

THE HERMETIC PRESS “STYLEBOOK”

by
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“No passion in the world is equal to the passion to alter someone else’s draft.”
—*H. G. Wells*

This “stylebook” was composed to answer common and not so common questions from authors. The entries are in no particular order. You may therefore use this document for your first editing exercise.

The Serial Comma:

There are two widely accepted schools of thought on the use of a serial comma; e.g., “Place the cards, coin, and rubber band into your pocket.” Or “Place the cards, coin and rubber band into your pocket.” One school would have you always place the comma before *and* in a series of three or more elements. The other would not. There is a third school, with a scant faculty, that uses the serial comma only when there is some genuine concern of ambiguity of meaning that a comma would resolve. The first two practices are generally safe, although rigid usage of either can create occasional unintended meanings. The third approach requires thought each time you punctuate a series. I have adopted the that approach, but have no objection to the use of the preceding two.

As a curious writer, though, I will ask those defenders of the serial comma: If a comma is always needed between the last two elements in a series of three or more to provide clarity, why does that need vanish in a series of two?

Close Quotes and Punctuation:

As with the serial comma, there are two widely accepted practices for placing commas and periods inside or outside of the closing quote mark. American practice always places commas and periods to the left of the quote mark. Other punctuation marks are placed to the right of the quote mark, unless they are logically part of the element set off inside the quote marks. Examples: “Set down the ‘ancient coin,’ then cover it with your hand.” “With apparent anger, slap down the ‘ancient coin’!” The practice of always “tucking” commas and periods inside the quote mark was established by American typesetters, for æsthetic reasons.

British practice places commas and periods inside or outside the closing quote mark, dictated by the logic of the sentence, in the same way punctuation is positioned inside or outside of a closing parenthesis. I, choosing function over form, use the British style. You may prefer the American style. That is fine. Just be consistent in the use of whichever practice you choose.

Titles:

Here is the method used for noting titles. Generic trick titles, such as *Cups and Balls*, *Out*

of This World, Linking Rings, etc. are capitalized. Specific trick and article titles like Paul Curry's "Out of This World", Dai Vernon's "Symphony of the Rings", etc. are capitalized and in quotes. Another example: Twisting the Aces should be in quotes if referring to a specific method title, like Dai Vernon's original "Twisting the Aces". If used as a generic plot description, it would be Twisting the Aces. Magazine and book titles are italicized, as in *Dai Vernon's Symphony of the Rings* by Lewis Ganson and *The Linking Ring*.

Capital Card Names:

Over the years I have come to believe that capitalizing card names is desirable, as it sometimes makes one's writing clearer, as in "Place the Two on the table," (a Two of Clubs, say) and "Place the two on the table," (two cards previously specified). A rule of thumb is to handle the capitalization of card names as you would proper names, like father-Father. However, it occasionally gets tricky and begs for a judgment call. I would write "the Three" or "the two black Threes" or "the four Queens". One must decide if the name is being used specifically or generically; e.g., "Place any low-valued spot cards, like twos, threes or fours, on top of the deck." "Place the black Twos, Threes and Fours on top of the deck." Yes, there are gray areas.

Hold the Biddle, Please:

I prefer that the term "end grip" be used instead of "Biddle grip". My reasoning is two-fold. The meaning of "end grip" can be intuited by someone who has never come across the term before. The same cannot be said for "Biddle grip". And the latter term is historically misleading. Elmer Biddle was clearly not the first person to hold cards by their ends, and naming this grip after him is patently ludicrous.

Gimmicks, Gaffs and Fekes:

These three words are often used interchangeably, but careful writers may wish to be more discriminating. The clearest distinctions of the words I know of were formulated by T. A. Waters in his excellent *Encyclopedia of Magic and Magicians*. I am not certain how thoroughly grounded in historical usage Thomas's definitions are, but there is some support for them, and I think his distinctions can add clarity.

Thomas defined a *gaff* as a common object that has been physically altered in some secret way to bring about a magical goal; e.g., a stripper deck, a mirror glass.

He defined a *gimmick* as a secret device never seen by the audience, which contributes to a magical effect; e.g., a reel.

Thomas defined *fakes* or *fekes* as devices visible to spectators, but with secret natures or uses that are unrecognized by the audience; e.g., thumb tips, sixth fingers. He judges *feke* as "an obsolete and affected spelling". I would differ with him on this point. I think this older spelling aids in differentiating the specific meaning of the word within magic's literature from the broader meanings understood by the public. I wish he were able to debate the point with me.

