. Also known as Professor Ching, it's likely he was English, or possibly a Cornishman adopting the style of Chinese performers as a gimmick. Using Asian dress and personas on stage became common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Ching

was one of the first to do so. It is also possible that he was the first in Europe to perform an aerial suspension, and not Robert-Houdin, when he performed juggling 'sitting in the air upon nothing'- this may not have been the same kind of illusion but an acrobatic demonstration.



## 10. Jeans' New Era of Magic: Blown to Atoms.

*Walter Cerretta Jeans* (Leeds: Jeans Ltd., 193-)

This curious 'prospectus for a new illusion' sees a magic inventor embracing the early atomic age. William Cerratta Jeans started out life as a brass moulder before moving into showbusiness in a number of different fields, including magic. He patented a number of innovative

magical inventions, including the mirror tunnel principle, which formed the basis of many production illusions, and Will Goldston dedicated a chapter to Jeans in *Further Exclusive Magical Secrets. Blown to Atoms* (1927) was never performed. The prospectus promises an effect of great novelty and originality, involving locking the performer in a box and cabinet to which a live bomb is then attached, the fuse lit... of course, Jeans did not give away the result!

**11. The Magician, or, Magic of the Sciences: Containing Wonderful Exploits, Amusing Experiments, Occult Sciences, Mechanical Recreations, Scientific Amusements, &c**  
(London: W. Strange, 1834)

This little book combines legerdemain, scientific curiosities, feats of strength and accounts of unexplained phenomena. Although this book is very rare, books combining these subjects as amusements for readers were common in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, popularising both magic and experiments in chemistry and physics. The section on legerdemain closely follows the contents of 18<sup>th</sup> century books such as Henry Dean's *Hocus Pocus* (1722) with descriptions of the secrets behind the cups and balls, card and coin tricks and tricks of confederacy. The publisher, William Strange of Paternoster Row, produced a mixture of cheap periodicals, political works and penny bloods - small, cheap editions of literature.

**12. Scientific Mysteries: a Collection of Simple and Effective Experiments Illustrating Chemical, Physical and Optical Wonders**  
(London, Melbourne, Australia: 1891)

A later book that combines magic and scientific experiments. The emphasis of this collection is more on the scientific, with experiments with gases, phosphorus, metals, crystallisation and even 'nihilist bombs'. Many are also associated with magic: invisible inks, inexhaustible bottles, colour changing flowers and the diving imp, often featured in early conjuring books. Also featured are some of the important optical illusions of 19<sup>th</sup> century theatre: stage ghosts, a version of Pepper's Ghost using glass to reflect an actor's image onto the stage and 'Decapitation no murder'. This is a description of the Sphinx Illusion, showing a seeming decapitated but living head on a table, which is combined with mirrors to conceal the head's body from the audience.



### 13. The True History of the Ghost; and all about Metempsychosis

*John Henry Pepper* (London: Cassell , 1890)

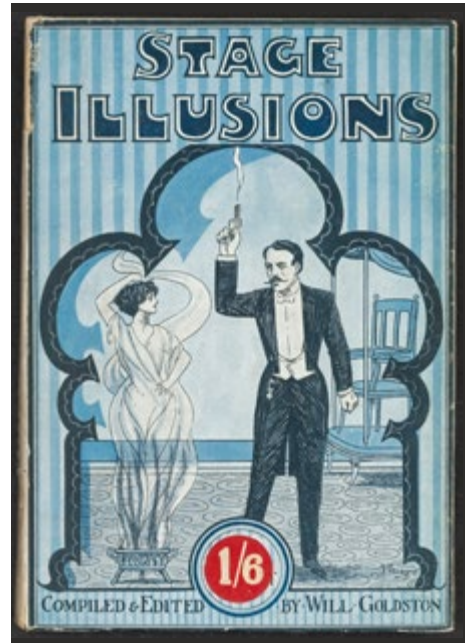
Pepper's Ghost was a sensation of the Victorian age: an optical illusion that produced the image of a ghost on stage through a combination of light and reflections through glass. It became associated with the name of Henry John Pepper but came from the invention of Henry Dircks. This book, written by Pepper over 40 years later, tried to tell the full history of the effect's origin and development. Dircks developed his 'Dircksian Phantasmagoria' in the 1850s, but the set up could not be easily accommodated by existing theatres. Pepper was a lecturer at the Royal Polytechnic Institution and saw the potential in it. After some modifications to make it more suited to existing theatres, it was premiered by Pepper in 1862 and the two registered a joint patent the same year. Pepper went on to show the ghost at the Egyptian Hall, then America and Canada before settling in Australia. The effect established the usefulness of glass in creating stage illusions.

### 14. The Boy's Playbook of Science

*John Henry Pepper*, New edition  
(London: Routledge, 1866)

Henry John Pepper was a showman who saw the entertainment potential in the Ghost and how to exploit it. But he was also a keen exponent of science education. As well as lecturing at the Royal Polytechnic, he established educational classes in science and lectured in schools. This is one of several books he published aimed at educating

boys in a range of scientific principles, which emphasised the potential of science both to amuse and be useful.



### 15. Stage Illusions

*Will Goldston* (London: The Magician Ltd., 1912)

Will Goldston was a prolific writer and publisher of guides, biographies, histories and manuals of magic. Like many, his interest in magic began as a child and he had a short-lived stage career performing a black art act under the name Carl Devo. He founded his own society, the Magicians' Club of London in 1911 after leaving the Magic Circle with Harry Houdini as the first president, and Harry Price serving as its librarian and later vice-president. Goldston wrote and published many books revealing magicians' secrets. This book, largely compiled from material in



magazines, reveals the mechanics behind illusions acts. The cover depicts various versions of making a lady disappear.

