

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, PhD.

Hello fellow magi and welcome to the *Ex Libris* article for June 2015! I hope you are all enjoying the summer!

The book in the spotlight this month is a book that no conjuring library should be without and was in fact the very first book on magic that I got from a magic shop. The book is '**Greater Magic: A Practical Treatise On Modern Magic**' by John Northern Hilliard, edited by Carl W. Jones and Jean Hugard and dedicated to one Angel Lewis, whom most of you know as Professor Hoffmann.

Hilliard worked for Howard Thurston as a press agent during the day and at night he began writing a book that, he hoped, would bring magic to the modern age and up to date. Because of his day job, he had access to some of the greatest magical minds of the day who were kind enough to share their creations and their knowledge. Hilliard spent hours writing down the descriptions and the modus operandi, keeping everything in brown leather three-ring binders.

In 1931, Carl Jones heard about these manuscripts from Thurston, who was asked to talk Hilliard into allowing them to be the publishers, a request to which Hilliard later acquiesced. It was Jones who, in 1932, came up with the title of '*Greater Magic*', which Hilliard absolutely loved and told Jones to copyright straightaway. Hilliard continued working on the book for the next three years until his untimely death in 1935 at the age of 63 in the room of an Indianapolis hotel. Only a third of the book was complete, with a large portion of the material still in the notebooks that Hilliard compiled. Jumping forward a bit, Carl Jones ultimately selected Jean Hugard in 1937 to help finish the massive book. Along with the Hugard editing came over 1,000 illustrations by Dr. Harlan Tarbell.

Greater Magic was originally released in 1938 intending to be an encyclopedia on magic and magicians; it was not advertised to the public – it was only advertised and distributed among magicians. It covered just about every major facet of magic at the time including cards, coins, ropes, billiard balls, thimbles, matches, cigarettes/cigars, mentalism, linking rings, mathemagic, magical apparatus, illusions, bills, sponge balls, silks, cups and balls and much more. The original book contained over 715 effects from over 100 magicians, many of them the 'big names' of the day: J. N. Hofzinsler, Theo Annemann, T. Nelson Downs, Harlan Tarbell, Houdini, Dai Vernon, Cardini, Silent Mora, Max Malini, Nate Leipzig, Chung Ling Soo, Harry Blackstone Sr., the Bambergs and many more too numerous to list here.

Carl Jones released the book in December of 1938, limiting the original print run to 1,000 copies and priced them at \$12.50. In fact, 378 copies were sold before the first book even left the printers and the tome was an immediate success.

Join me next month for Part II, in which we will delve into the mystery that accompanied this great book. Until then, here is an effect from the *Greater Magic* book to whet your appetite:

The Salt Trick by Henry Gordien

Effect: The performer pours a quantity of salt from a shaker onto his left hand and then dumps it onto the hand of a spectator. He forms his left hand into a fist and invites the spectator to slowly pour the salt into his closed left fist. Holding both hands in a fist and held far apart, he slowly opens his left hand over the spectator's but no salt emerges – the hand is empty! He immediately proceeds to pour the salt out of his right fist into the spectator's hand.

Requirements: A salt shaker with a removable top, some salt and a thumb tip*. Place the thumb tip wherever you like so that it can be easily obtained, somewhere on your right side.

Presentation: Get the thumb tip onto your right hand thumb. Pick up the salt shaker with the right hand and remove the top with your left hand; discard it to the table and pour a quantity of salt onto your left hand, making sure you that you pour out a *little* more than the thumb tip can hold. Ask your helper to hold out their *right* hand and then pour the salt onto their hand as you set the salt shaker down. Contrive to spill the extra bit of salt while pouring it onto their hand – this not only makes the effect more realistic but it also reduces the amount that will go into the thumb tip, which must not be filled to overflowing. While your right hand is momentarily at your side, remove the thumb tip and get it into finger palm position, the opening facing your thumb.

Close your left hand into a loose fist as you would for the Vernon 'Coin Load', leaving a larger hole formed by your thumb and forefinger. Cross your right fist over your left fist as you point with your right index finger at the salt in their hand. As your hands cross, the thumb tip is allowed to secretly drop into the left fist. Invite the spectator to pour the salt into your left hand. Use the right fingers to brush the salt off the top of your left fist, and during this action, use the right forefinger and thumb to nip the edge of the thumb tip and steal it into right hand finger palm. Close both fists and hold apart at chest level over the open hands of the spectator. Milk the vanish of the salt from the left hand. For the big finish, pour the salt out of the right hand slowly. As you finish pouring, raise the right hand and give a few swift downward swings to get the last of the salt out, using this action to hide getting the thumb tip back onto your thumb.

*The original version of this used a small tube with a bottom that was about the size of a silk dye tube. Also, you can start with the tip on your left thumb, but you must then find a way to conceal it from the start. I encourage you to try this because you can do this anywhere if you carry a thumb tip with you! Have fun and happy summer reading!

Yours in the Secret Art,

Joaquin Ayala, PhD.

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