As with most things, there will be exceptions; items that can be plausibly placed in more than one of these three classifications. But Thomas's definitions provide excellent guidelines.

What Gender Are We?

With social norms rapidly changing (compared to the more patient pace of history), the use of *he* as a gender-neutral pronoun has become at times anything but a neutral issue. If there is a need to emphasize dual genders, use *he or she* and *his or hers*, and use them as sparingly as possible, as they quickly become wearing. In recognition of the problem, I sometimes vary the genders of the spectators in tricks, making some *she*'s and others *he*'s. English does have a non-gender-specific pronoun: *it*. And *it* is a perfectly fine solution to the problem. Oddly, *it* is also never seriously considered as a solution. Instead, far more strained and awkward constructions have been experimented with.

Another problem with gendered pronouns arises within the long tradition in magical literature of always using *he* when needing a pronoun for the performer. For centuries, this was tolerable from the standpoint of accepted grammatical usage, and was also supported by the gender of most magicians, professional and amateur. But as women are entering the profession in increasing numbers (thank goodness), this practice must also be examined with fresh eyes. The use of *he* for both genders was simply a matter of practicality, and was recognized by most English speakers as being non-gender specific despite its appearance. Currently, the plural *they* is becoming more accepted as a gender-unspecific singular pronoun. From a grammatical point of view, this brings a loss in clarity; from a sociological point of view, it has its appeal. Personally, I believe sexual equality can and will be established on more meaningful grounds than blunting the efficiency of language. If need be, let *it* reign. But each must weigh the importance of these concerns in *his or her* own mind. In most instances, the problem of references to the performer's gender, when addressing the reader, may be neatly avoided by using the second-person: *you*. This also creates a friendlier and a more direct link between author and reader.

Put It There:

A far more difficult problem in addressing gender issues in magic books is dealing with references to clothing involved in the method or choreography of tricks. Standard portions of male attire are assumed and frequently mentioned in magic texts; especially pockets. This, as Lisa Menna pointed out to me years ago, is a large problem for women magicians, whose costumes vary widely, often don't include pockets and, when they do, frequently the pockets are more decorative than functional. Long a problem for women, it is becoming an increasing problem for all those of us wishing to instruct by text. If pockets (visible or secret), sleeves, trouser legs, lapels, etc., become involved in the method or the effect of a trick, the woman reader will need to assess if that trick is practical for her and how problems of dress can be, may we say, addressed. There is clearly no way a writer can in any practical manner cover multiple solutions for different costumes. However, as magic becomes more equally populated by women magicians, writers should not lose sight of the problems of dress and occasionally acknowledge it

rather than ignore it. (This touch of courtesy was suggested to me by Tom Stone as we discussed the problem.)

No Pinkies:

I would greatly prefer that the term “pinky” or “pinkie” be avoided. This is baby-talk, like referring to the index finger as “pointer”. Instead, use “little finger” or “fourth finger”.

Adjectival Hyphenation:

Adjectival word pairs like “face up”, “palm down”, “left hand”, etc. should be hyphenated when they precede the noun, but are not hyphenated when they follow it. Thus, “Place the Aces face up on the face-down deck.” Standard hyphenation procedure also dictates that “little finger” or “fourth finger” be hyphenated in such phrases as “Catch a left little-finger break above the selection.” The hyphen is necessary here to indicate that “little” is linked to “finger” and not to “break”. In other words, it is the finger that is little, not the break. If the rules of hyphenation aren’t clear from this, check a standard style or grammar book.

A Moving Passage:

The confusion of foreword and forward is amazingly common in magic books and in those works of less than eighty pages that their authors wistfully call books. I suspect that the mere repetition of the error in print lays the trap for many an eager first author (it certainly caught this one). *Foreword* is that assemblage of words that comes before the main body of text in a book. *Forward* is therefore misapplied—unless the book is in motion.

Although less common, one occasionally sees a similar mixing of afterword and afterward.

In the Country of the “Wards”:

And while in the country of the “wards”, *towards* is British (and occasionally southern U.S.) spelling. Standard American spelling is *toward*. Ditto with most of the other “ward” words, like *backward* and *forward*. If your writing generally follows American conventions, don’t use the final “s” on these words, and never mix the two forms.