## **16. Mahatma**

**Vol. 1 (1898)**

When it started in 1895 *Mahatma* was the only dedicated newspaper in America for magicians. The newspaper features some of Harry Houdini's earliest advertisements and he was also its European correspondent. This issue features British magician David Devant, who worked with John Neville Maskelyne at the Egyptian Hall in London. Devant's 'spirit wife' appeared as part of his first sketch- his version of 'The Artist's Dream'. Devant was an ingenious inventor of illusions and did much to drive innovation and modernisation in the performance of magic, including seeing the potential of early cinema. He introduced the Theatrograph, a British projection system invented by R. W. Paul, to performances at Egyptian Hall, where it was first publicly exhibited in 1896.

## **17. Magic Circular**

**Vol. XV (1920-21)**

*The Magic Circular* is the official magazine of the Magic Circle, first issued in 1906 and published continuously since then, making it one of the longest running publications on magic. This issue includes a report on one of the most famous illusions of all: sawing a woman in half. The illusion is usually attributed to inventor and performer P.T. Selbit, whose version, first performed January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1921 at Finsbury Park Empire, is described

here. Selbit tied his assistant into an enclosed wooden crate and divided it into 8 parts, before she emerged unscathed. Several months later, Horace Goldin premiered his own version with the familiar feature of the assistant's head and feet emerging from the crate. The magicians were involved in a legal battle over the ownership of the trick, but it's likely neither came up with the concept. Similar illusions had been performed in the 1870s, and tricks involving decapitation and dismemberment are some of the oldest recorded.

## **18. Magician Annual**

**(1908-09)**

As well as books, Will Goldston also published and edited several magazines and journals, including *Magician Monthly*, *The Magazine of Magic* and *Magician Annual*, published by the department store Gamages where Goldston worked in the Theatrical and Entertainment Department. As well as features on magicians and their tricks and illusions, the *Annual* also reprinted patents, a wonderful source of information of innovations in stage magic. The patent featured here is by Charles Morritt, who trained at the Maskelynes' Egyptian Hall and was the inventor and designer of numerous stage illusions. These included 'The Disappearing Donkey', which was repurposed by Harry Houdini to make an elephant disappear.

---

# MAGIC FOR ALL



---

Conjuring has long been popular among amateurs and hobbyists as well as professional entertainers, particularly as a form of amusement for children to entertain their friends and family. Manuals for beginners and amateurs were published in huge numbers, with many successful performers offering to reveal the secrets behind their magic and teach the reader tricks that anyone could do. This section explores the rise in popularity of stage magic, the success of books like *Modern Magic*, and the growth of specialist dealers of magic tricks and books.

Early conjuring books included an element of instruction alongside the revelation of secrets. **Henry Dean**, in his *Hocus Pocus* (1722), offered to teach any 'person that is desirous to learn any part of this art.' In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, instructional books became increasingly common, revealing not only how it was done, but providing comprehensive instruction in techniques, skills, props and performance so that you could do it yourself.

In the 1830s ideas of enjoyment and leisure in childhood were gaining importance and magic tricks became an eminently suitable pastime for the Victorian boy. Books such as *Parlour Magic* (1838) and *Every Boy's Book* (1852)

were aimed at young boys to entertain 'at the parlour or the drawing-room table or fireside' and to relieve boredom. Chemical and physical experiments are presented alongside sleights involving cards, coins and handkerchiefs that could be easily mastered with practice.

New generations of performers were inspired by **Professor Hoffmann's** influential *Modern Magic* (1874). This was the book **Harry Price** received to answer the questions of his childhood fascination with the secrets of magic and the one that began his collection. **David Devant**, the great magician of the British Golden Age, cited it as one of the two books that opened his path to success and it also inspired the author and dealer **Ellis Stanyon**. *Modern Magic* inspired many generations of conjurers, professional and amateur, and covered all aspects of magic, from dress and performance to the secrets behind major stage illusions.

Dealers in equipment and books flourished in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with **Will Goldston**, **Davenport's** and **Hamleys** among the most famous names. Magic also became a marketing gimmick to advertise cigarettes and other day-to-day products such as chocolate and stock cubes.

## **1. The Art of Conjuring Made Easy; or, Instructions for Performing the Most Astonishing Slight-of-hand Feats**

(Derby: T. Richardson, n.d.)

This chapbook, a small cheaply produced paper-covered booklet, takes its content from many other guides to conjuring from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Inside are tricks with eggs, cards and coins as well as the means of producing fireworks and explosions with phosphorus and gunpowder. The book was aimed at children, with an advertisement on the back cover offering 'children's books, one penny each' from the publisher Thomas Richardson. Richardson published many editions in the chapbook format in the 1830s and 1840s, including versions of *The Whole Art of Legerdemain* and *The Original Norwood Gypsy; or, The Fortune-teller's Sure Guide*. The books were often issued with brightly coloured foldout frontispieces.

## **2. Parlour Magic**

(London: Whitehead, 1838)

This is an early book dedicated to magic and aimed at children, specifically boys. The content of the book is wide-ranging, covering optical illusions, transmutations, sleights and a 'melange' ranging from electric light to vegetable anatomy. The book makes some bold claims at originality, stating that many of the effects are appearing in print for the first time. It also makes grand promises to its reader, enabling him 'to qualify the hero of his little circle to divert and astonish his friends, and, at the same to improve himself.' Studying the book will ensure

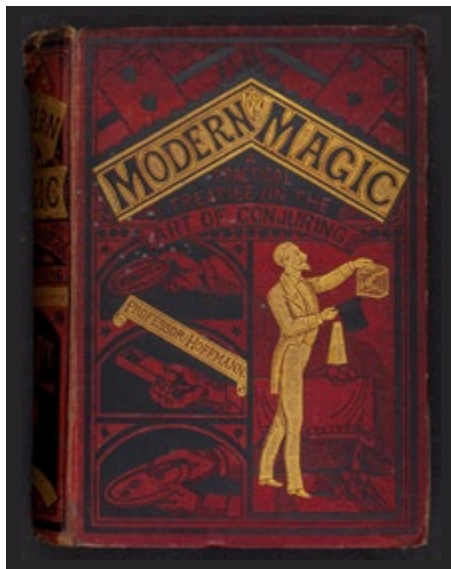
the reader never suffers the disgrace of being called 'no conjuror'. Like much Victorian juvenile literature, the book ensures that its amusements are also educational so that its young readers make good use of their leisure time.

