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Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin (1805–71) is often called the father of modern conjuring. His name was later adopted by magician and escape artist Harry Houdini, whose highly sceptical exposé of Victorian spiritualism is also published in this series. The best-known magician of his time, Robert-Houdin toured France, England and Germany, performed for Queen Victoria, and was sent to French Algeria by Napoleon III to demonstrate the perceived superiority of French magic to the local shamans. This book, originally published in 1868, is devoted primarily to coin and card tricks, but Robert-Houdin also describes many other magical tricks and includes a history of conjuring. In 1877 the book appeared in this English translation by Louis Hoffmann (1839–1919). Hoffmann (real name Angelo John Lewis, a barrister) had published his own guide to magic in 1876, and both books caused controversy for revealing the secrets of stage magicians in such unprecedented detail.

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# Secrets of Conjuring and Magic

*Or How to Become a Wizard*

JEAN EUGÈNE ROBERT-HOUDIN

EDITED & TRANSLATED BY

LOUIS HOFFMAN



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THE SECRETS  
OF  
CONJURING AND MAGIC

OR  
*HOW TO BECOME A WIZARD.*

BY  
ROBERT-HOUDIN.

TRANSLATED AND EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY  
PROFESSOR HOFFMANN,  
AUTHOR OF "MODERN MAGIC."

FOURTH EDITION.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.*

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.



THE following pages are a translation of *Les Secrets de la Prestidigitation et de la Magie*, which was published by Robert-Houdin in 1868, and which has nearly ever since been out of print, the possession of a copy being regarded among professors of magic as a boon of the highest possible value. Though originally intended only as an instalment of a larger treatise, the present is unquestionably the most scientific work ever written on the art of conjuring, and the favourable reception accorded to my own book, *Modern Magic*, leads me to imagine that a translation of this, the production of probably the greatest conjuror the world has ever known, will be received with still greater favour.

In the work of translation I have aimed at substantial rather than absolute fidelity. My design

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has been to produce a manual of practical utility, and rather to indicate clearly what the author *meant*, than to reproduce with literal exactness what he has *said*. To that end, I have not hesitated, where it has appeared desirable, to supply a word or expand a phrase, and have further added occasional explanatory footnotes. To avoid the confusion which would arise from the use of two sets of notes, I have incorporated the author's own notes, which are few and far between, with the text itself.

LOUIS HOFFMANN.

*September 1, 1877.*

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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THE shortest preface, it is said, is the best, probably because the shorter it is, the easier it is to skip it.

It is seldom, indeed, but that we leave unread the few pages of more or less personal observations with which some authors introduce their opening chapter.

For my own part, I confess with shame that I don't think I have ever read a preface, save those I have written for my own works.

Desiring to do the proper thing, I had made up my mind to leave this first page virgin of print, in token of my hearty approval of the popular saying above mentioned ; but upon second thoughts, and in order not to depart too completely from the prevailing fashion as to a preface, I have endeavoured

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to find a way to conciliate the favour of my readers by something similar in intention if not in form, and I have finally determined on a *Dedication*.

This book being solely designed to teach conjuring, I dedicate it, with much goodwill, to those of my readers whom it may concern, as indicated on the page next following.

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TO

MY FUTURE BRETHREN IN THE  
MAGIC ART.

*May the instructions contained in this book be as  
profitable to them as the composition of those instruc-  
tions has been pleasant to me.*

ROBERT-HOUDIN.

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