Numbers:

Since we are writing books, rather than newspaper or magazine columns (where space is at a premium), spell out numbers below 101, unless they are being used in mathematical calculations or time.

Please, No Steps:

Don’t use numbered paragraphs for trick or sleight explanation. The numbered format makes a technical work look even more off-putting. And the numbering seldom serves

any real purpose of clarity. Once in a while the author may refer back to “Steps 1-4”; but I would argue that this is more a matter of the author’s convenience than the reader’s, who then must turn back and see what those steps are, since we don’t remember actions by number. A far more helpful procedure is to give brief descriptions or recaps of the repeated actions to jog the reader’s memory.

The Singular Magi:

We conjurers have plundered the language for as many grand-sounding titles for ourselves as can be discovered. In our search we have often corrupted the meaning of words; e.g., sorcerer, necromancer, magus.

Meaning aside, we read, with surprising frequency, that one of our practitioners is “a magi”, despite his individual nature. Magi is plural; magus or mage is the singular. Birds move in flocks, fish in schools, and magi in conventions. A mage travels alone.

Mysteries of the Possessive Apostrophe:

The apostrophe is used to establish a noun’s ownership of the object that follows it. The rules for its use are not difficult, nor are they obscure; but many writers of magic seem never to have seen an apostrophe at work. To write “the spectator’s hand” declares that the hand belongs to someone who has probably ceased to be a “spectator” and is now unpaid help; whereas “the spectators hand” slaps several abused observers against an anonymous hand while casting meaning to the wind.

The apostrophe is placed after the *s* with plural nouns, to distinguish multiple ownership: “the magician’s Zig-zag” denotes one proud possessor of a generic stage act; “the magicians’ Sub Trunk” expresses the idea of a magic club that shares a similar asset.

With nouns that end with *s* in the singular, the same logic is followed. Therefore, one does not write, “Karl Fulve’s Self-Working Card Tricks”, unless the author of that work is a single Fulve. The man’s name is Fulves; therefore, “Karl Fulves’ *Self-working Card Tricks* or “Karl Fulves’s *Self-working Card Tricks*. (Both styles shown here are acceptable, but only one style should be used consistently within a work.) It follows that, if Mr. Fulves were to make this book a family project, we would then have “the Fulveses’ *Self-working Card Tricks*” and a hint of congenital derangement.

There is one seeming exception to this rule of the possessive apostrophe that tricks many a trickster: *its* is the possessive of whatever it may be; *it’s* may look like a possessive to the unwary, but is a contraction of *it is*. As those who have dabbled with mnemonics know, a single exception such as this is often more easily remembered than the rule. Commit it to memory.

One last rule, one well established, but seldom recognized. The genitive apostrophe should be reserved for living beings or personified entities. Inanimate objects should use the genitive *of*. Examples: “The *hands*’ actions should be unhurried.” Hands are living, animate things. But “Display the face *of* the top card,” not “the top *card’s* face.” A card is an unliving object.

Capital Punishment:

Just above, the words Zig-zag and Sub Trunk were awarded the reverence of

capitalization. This is done because we capitalize titles in English; in this case, the titles of two illusions, threadbare from love. Many authors of magical literature, including some very good ones, bestow the same honor upon the names of sleights. This habit is particularly attractive because it makes the sleights stand out in the text for the student. However, such a practice does have stumbling blocks that the caring writer will wish to skirt rather than tumble over.

First, there is the mystery of where one draws the line. Those who capitalize would agree that such manipulations as the Classic Pass or the Glide deserve promotion. But what about the little-finger break or the riffle shuffle? Are these not the titles of recognized maneuvers as well? What crime have they committed that makes them unworthy of capitalization, while others don the mantle?

We wade deeper waters still when the names of sleights suddenly transmogrify into verbs or even adjectives, operating within the magical leniency of the English language. For instance, few in our craft flinch at such phrases as “side steal the chosen card to the top of the deck,” or “classic palm the coin,” or “hold back the double-buckled cards.” Now English allows us some freedom to follow the Germans and capitalize certain nouns, but no language of which I am aware condones the capitalization of verbs; and only seldom do adjectives receive such exaltation (those derived from proper nouns, such as Freudian or Marlovian). So, if one adopts the procedure of capitalizing the names of sleights, one must bow to the inconsistency of demoting those sleights to lower case when they choose to become something other than nouns. I think a better course is to avoid using the names of sleights as verbs and adjectives; e.g., “Use a Side Steal to bring the chosen card to the top,” “Grip the coin in Classic Palm,” “Execute a Double Buckle to hold back the cards.”