## **3. Every Boy's Book of Games, Sports, and Diversions, or, The School-Boy's Manual of Amusement, Instruction, and Health**

(London: Grieves, 1852)

The roles of boys and girls became more defined in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and began to diverge from each other. It became increasingly important for boys to attend school, rather than work, and as a result they had more leisure time and more autonomy than girls to make use of that time. Books such as this were intended to make sure that time was used productively. Conjuring became a key part of these books alongside other indoor and outdoor pursuits. It was deemed a fitting diversion for an ingenious boy to entertain himself and his friends. The section on conjuring here is very similar to *Parlour Magic*, presenting simple sleights that could be mastered with a little practice and few specialist pieces of apparatus.





#### **4. Modern Magic: a Practical Treatise on the Art of Conjuring**

*Professor Hoffman [Angelo John Lewis],*  
2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1877)

*Modern Magic* is a landmark in magic books. First published in 1874, it was the first in a tetralogy of books – *More Magic* (1890), *Later Magic* (1903) and *Latest Magic* (1918) – that for the first time attempted an encyclopaedic and instructional compendium of performance magic. It was an immediate success. The first edition of 2,000 copies sold out in seven weeks and the book reached 15 editions by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The comprehensiveness and accessibility of the book meant it became an effective textbook for aspiring magicians as well as a record of the contemporary practice of magic. The roots of the book were in articles that Professor Hoffman published in *Every Boy's Paper*. As well as his own knowledge,

he drew on material from books by Robert-Houdin and from Jean Nicholas Ponsin's *Nouvelle Magie Blanche Dévoilée* (1853). British magician David Devant wrote in his autobiography that reading the book 'opened up a new fairyland. I saw before me the road to success'.

#### **5. Tarbell System of Magic, Vol. 1**

*Harlan Tarbell (Chicago: Tarbell System, 1927)*

Harlan Tarbell was a stage magician and illustrator. In the mid-1920s publishers T. Grant Cooke and Walter A. Jordan planned a correspondence course in magic. They first approached Harry Houdini to write the course, he declined and recommended Tarbell who completed the 60 correspondence lessons and over 3000 illustrations by 1929. The course covered all forms and elements of magic. Tarbell placed an emphasis on training in the basics: 'One must be trained in the mechanics, the alternate methods and be skilled in the presentation in order to meet any conditions which may arise'. The rights to the course were purchased by magician and dealer Louis Tannen in 1941, who published original lessons in book form with additional content. The course continues to be an important reference source for magicians, and from 2016 Penguin Magic began a video subscription version of Tarbell's tricks performed by Dan Harlan.

## 6. The Boy's Book of Magic: Including Chapters on Hindu Magic, Handcuff Tricks, Side Show and Animal Tricks, Ventriloquism

*Hereward Carrington* (London: Routledge, 1921)

Hereward Carrington is best known as an investigator of the paranormal. He carried out many investigations for the American and English Societies for Psychical Research, including into the mediums Eusapia Palladino and Margery Crandon. He was also an amateur conjuror and published on a wide range of subjects including psychical research, ghosts, the occult and fasting. This book is written for beginners, as well as advanced students, and Carrington claims to have included several original tricks, thanking Howard Thurston, Harry Houdini and Harry Kellar for their suggestions. It is also indebted to Professor Hoffman and Carrington quotes heavily from *Modern Magic*. It covers card, coin, handkerchief and egg tricks and miscellaneous tricks such as Alexander Herrmann's version of pulling a rabbit from a hat.

## 7. Lessons in Conjuring

*David Devant* (London: Routledge, 1922)

This is one of many books David Devant published for keen students of magic. Perhaps because he gained so much from reading books like *Modern Magic*, he saw the value of sharing the secrets behind tricks and teaching the art of performing them. The importance of not just knowing how to do a trick but knowing how to perform it well is emphasised. Devant recalls an encounter with a young conjuror at the Egyptian Hall who

claimed to know three hundred tricks, he replied that he knew eight. By that he meant 'for some years my repertoire consisted of eight tricks, but I knew them thoroughly. I was always ready to show them at any time, at any place, under any conditions'. Complete mastery of the performance of a trick was essential.



## 8. Sleight of Hand: a Practical Manual of Legerdemain for Amateurs and Others

*Edwin Sachs*, 2nd ed. (London: Upcott Gill, 1895)

Edwin Sachs' book was contemporary to *Modern Magic* but does not hold the same place in the popular imagination. Nevertheless, with its focus on the skills required for sleights and misdirection rather than a reliance on apparatus it was

