

## 1898 presentation to J N Maskelyne

1898 saw the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Maskelyne and Cooke's first performance at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, London. The anniversary was marked by the presentation of a testimonial to J N Maskelyne on 26 May 1898, the day after the actual anniversary. This report appeared in the *Era*, 4 June 1898, page 19, column 3:

### PRESENTATION TO MR. MASKELYNE.

A little ceremony, quite simple and unostentatious in character, though none the less interesting on that account, took place at the Egyptian Hall on Thursday evening, May 26th. At the conclusion of the evening's performance, Mr Maskelyne, much to his surprise, was invited into his own hall. There he found assembled the principal and older members of the Egyptian Hall company. The centre of the stage was occupied by a draped easel, and a certain amount of liquid refreshment was in evidence.

Mr Maskelyne having seated himself, in compliance with a general request, Mr Cooke rose, and in tones which now and again betrayed emotion, spoke as follows:—I have much pleasure, Mr Maskelyne, in accepting the position of spokesman upon this occasion, although, as you know, I have no gift as a speaker; still, the presentation of a testimonial by members of your company, in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of your occupying the Egyptian hall, is such an event that I, as your old colleague, feel that it is in keeping with that position I should undertake the duty, especially as it is at the desire of those around me. The address occupying the centre of this frame contains congratulations upon your record reign in this hall, and notes the long period during which you have enjoyed the great and well-deserved success given to you by the public. It is signed by the members, and around it are arranged their portraits, which, we trust, may hereafter recall the features of those who feel a personal gratification in your well-doing, and who desire your continued happiness and prosperity. The terms of the address will now be read, previous to which I will conclude with once more congratulating you on behalf of all here upon this truly auspicious occasion.

The assembled members of the company then drained bumpers to Mr Maskelyne's long life and prosperity, accompanied by musical honours. Mr E. S. Elton, acting-manager, then unveiled the easel and displayed a most tastefully executed design, handsomely framed, and bearing in the centre the address surrounded by the various members' portraits.

Mr Elton then proceeded to read the address. It ran to this effect:—To J. N. Maskelyne, Esq. We, the undersigned members of your company, desire to offer our sincere congratulations upon the twenty-fifth anniversary of your occupancy of the Egyptian Hall. During the period of the last quarter of a century you have enjoyed a well-earned and long-sustained popularity, which has made your name a household word throughout the land. You have a reputation such as falls to the lot of few to achieve, and which has been endorsed by all classes from Royalty downwards. You have, in fact, gained a place in the affections of at least all English-speaking people. Some among the undersigned had the pleasure of assisting at your inaugural performance in the Egyptian Hall, and since then have viewed with unfeigned satisfaction the rise and progress of your entertainment and the prestige it has attained. The others can reflect with equal pleasure upon their long connection with you and "England's Home of Mystery." Therefore all unite in offering their heartfelt good wishes for your continued prosperity, and beg you to accept this memento as a slight token of regard and esteem. Yours most faithfully, G. A. Cook, Nevil Maskelyne, J. B. Hansard, W. Crompton, David Devant, E. A. Maskelyne, F. Cramer, Mel B. Spurr, W. R. Taylor, J. B. Langdon, John Forty, Alfred Bruce, E. S. Elton, Olive Elton.

Mr Maskelyne was evidently too much affected to deliver a lengthy oration. In a few affectionate and well-chosen words he thanked his assembled friends and fellow-workers for their kindness and sympathy and for their handsome and most unexpected presentation. Mr David Devant having replied on behalf of the assembled company, the informal but touching little ceremony was brought to a conclusion by all present joining hands and singing "Auld Lang Syne."