My opinion for years has been that the names of sleights usually function quite well in lower case, and that the dubious service done the reader by capitalization is outweighed by the problems this practice raises. Nevertheless, those problems have continued to trouble me. In discussing the issue with David Acer, while working on his book, *More Power to You*, David came up with a solution I think is simple, elegant and almost entirely satisfactory in my mind. David’s rule is to capitalize the titles of specific sleights (e.g., Double Undercut, Riffle Pass, Diagonal Palm Shift), keeping in mind that these names should not be converted to verb or adjectival forms. General terms for groups of related sleights (e.g., false shuffle, palm, false count) should not be capitalized. Nor should grips and positions (end grip, dealing grip, little-finger break, classic palm, finger palm, edge palm, Tenkai palm, fingertip rest), as they are not sleights. The same goes for common and usually honest actions used by the public as well as by magicians (riffle shuffle, Hindu shuffle, straight cut, ribbon spread, deal). These are open procedures, not sleights. Positional terms like “outjog” and “injog”, while they may often be done secretly, are also classified outside the honored group of specific sleight names, and therefore are not capitalized. Gray areas still remain, but they are much narrower than those encountered with other systems. Not every writer will wish to adopt David’s system. That is fine, so long as your solution is based on responsible consideration and not on ignorance of the question.

Face Up—Face Down:

Cards, by common consent, are said to have faces. Hands do not; and a good thing too,

considering all the unsavory tasks hands are asked to do. Therefore, the writer who says that he “turns his hand face up” is either ill-informed or an anatomical wonder. Most of us have palms.

Redundant Physiology:

It is not uncommon to see in magic texts the overly zealous definition of fingers. “Bend the left-hand forefinger in toward the palm.” At least the author who pens such a sentence sins on the side of concern for clarity. However, since almost everyone’s left forefinger is found on his left hand, the phrase must be ruled redundant. Write “left forefinger” and get on with it.

Mental Double-think:

One mire of redundancy that sucks at the shoes of inattentive authors has the name “Mental.” The words mental and mentally are inextricably connected with the act of thinking, but thinking is often overlooked when magical writers and performers use them. One will see the phrase “mental telepathy,” and hear it spoken. Yet, if one stops for a moment to think, there is but one kind of telepathy, and it is by nature mental. So just write and say *telepathy*.

Even more common are such phrases as “Now mentally picture your card in your mind.” How else? Other examples: “Mentally think of your design.” “Mentally visualize the word.” When you read or hear such phrases, you can be sure that the perpetrator was guilty of something less than “mental thought” when he composed them.

Cut the Fat:

Certain wordy phrases, common in spoken English, slip casually into our written prose. Here are a few to watch for:

period of time—a period is intrinsically a unit of time. In many cases, either *period* or *time* work perfectly well without a partner.

in order to—in most instances *in order* adds nothing to the meaning of the connected infinitive; try cutting it and see if the sentence loses anything other than two functionless words.

As an experiment, use Find or Search in your word processing program to locate these phrases and see how often you use them when you needn’t.

Which End Is Up?

It is not uncommon to see writers trying to clarify which sides of a deck they mean with such phrases as “the short end”, “the long side”, “the long end” and “the short side”. It seems to me that such definitions are needlessly wordy. If you set a rectangular object in front of the average person, and ask that he point to its ends, the majority will indicate the two shortest sides. Given this widespread understanding of the word, it seems reasonable to me that one can, especially within the literature of card magic, refer to the “short sides” of a deck simply as the ends, and the “long sides” as the sides, thereby gaining concision without losing meaning.

Meaning by Half:

Occasionally, when referring to the classic illusion of “Sawing a Woman in Half,” one sees writers of magic attempting to correct standard English usage by calling the effect “Sawing a Woman in Halves”. Their attention to detail is admirable, but the fact is, dividing an object *in half* is a long-established and accepted idiom; and as idioms are wont to do, it frustrates literal meaning. Just as one wouldn’t normally say or write, “Cut the lemon in halves,” or “Tear the phone book in halves,” women are not sawn “in halves”. Grammarians call such usages over-refinements.

The word *half* can also cause unconscious wordiness. In the literature of card magic, one will often read things like “Now shuffle the two halves into each other.” Here the phrase “two halves” is ruled redundant. The halves of any single object must by definition number two. Therefore, halves requires no further quantification. Only if you have two or more decks in play, each cut in half, might you need to specify how many halves are currently being handled.