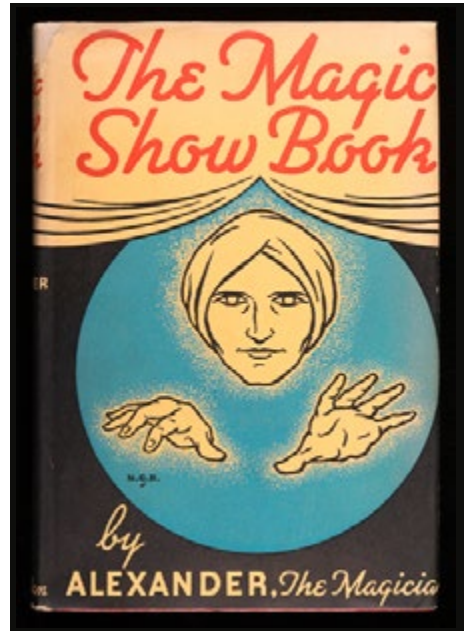
popular with many magicians. Sachs was a sporting journalist and the book began as a series of articles in the *Bazaar Exchange and Mart* before being collected in a book in 1877. The book is divided into drawing room magic, the performance space of most amateurs and 'grand magic' for the stage. The introduction emphasises the importance of the 'conjuring-wand' that the audience must believe is for show 'it is, however, an absolutely indispensable article, both to beginner and proficient, as it serves as an auxiliary to the concealment of any item in the hand'.

### **9. Conjuring for Amateurs: A Practical Treatise on How to Perform Modern Tricks**

*Ellis Stanyon* (London: Upcott Gill, 1897)

Ellis Stanyon was another magician who owed his initiation into the art to Professor Hoffman. As well as performing, he was a dealer in magical apparatus and books and published a periodical *Stanyon's Magic* which ran from 1900 to 1920.

This is the first of several books he published on instruction in conjuring. It was followed by a book dedicated to card magic and *Stanyon's Serial Lessons in Conjuring*, a multipart course in magic. Aimed at the amateur, practising magic as a hobby is emphasised as 'it is a wholesome and moral one'. Nevertheless, Stanyon hopes to have presented something new with his volume to amuse his '*confrères* and the public alike'.



### **10. The Magic Show Book**

*Alexander the Magician* (New York: Macmillan, 1937)

This is a book aimed at the true beginner. Compiled from the author's columns in *Young America: The National News Weekly For Youth*, it presents tricks that can be performed easily and 'there is no exceptional skill required, and all the apparatus needed can be built easily.' The tricks get increasingly difficult through the book and it starts with the key warning to never reveal the method of a trick to the audience or risk ruining the mystery. Written for children, aged 10-14, the blurb promotes the book to boys and girls alike!

## **11. Will Goldston's More Exclusive Magical Secrets.**

*Will Goldston* (London: W. Goldston, 1921)

The series of 3 books of magical secrets known as the 'locked books' are among Will Goldston's best known works. Goldston was often accused of publishing magicians' secrets without permission, but he saw it as a duty to document and preserve magic's heritage and secrets that magicians might otherwise take to the grave and 'that is not fair play'. The series claimed to reveal unpublished tricks and featured many well-known magicians. Its print run was strictly limited and it was sold for a relatively high price. Each volume was issued with a padlock attached to prevent casual browsing and, when promoting the first volume, Goldston proposed that all subscribers sign an undertaking not to reveal the book's secrets. The series was perhaps much more of a gimmick to promote Goldston's businesses than an exclusive revelation of secrets. This copy was presented to Harry Price with the inscription: 'Congratulations to friend Harry Price. You possess the 1st copy many hours before other subscribers receive their copies. Best wishes, Sincerely yours, Will Goldston. November 1921.'

## **12. Illustrated Descriptive Catalogue with Prices of Conjuring Tricks, Magical Apparatus, and New and Ingenious Puzzles**

*J.P. Bland* (London: the author, 1873)

The catalogues of dealers and sellers of conjuring equipment can be a wonderful source for historical tricks and illusions. The first advertisements for Joseph

Bland's business appeared in *The Times* in 1860-61, although this catalogue from the early 1870s claims it has been established for 20 years. The shop was situated in New Oxford Street by 1863. Bland issued the first of his lavishly illustrated catalogues in 1866, and it was pirated soon after. A special notice at the front of the catalogue calls attention to the unscrupulous thieves and their inferior copies of his products. The catalogue includes apparatus inspired by Robert-Houdin and magical hats, bottles and bird cages among many other wonders. The most expensive item is 'The fairy singing bird', at £35. It is described as the 'most extraordinary automaton ever seen or heard in this country'. Following his death in 1898, Bland's business passed to Hamley's.

## **13. Fry's Cocoa & Chocolate album of cigarette cards depicting magic tricks**

### **14. 'Amusing tricks and how to do them'**

(Published by Carreras Ltd.)

Cigarette cards were a form of trade card, originally functioning to reinforce cigarette packets but quickly becoming collectable. Companies produced themed sets such as these as promotional tools. Carreras was a London tobacco company. Their 1937 series of 50 cards of 'Amusing tricks and how to do them' feature cartoon illustrations with brief descriptions on the reverse. Cards issued by Fry's Ltd. are shown in an album. The series of 50 'Tricks and Puzzles' cards, issued in 1924, have illustrations of tricks and simple instructions on the back.



## 15. Collection of Catalogues of Magical Apparatus

*W. & F. Hamley* (London: Hamley Brothers, various dates)

Hamley's is famous for being the world's oldest toy shop, and its Conjuring Department was one of the biggest and most important centres for magic apparatus and books. It sold to professionals, amateurs and beginners. The shop started selling conjuring items from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Notices in the first issues of *Mahatma* listed Hamley's Grand Magical Saloons in High Holborn as the newspaper's sole agents. These catalogues feature the latest tricks, with illustrations, packs of cards, accessories, magic books and magic sets. Several also feature advertisements for Hamley's Entertainment Agency, which provided 'suitable entertainments for every occasion and employ only artists of refinement and ability'.