The literature of card magic is full of little problems for the conscientious writer. Here are a few more instances.

Have You Crimped or Bridged?

In the jargon of magic, when one puts a bend into one or more cards, we call it either a crimp or a bridge. However, there is some confusion about when it is correct to use each of these terms. Some authors seem to perceive them as synonyms.

Over the years these words have been awarded generally accepted, separate meanings, but these definitions are seldom formally stated. Here they are: A crimp is a bend placed in a single card, while a bridge is a bend put into several cards together, up to and including an entire deck. Therefore, one doesn’t crimp a deck or a packet, one bridges it. This distinction is useful in keeping one’s meaning clear.

There are, however, certain exceptions to this rule. For example, there is a particular type of bend called a “Mexican Joe crimp”, which is often put into packets, even entire decks, as well as into individual cards. To change the established name of this bend to a “Mexican Joe bridge” every time the bend is applied to more than a single card would needlessly complicate magic’s already overly complex lexicon. However, in most instances, appropriate uses of the words crimp and bridge are not difficult to determine.

Do You Perform Standing or Lying?

Another cause for unnecessary confusion to the reader of card literature occurs when some authors employ the terms injog and downjog interchangeably, along with their opposites, outjog and upjog. If writers of card magic keep in mind the meanings intrinsic in these terms, their proper use can add clarity rather than confusion to descriptions. If you are holding the deck horizontally and move a card *in* toward yourself, it is injogged. If you are holding the deck vertically and move the card *downward*, it is downjogged. Similar logic holds for the terms outjog and upjog. By referring to a downjog when the deck is held horizontally and the card is moved, not downward, but inward, the writer is likely to make the reader question the desired position of the pack. Why should we use terms that can cause uncertainty for a reader trying to follow complex physical actions from the printed page?

When a Cull is Not a Cull:

A cull, in magic jargon, is the secret action of arranging one or more cards in the deck or a packet. Consequently, when the performer *openly* removes, sorts or arranges cards, he is not culling them. He is removing, sorting or arranging them. Yet one will often see these overt actions referred to as culling. Once again, confusing the meanings of such words only makes the job of the reader more difficult, and your meaning less clear.

Mating Does Not Beget Duplication:

In recent years there seems to have arisen in the literature some confusion over when two cards are mates and when they are duplicates. Yet, with just a bit of thought, the difference should be clear. An example of mates would be the King of Clubs and the King of Spades. Both share the same value and color. However, the suits differ; therefore, these two cards are not duplicates. Duplicates would be two Kings of Clubs. Another obvious pairing of cards recognized as mates would be the King of Clubs and Queen of Clubs. Here the suits match, as do the societal associations of kings and queens. It is rare to see card mates erroneously called duplicates, but one does see duplicates incorrectly referred to as mates.

Rows and Columns:

Other straightforward definitions that often seem to escape the understanding of writers in magic are those for rows and columns. A row is an object or a line of objects that lies horizontally. In geometric terms, it is on the x plane. A column is an object or a line of objects that sits vertically (on the y plane). These terms are commonly understood to hold similarly for objects arranged flat on a table or diagrammed on paper. Therefore, referring to a “vertical row” is a contradiction in terms, while referring to a “horizontal row” is simply redundant. Strike that horizontal.

Caught by the Talon:

Talon, in the world of card playing, is the portion of the deck left over after the hands have been dealt. Yet, within the literature of card magic, where one would think such a term would be understood, it is often misapplied to the deck when no cards have been dealt. In most of these instances, one strongly suspects that the author was simply looking for a synonym for deck or pack, and clutched at talon in error. Such suspicions are fully confirmed when one reads a phrase like “the undealt talon of the deck”. Here the writer obviously doesn’t know the meaning of the word he has forced into action, or undealt would never have been linked to it.

How Old is Ancient?

Ancient, according to my dictionary, means something dating from “a long time past, especially before the end of the Western Roman Empire, C.E. 476; dating from a remote period; of great age.” There are few tricks, methods and principles in magic that can truly be said to be so old as that. Therefore, when I all too frequently find magical writers referring to some relatively recent idea as “ancient”, I can only wonder if they are ignorant of the meaning of the word, or of the history of the idea they are imprecisely dating.