## 16. Illustrated Catalogue of the Latest English, American and Continental Magical Novelties

*L. Davenport & Co.* (London: Davenport, 19--)

### Catalogue of Magical Apparatus, New Conjuring Tricks and Latest Amusing Jokes, Puzzles and Novelties.

*L. Davenport & Co.* (London: Davenport, [19--])

Davenports has been a centre of magic in London since 1898 and is the oldest continuously owned magic business in the world. Dealing in apparatus, tricks and books, it absorbed several other magic businesses including Will Goldston

Ltd. The business was founded as a mail order company by Lewis Davenport, an accomplished magician, as a teenager. It soon found a home for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Bloomsbury, first in New Oxford Street, then, Great Russell Street, opposite the British Museum. Davenport's catalogues were often issued with alluring gold and silver covers and were richly illustrated. Tricks and illusions featured in these catalogues range from egg and watch bags to an act based around the electric chair and the swallowing razor blades trick.

## 17. The Oxo's Book of Magic: Mystifying Tricks Easily Made

(London: Oxo Ltd., 1934)

This small pamphlet re-purposes simple, classic tricks for use with Oxo products and packaging - an example of using magic for advertising and promotion. Stock cubes stand in for die and balls and magic words include 'Fray Bentos - Best-Paste-for-Sandwichi'. It was sent to several magic magazines and received positive mentions, for the potential of its wide distribution to stimulate interest in magic and as an advertising gimmick. *The Magic Circular* noted 'the lad who is interested will soon be pestering mother for covers of meat paste jars, meat cubes, jelly cubes and all the other things this firm sells as they are necessary for the tricks!'

---

# MASTERS OF MAGIC & THEIR INFLUENCE



---

The history of magic is dominated by the personalities and stories of its star performers. Tales of ingenuity, invention, great rivalries, battles to master and top the latest illusion, stolen secrets, and fortunes and fame made and lost accompany the magician through the ages.

Covering the great performers of the golden age of magic, this section begins with those magicians often credited with establishing magic as a theatrical art, including **John Henry Anderson**, the Great Wizard of the North, believed to be the first to pull a rabbit from a hat.

Magic has often created and perpetuated its own myths and legends: an exciting backstory is as much part of a magician's performance as the illusions produced. Magicians revealed and retold their lives and secrets in accounts which also contributed to setting the standards for the art.

One of the most influential performers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, **Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin**, created in his autobiographical account *Confidences d'un Prestidigitateur* (1858) the myth and image of the modern master of magic as an artist and inspired a generation of performers. As well as an account of his relatively short professional career, the book presented a highly embellished version of his life and exploits, including a mission to Algeria for the French government.

**Robert-Houdin** was a key influence on one of the most famous magicians of all times, **Harry Houdini**, even down to his stage name. But this legacy soured for **Houdini** and he published his own exposé in *The Unmasking of Robert-Houdin* (1908). The book was part scathing attack on the 'unoriginality' of the master and **Houdini's** own history of magic, based on his collection of magical material. **Houdini** shared **Harry Price's** passion for book collecting, as well as their better-known activity investigating mediums, and books were often discussed in their correspondence.

Magicians have presented and refined famous illusions, which continue to be performed today, and created the figure of the magician in the popular imagination. Works on and by performers featured in the exhibition include the **Maskelynes**, who presented many innovative performances at the famous Egyptian Hall, **Horace Goldin**, who performed an illusion inspired by **Harry Price**, **David Devant**, and the great American magicians, **Alexander Herrmann**, and **Harry Keller**.

Key works that remain essential reading for practitioners of magic also feature, including first editions of **Maskelyne** and **Devant's** *Our Magic* (1911) and *The Expert at the Card Table* (1902), a book whose authorship is still debated.

## 1. The Fashionable Science of Parlour Magic

*J. H. Anderson* (London: *The Great Wizard of the North*, at his Royal Psycomantheum, ca. 1850-60)

John Henry Anderson is one of the first great names of modern magic. Hailing from Scotland, Anderson claimed that the title 'The Great Wizard of the North' was conferred on him by Sir Walter Scott, but this was most likely an invention to embellish his reputation. He began performing magic at 17 in touring companies in Scotland and the north of England, establishing himself in London theatres in 1840. His belief in the importance of creating a performance that was more than just a demonstration of skill but also entertained and dazzled the audience helped establish magic as an important fixture of the stage. This book was possibly first published as early as 1840 and includes descriptions of many tricks, as well as an early exposure of 'spirit rappers' and mediums. Anderson popularised two of the most famous magic acts - pulling a rabbit from a hat and the bullet catch. These were often featured in his elaborate posters and playbills.

## 2. Fifty Years in the Magic Circle

*Antonio Blitz* (San Francisco: Bancroft, 1871)

Several performers appeared in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the name Signor or Herr Blitz. A feature common to many of their acts was the dancing plates. John Neville Maskelyne saw a version of this as a child and later incorporated it into his company's repertoire. The Signor Antonio Blitz of this book performed

in England in 1825 before leaving for America in 1834 to find success. Blitz's act included many of the tricks and features popular in magicians' performances of the time. As well as dancing plates, he performed the bullet catch and with automata and performing animals. The biography was an extension of Blitz's stage persona, which claimed he was born in Moravia and first performed in Hamburg at 13 after learning the secrets of magic. This biographical detail was possibly borrowed from another Signor Blitz, as his tombstone states he was born in Deal, Kent.

## 3. Voyages et Séances Anecdotiques de M. Comte

*Louis Christian Emmanuel Appollinaire Comte* (Paris: J.G. Dentu, 1816)

Comte was the leading French magician of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was particularly noted for his skills with cards and his mastery of patter and presentation. Robert-Houdin knew Comte and considered him to be the best example for conjurors to aspire to. This account of his exploits was published early in his career, which lasted until 1854, shortly after he had opened Le Théâtre Comte in Paris. It includes his performance for Louis XVIII at the Tuileries Palace in 1814 during a celebration of the restoration of the Bourbon royal family. Comte replaced the King of Hearts with a portrait of the King during a card trick. He then fired the portrait from a pistol at a vase of flowers, from which rose a bust of Louis.



#### 4. The Adventures of the Strange Man

*H.S. Lynn* (London: Gilbert & Rivington, 1873)

Dr Hugh Simmons Lynn toured many countries and this book, with a frontispiece by George Cruickshank Jr, records his adventures. In 1864, Lynn was possibly the first to perform Japanese Butterfly Trick in the West, which involved paper butterflies dancing from a fan. He claimed he had learned the trick while travelling in Japan. From 1873 he presented a rival magic programme at the Egyptian Hall, the home of Maskelyne and Cooke. It was a wide-ranging show, including spirit rapping and table-turning, clairvoyance, the Indian Basket trick, aerial suspensions and the Palingenesia – a decapitation trick that extended to removing the arms and legs – among

many others. Lynn's patter included the phrase 'that's how it's done' and it became a popular catch phrase, no doubt helped by this book. As a child, Harry Houdini was inspired by a Dr Lynn, but that is likely to have been an imitator who was riding on Lynn's success by using his name.

#### 5. Robert Heller, his Doings

*Robert Heller* (Melbourne: H. Cordell, ca. 1875)

Robert, sometimes Joseph, Heller was born and began his career in magic in Britain, but it was in America that he made his name and had the greatest impact. His early programmes were an almost exact copy of Robert-Houdin's but when he launched his career in America, ten years after leaving Britain, it was his combination of magic and humour with other entertainments that entranced audiences. His second-sight act with his assistant Haidee Heller, where she would describe items brought in by audience members while blindfolded, was a sensation. With the dealer Charles De Vere, Heller invented the Black Art Table, which had a black top that could accommodate compartments undetectable by the audience.

#### 6. Cutting of illustration, 'Angleterre-Le colonel Stodare a Egyptian Hall-Le tour indien du panier'

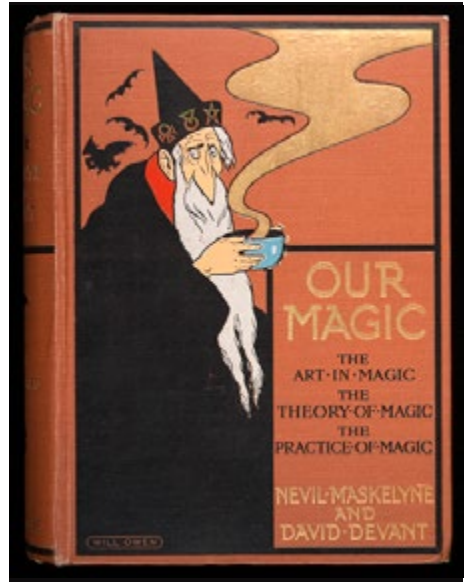
(n.d.)

Colonel Stodare first performed at the Egyptian Hall in London in April 1865. He presented a number of illusions that were new to the audiences and would quickly become part of magic repertoires. The Indian Basket Trick, seen here, and the famous Sphinx illusion. The Sphinx

was invented by Thomas Tobin of the Polytechnic Institute and used mirrors to create the illusion of a disembodied head appearing on a table. Stodare first presented the Sphinx on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 1865; it was so popular that he was soon commanded to show it to Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle and the trick is pictured in the frontispiece of Professor Hoffman's *Modern Magic*. Stodare's career was cut short by his death from consumption less than two years after he first appeared on the Egyptian Hall's stage.

### **7. Catalogue for an exhibition by Maskelyne and Cooke, Illusionists and Anti-Spiritualists, at the Egyptian Hall**

John Nevil Maskelyne's partnership with George Alfred Cooke began in 1865 when they built a spirit cabinet to expose the Davenport Brothers' séance act. In 1873 they took a three month lease on a room at the Egyptian Hall, where they remained until the building was demolished in 1905. During their time there, the Hall became known as England's Home of Mystery. Maskelyne was a master at devising and presenting illusions and pioneered stage levitations. Some of their famous illusions are depicted here, including the automaton Psycho. Maskelyne was also adept at employing other talented performers and inventors including Paul Valadon, Charles Morritt and David Devant. Maskelyne continued to be a skeptic of spiritualism and founded the Magic Circle's Occult Committee to investigate supernatural claims.



### **8. Our Magic**

*Nevil Maskelyne and David Devant*  
(London: Routledge, [1911])

*Our Magic* was written by David Devant and Nevil Maskelyne, the son of John Nevil Maskelyne, to redefine how the performance of magic was perceived. It stressed the importance of the art in magic. It was not keeping secrets or trickery that mattered, but the effect an act had that was of greatest importance—that came from the magician's skill and inventiveness. Maskelyne covers the technical and performance requirements of a magician, while Devant shows the processes behind effects and the importance of storytelling in performance. The emphasis is always on understanding that knowing how a trick is done is not enough – a magician must know how to perform a trick to perfection. The book

was not successful with general audiences but remains a key text for magicians.

### **9. Artifice, Ruse, and Subterfuge at the Card Table: a Treatise on the Science and Art of Manipulating Cards**

*S. W. Erdnase* (Chicago: Erdnase, c. 1902. Another edition Chicago: Frederick J. Drake, c. 1918)

Known by the title *The Expert at the Card Table*, this book became one of the most important in modern card magic. In print continually since 1902, it has been translated into multiple languages. The book covers the techniques of card shapers and cheats including shuffles, cuts, forcing and palming with a section on card tricks. The identity of the author is also one of the greatest mysteries of modern magic and has never been definitively proved. The illustrator of the book, Marshall Smith, described meeting the author in a hotel room; he was a well-spoken, gentlemanly man who paid him with a cheque. Numerous candidates have been suggested, many based around the theory that the author's pseudonym was an anagram of E. S. Andrews. The first edition, shown here alongside a latter mass-market paperback, was published by the author and priced at \$2.00.