The Methodology of Method:

Methodology is the scientific study of methods, or it can refer to a family of methods. It

is not a single method. Therefore, when an author writes “the methodology of this trick is simple yet deceptive,” he has most likely decided that the extra syllables of this erudite-sounding word add importance to his description. Nonetheless, method was the simple word he wanted, unless he really meant to refer to a group of related methods.

The Problem of Ambiguity:

Ambiguity, by its very nature, is hard to pin down. It can occur for so many reasons. The only cure for ambiguity is to hunt it down ruthlessly, wherever it lies in your writing. Every word imprecisely used, every phrase left to dangle, every comma carelessly placed is a harbor for ambiguity; i.e., lack of clarity and crippled meaning; i.e., damaged communication between author and reader. The only remedy is careful examination of each sentence you write for the possibility of misunderstanding. When you find it, correct it. Every time you say to yourself, “They will know what I mean,” you have made an unwarranted assumption. They may not; and if they don’t, you have broken the contract between writer and reader: the promise of communication.

Moving Prepositions:

The distinctions between *in* and *into*, *on* and *onto* seem to be frequently forgotten. *In* and *on* denote activity within a location already occupied. The addition of *to* to *into* and *onto* denotes movement to a location. Therefore, you “Put the coin *into* (not *in*) your pocket,” and you “Lay the cards *onto* (not *on*) the table.”

Prepositional Dangers:

Another extremely common error in magic writing is the dangling prepositional phrase in such sentences as “Set the deck onto the table with the left hand.” This construction has two problems. The first is that the words suggest the table has a left hand. The second is that, for teaching purposes, the information is conveyed in an inefficient order. The easiest fix is “With the left hand, set the deck onto the table.” This solves the problem of the table having digits and sequences the information more helpfully. With the first example, the reader is first told to “Set the deck onto the table...” Okay. “...with the left hand.” Oh, with that hand! By not stating first which hand is used, you can cause the reader to stumble and have to retrace the action physically or mentally. “With the left hand, set the deck onto the table,” provides the reader with the information in an order that prevents such stumbles and makes the learning process that much smoother.

A Little More Thought Required:

Under this heading I’ll offer a few more examples of writing drawn from recent conjuring literature, all of which embody the same fault: The writer failed to think about what his words said, rather than what he intended them to say.

“Try it once, and you’ll discover that it’s infinitely practical.” One’s mind must surely swoon at the contemplation of what is not just practical, but infinitely practical.

“Properly executed it appears unscrupulously fair.” This magician may be so entrenched in the work of deception as to perceive anything fairly done as somehow disreputable, but to most of us, being unscrupulous while being fair will provide quite a challenge.

In the following example, after giving some sketchy historical background on an effect, the author wrote: “Regardless of its origins, you’ll find the effect to be a powerful bit of

close-up mentalism.” Apparently, from this we are to gather that something about the history of the trick could affect our judgment of its dramatic merit. This non sequitur probably resulted from an attempt to run too many ideas into one sentence, resulting in nonsense.

In an article on analyzing one’s performance skills, the author recommends that one “take a personal self-assessment” of one’s work. When doing so, the reader probably found it difficult to make his self-assessment any other way.

While surveying a book on spiritualistic presentations, one reviewer expressed a desire “to have a cold chill creeping up the proverbial spine.” Even more desirable in this work, it seems to me, would be to experience that chill up one’s actual spine, since one so often forgets to bring the proverbial one along to a séance. The problem here lies in a misplaced modifier. The author probably meant to make his cold chill proverbial, but somehow overshot his proverbial target.

In this same review, the author makes what is possibly an unintentional confession. “It so happens that over-pretentious patter is one of those [undesirable] things.” So apparently this reviewer finds a certain lesser level of pretentiousness palatable.

Here is an incredible trick that appeared in one of our better journals not many years ago, but seems to have been overlooked. “EFFECT: Two initialed cards, magicians and spectators are transposed from deck to pocket.” Perhaps the effect didn’t gain popularity because of the very crowded pocket it must require, along with the added trouble of getting the magicians and spectators initialed and into the deck.

As Horace observed about the difficulty of writing well, “Sometimes even good Homer nods.” Two of my favorite examples from two respected authors of magic are these:

“Here’s a sure-fire method that seldom fails.” Clettis Musson, 35 *Weird and Psychic Effects*.

And, from the erudite John Northern Hilliard, in *Greater Magic*: “Thoroughly false shuffle the cards.”