### **10. J.N. Hofzinsler's Card Conjuring**

*Ottokar Fischer*; edited, with notes by *S.H. Sharpe*. (London: The Magic Wand Office, 1931)

### **11. Photograph of Harry Price and Ottokar Fischer outside the latter's premises in Vienna**

(n.d)

Johann Nepomuk Hofzinsler was one of the most important card magicians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is known as the Father of Modern Card Magic. His performances were based on simple settings and small props that put his skills centre-stage. He invented several techniques and routines that continue to be used by card magicians, including 'Everywhere and Nowhere' where three cards all turn into the audience member's card. Hofzinsler's legacy was first established by the publications of an Austrian magician, Ottokar Fischer, pictured here with Harry Price in the 1930s. Unfortunately, Fischer got many details wrong and a recent major work by Magic Christian corrected these and revealed new information about Hofzinsler's life and magic.

### **12. Memoirs of Robert-Houdin: Ambassador, Author, and Conjuror**

*Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1859)

Robert-Houdin's memoirs were first published in French as *Confidences d'un Prestidigitateur* in 1858, with the first English editions coming the following year. The book featured stories from his introduction to magic by the travelling magician Torrini to his mission to Algeria for the French government to demonstrate the supposed 'superiority' of French magic to local mystics. The autobiography was highly embellished, if not entirely invented in parts, but this was an extension of Robert-Houdin's belief of what it meant to be a magician. For him, it was an actor playing a role, creating a performance of perfect illusions. His autobiography, with its

colourful origin story and exploits, was a continuation of the performance. This book, and Robert-Houdin's other works, were highly influential on the generation of magicians that followed.

### 13. The Unmasking of Robert-Houdin

*Harry Houdini* (New York: The Publishers Printing Co., 1908)

Harry Houdini was one of the magicians impressed by Robert-Houdin's memoirs. As he was one of his chief inspirations for beginning a career in magic, Houdini even took his stage name from his illustrious predecessor. Houdini was also a passionate collector of material on the history of magic. Through his research, he began to resent the limelight that Robert-Houdin, in his view, received at the cost of other magicians. As he began to learn that there was little evidence for many of the stories in Robert-Houdin's autobiography, this book, which began as an ambitious history of magic, became Houdini's exposé of his former hero's 'dishonesty.'

### 14. Houdini's Magic

*Walter B. Gibson* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, c1932)

Harry Houdini's unexpected death in 1926 meant that many of the secrets of his magic and escapology went to the grave with him. Houdini started in card magic, billing himself as the 'King of Cards', but his fame came chiefly from his escapology and grand stunts, such as making an elephant vanish from the stage of the New York Hippodrome. Houdini did not publish a great deal on his own magic and this book was prepared

posthumously from his notebooks with the assistance of his widow, Bess Houdini, also a performer, and Bernard Ernst, president of the Society of American magicians. The author, Walter B. Gibson, was a professional magician and prolific author, ghost-writing books for several other magicians.



### 15. Head and shoulders photograph of Houdini, signed to Harry Price

(14 September 1921)

### 16. From Harry Houdini To Harry Price

(dated 5 September 1920)

Harry Houdini and Harry Price maintained a long correspondence. It mainly concerned investigations into mediums, particularly Houdini's séances with Margery Crandon. They also wrote on their shared passion on collecting books, particularly early conjuring books. Houdini amassed an



extensive library, of which he boasts in this letter to Price in 1920. His collection is now in the Library of Congress and the Harry Ransom Centre. This portrait, sent to Price in 1921, includes a note about one of Price's prize finds: the first edition of *Hocus Pocus Junior*.

## **17. The Sphinx**

**V. 4, no. 7 (1905)**

Women in magic are often in a minority and overlooked. They are present often as assistants or appearing on playbills named under their male counterparts, but also as performers in their own right. Adelaide Herrmann's career in magic began with her husband Alexander Herrmann and their popular show across America. She was part of their innovative version of Robert-Houdin's suspension and their levitation illusions. Following Alexander's death, she continued the show with his nephew, Leon Herrmann, before striking out on her own. Adelaide became known as the Queen of Magic. She was renowned for her version of the bullet catch trick and skill with billiard balls. Her successful solo act, mainly on vaudeville stages, continued well into her seventies. She featured frequently in the magical and popular press and here appears on the cover of *The Sphinx*.

## **18. 'The queen of coins: "Talma" talks about her tricks' in New Penny Magazine**

**(London: Society for the Diffusion  
of Useful Knowledge, 1900)**

Mercedes Talma was part of one of the most successful magic trios of the early

20<sup>th</sup> century, The Comedians de Mephisto Co., also known as LeRoy, Talma and Bosco. With her husband, Servais LeRoy, she presented many innovative stage illusions including Asrah, a levitation effect which ended with the assistant vanishing in mid-air. Talma was also a highly skilled sleight-of-hand performer and was known as the 'Queen of Coins'. Here she presents her coin magic to the *Penny Magazine*, plucking coins from thin air, recounting anecdotes from her performances and revealing the secrets of her palming techniques, such as palming an astonishing 30 coins at one time.

## **19. It's Fun to be Fooled**

**Horace Goldin (London: S. Paul, 1937)**

Horace Goldin was a stage illusionist who received the title 'The Royal Illusionist' after performing several times for Edward VII. He is best known for his version of 'Sawing a Woman in Half' and the resulting legal battle with P.T. Selbit over the credit for the trick. He also had a curious connection to Harry Price. In 1932, Price conducted an experiment in black magic on the Brocken peak in Germany. It was a ritual to transform a young man into a goat and attracted a great deal of press coverage. Goldin, then on tour in Europe, sensed an opportunity and bought the same goat for an act. He recreated the experiment as an illusion, successfully transforming the goat into a man. He asked Price's permission to play him in the act; it was given on the condition that the act was not a burlesque and was presented in a dignified way.

## **20. Herrmann the Great: the Famous Magician's Wonderful Tricks**

*H. J. Burlingame (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1897)*

Alexander Herrmann was part of a dynasty of French magicians who had his greatest success on the American stage. He began performing with his older brother, Carl, in America, and launched his solo career in 1862. He performed across Europe, including a 3-year engagement at the Egyptian Hall, before returning to America in 1874. In 1875 he married Adelaide Scarcez and they toured as one of the most successful magic acts in America for the next two decades. Although the types of illusion he presented were often variations of existing tricks, Herrmann's shows were particularly noted for their humour and his showmanship. He was one of the few magicians to actually pull a rabbit from a hat, by taking a hat from the audience and dropping in a rabbit concealed in his jacket.

## **21. A Magician's Tour, Up and Down and Round About the Earth**

*Harry Kellar (Chicago: R.R. Donnelly, 1886)*

For 20 years Harry Kellar and Herrmann the Great competed to be America's reigning 'King of Magic' and the successor to Robert Heller. Kellar started with the travelling magician the Fakir of Ava (Isiah Hughes) in 1864 before travelling the world and bringing back tricks and apparatus that were new to American audiences. This book describes Kellar's travels to South America, India, Africa and Australia. It is edited by his faithful 'familiar', 'Satan, Junior'. Kellar's large scale

stage shows specialised in illusions using apparatus rather than sleight-of-hand. He was notorious for buying or 'borrowing' other performers' acts, including French magician Buatier De Kolta's 'Vanishing Birdcage' and John Nevil Maskelyne's automaton 'Psycho' and levitation illusion, which he audaciously walked onto the stage and examined mid-performance. After Herrmann's death, Kellar was America's favourite magician until 1908, when he passed his literal mantle to his chosen successor, Howard Thurston.

## **22. My Life of Magic**

*Howard Thurston (Philadelphia: Dorrance, c1929)*

Howard Thurston made his name in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as one of the most skilled card magicians of the age, earning the title 'King of Cards' for his performances of sleights and stunts. He was known for his version of the 'Rising Card', where audience members' cards were pulled from a pack by an invisible force into Thurston's hands and then thrown into the crowd. Thurston joined Kellar's show in 1907 before taking over in 1908. His vaudeville touring company became one of the biggest in America with Thurston presenting many spectacular stage illusions, including Kellar's levitation and the Indian Rope Trick. His shows were advertised with spectacular, colourful posters depicting his spectacular feats and announcing him as 'Thurston the World's Famous Magician. The Wonder Show of the Universe'. In his time Thurston was as celebrated as his sometime rival Harry Houdini.

---

# EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

## Film Screenings

---

**The Prestige** – Thurs 24<sup>th</sup> Jan

**Houdini** – Thurs 28<sup>th</sup> Feb

**The Illusionist** – Thurs 21<sup>st</sup> March

## Talks & Events

---

'The Enduring Magic of the Great Houdini'

'The Books That Influenced The Great Magicians'

'Magic's Spell on Society - Tracing Magic Through Popular Culture'

More events to be announced.

Go to [www.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk](http://www.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk) for full listings and to book.



---

# USEFUL INFORMATION

## Opening Hours

---

Monday - Saturday  
Sunday: Closed

### Term time hours

Mon – Thurs: 09.00 - 20.45  
Fri: 09.00 - 16.15  
Sat: 09.45 - 17.15

### Out of term time

Mon – Fri: 09.00 - 17.45  
Sat: 09.45 - 17.15

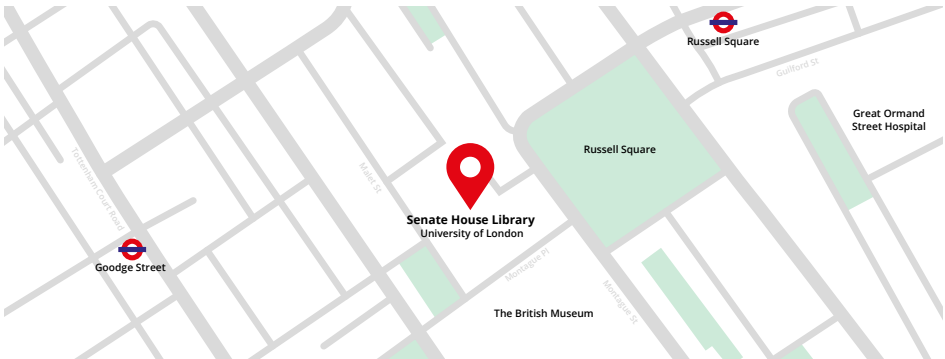
## How to Find Us

---

We are on the 4th floor of Senate House in Bloomsbury, Central London – a short walk from London Underground and national railway stations.

### Senate House Library

University of London  
Malet Street  
London WC1E 7HU



## Public Transport

---

### Closest Bus Stops

Tottenham Court Road or Russell Square (Numbers 7, 24, 29, 68, X68, 73, 91, 134, 168 and 188)

### Closest London Underground Stations

Russell Square  
Gough Street  
Tottenham Court Road  
Euston Square

### Closest Railway Stations

Euston  
Kings Cross / St Pancras International



---

# NOTES





**UNIVERSITY  
OF LONDON**  
SENATE HOUSE  
LIBRARY

**f i t #STAGINGMAGIC**  
OPEN MONDAY – SATURDAY  
[www.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk](http://www.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk)