



FOUR MAGICIANS

Editor's note: This rare and unpublished photograph was given me several years ago by Frank Ducrot. It was taken in the rear of Houdini's home at 278 West 113th Street, New York City, on the occasion of one of Downs' few trips east after his retirement. The exact date is doubtful but evidently it was 1924 or 1925. The Jinx would like this issue to be something of a memorial issue to four great men of magic. The material has been searched for over a period of two years and we trust that it will not be found too familiar.)

SMOKED GLASSES

When Genii started publication one of its first great effects was the Ten Kai Glass Levitation. It caused much comment and became popular as tricks go. Frank Ducrot added an ancient smoke effect to the feat to greatly enhance the presentation, AND IMPROVED THE GIMMICK. Whereas the original idea used a short bit of knotted thread, and subsequent tightening of the knots would cause failure, the Ducrot gimmick was of metal and entirely did away with chance of accident. Frank showed this to us on Nov. 8, 1937 and gave us permission to use it in The Jinx. We never did get around to it, for "Duke" was selling it over the counter and we had plenty material to use otherwise. Recently, again in Genii, was explained the Ducrot routine of

smoked filled glasses. However, the gimmick was not revealed so we proceed.

Two medium size glasses with straight sides are shown with a book and a large heavy handkerchief or towel. The cloth is folded lengthwise until about four inches wide, and laid evenly across the book whose binding is towards the spectators. The cover of the book is now lifted and the ends of the cloth on either side are folded in and under and the cover pressed firmly down. A cigarette or cigar is lighted and, after a deep puff or two, a glass is picked up and very carefully put to the lips when the mouthful of smoke is let dribble down into the tumbler, with the glass nearly full of the smoke, the other glass is picked up. By slowly tipping the smoke glass over the lip of the empty glass, the smoke pours from one to the other very effectively. Then it is poured back into the original BUT ONLY HALF.



Frank
Ducrot

Frederick
Eugene Powell

Harry
Houdini

T. Nelson
Downs

The two tumblers are quickly, and together, inverted upon the cloth on the book, trapping the smoke. The right thumb is placed firmly between the glasses and the fingers go beneath the book. Book and glasses are lifted into the air and then slowly the hand turns over. The glasses remain against the cloth even after the turn is completed and they are beneath the book. Then the nearest spectator is asked to select one of the glasses. He is asked to take it. And it comes away easily

in his hand while the performer takes the remaining glass and both blow the smoke away. The towel or handkerchief is shaken out, and, with the book, put aside.

We've made clear the handling of the smoke and its place in the effect. It's just one of those oddities that works, and in this instance lends a truly pseudo-scientific atmosphere to the trick. The gimmick? Just a small piece of bent metal inside the hem on the cloth.

Secure a piece of hardened metal about one-quarter inch wide and one and a half inches long. At each end a quarter or 3/8 in. bit is bent upward, depending upon the thickness of the cloth used. And it will take experimentation to find out exactly how long the fake should be for that depends upon the width of your right thumb when normal and not pressed down. This is sewn inside the border of the cloth, and after the folding and placing around the cover of the book, it is at the center of the top and last fold with the side edges turned upward.

The two glasses are inverted with their edges inside this fake's width. when the right thumb is placed between the glasses, and forced down against the cover of the book, the action presses the glass lips against the bent up ends and keeps them from falling during the subsequent manoeuvres. when the spectator reaches to take one of the inverted glasses, the performer takes the remaining one at the same time and without a move (apparent) the release is affected.

This is an awfully pretty club trick, and the use of the new gimmick eliminates any possible stretch in cord or knots which can easily, and very often has, caused disaster.

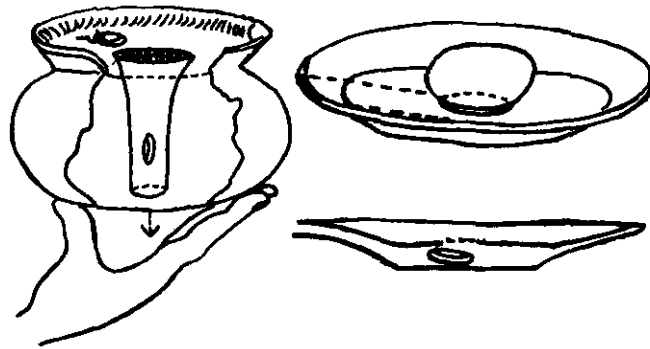
A RING THERE WAS

We first saw Frederick Eugene Powell in a little town near Waverly when he was on one of his last Lyceum circuits. His magic, as we look back now, was of the old school sort overlapping a new era. But never can be erased our feelings and thoughts as he unfolded mystery after mystery, and to-day we still have reverence for his faultless manner of working together with a confidence and kindness born of gentlemen and world travelers. The passage of a borrowed ring into an unprepared egg can well be used to-day for in my notebooks I can find no way of making the trip more magically without apparent sleights and unnecessary actions.

As an experiment in the fourth dimension the invisible penetration of an egg is about the best possible example, so says the wizard. A number of eggs are given into the keeping of a spectator. In this day and age it might be a very cute angle to present some lady with a dozen "boxed" eggs as purchasable, and after she has selected one for the experiment later, to leave her with the rest of them for subsequent disposal at home on following mornings.

Or, a ring can be requested of a lady, and in return the performer gives her a dozen eggs as security. This should cause great amusement.

The performer says that he does not desire ever to touch the ring, and it is placed by the donor onto a hook at the end of a very thin wand or stick. Retiring to the platform the magician lights, with his free hand, a metal bowl, which burns freely. He holds this on his hand and dips the borrowed ring into the flames. THE RING, DIPPED IN AND OUT, IS SEEN TO MELT AWAY.



The bowl is placed aside and, after due regards for the unknowns who must have a lot of leisure time to accommodate the desires of mortal magi, the lady selects freely one egg from her lot (Frank Lane undoubtedly would make some ungainly "aside" about her husband) and puts it on a plate held by the sorcerer. without touching it by hand he breaks it with the end of his hooked stick, plunges same inside the shell, and hooks out the actual ring which the owner takes from the wand herself.

This, undoubtedly, is about the easiest of the otherwise difficult tricks. The ingenious gadgets, flaming bowl and tray or plate, are non-mechanical accessories par excellence.

Around the edge of the bowl is a trough in which is placed tallow and hemp to make a grand looking flame which appears to be shooting from the entire bowl. Underneath is a hook upon which hangs a dummy ring made by forming into a circle and twisting the ends to make what might be the stone of a ring. "fuse wire" obtainable from electrical stores. This is thick, depending upon the resistance you want, and is used in the proper places throughout your home to keep short circuits from annoying the company itself. If the curling iron wire gets frayed, only your immediate household reaps the benefit of the blackout. This wire melts at very low temperature.

In the center of the bowl is a conical tube, its wide part at the top, and its lower end open through the bottom of the bowl.

The plate upon which the lady lays the egg which she selects is of metal enameled white. The sketch will make its construction clear. In the center of its surface is an elongated hole upon which an egg can rest. It is covered at each performance with a piece of enameled paper slightly depressed in the glueing. The double plate is solid around its edge except at one point where an opening allows of the ring being inserted. The ring slides into position beneath the paper covered hole and remains ready for its capture by the hooked wand when the egg is broken open and plumbed from above.

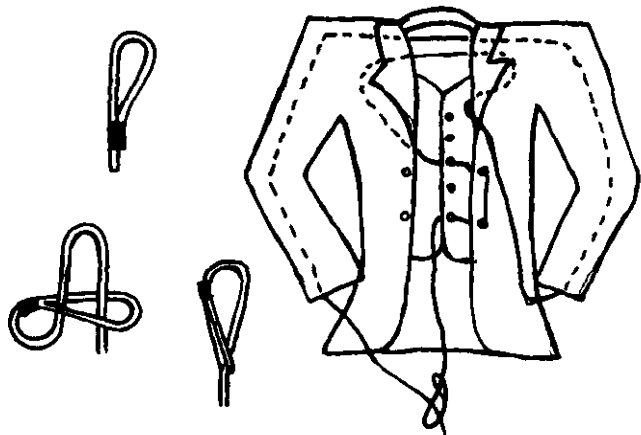
It should be clear now that the performer obtains the ring on his wand, lights the fire, and in the dipping of the ring into the flames lets it fall through the tube into the hand holding the bowl. The substitute ring is hooked in its place and over the flames is seen to melt away. Then the plate is picked up, the original ring allowed to find its place, and finally the freely selected egg is pierced to give up its contents (?). At no time has the performer's hand touched the ring.

MALAY ESCAPE

Our greatest magical regret is that we never saw Houdini on the stage. It hurts because, unlike Kellar and Hermann, we missed a performance of the arch mystifier and master publicist by but a few months. When Mother woke us on that morning of October 31, 1926 with the paper that carried his picture on the front page we cried. As we can analyse it now, 14 years later, and with the name of Houdini still, if not more, important in every type of literature as a noun-verb, it must have been in anguish that we had lost an opportunity to tell our cult in later years that we had witnessed magic by the world's best recognised mysticist since Moses threw down his staff and caused it to appear as a snake.

Houdini's escapes were, for the greater part, of a sort to be beyond the possibilities of the average conjuror. In his book "Magical Rope Ties and Escapes" one of the very best impromptu deliveries was his "Full View of audience Release." This effect is another of the simple yet completely mystifying methods of escape.

A piece of cord which has a small loop formed on one end, is threaded through both sleeves of the performer's coat, which he continues to wear, through the armholes of his vest, and through four buttonholes, and the free end of the cord is then threaded through the loop at the other end, and after being passed under a door or a screen, is given to a member of the audience to hold. The performer appears unscathed and completely together while the rope is found in one long length, also unscathed.



The cord to be used must be strong and soft. It should be about 8 yards long and of a color to make the effect "showy." On one end a loop is formed (about 1½ inches long) as per the sketch. The end of the cord, on which the loop is formed, is taken in the right hand, drawn up the right sleeve, passed across the back, and taken down the left sleeve, leaving about three feet of cord hanging free of the sleeve. The looped end is then passed into the left armhole of the vest, across the chest and out the right armhole. It is then threaded through one of the buttonholes of the vest, from the back; then through a buttonhole in the coat, from the back; through another buttonhole in the coat from the front, and finally through another buttonhole in the vest, from the front.

Then the end of the cord, which is hanging from the right sleeve, is apparently threaded through the loop at the other end. In reality it is passed through a noose formed on the cord by putting a portion of the standing end through the loop, as shown in the sketch.

To escape from the cord, it is necessary to pull about three or four feet of slack through the buttonholes, open out the running noose till it will pass over the head and shoulders, pass it over head and shoulders and step completely through it. It will be found now that the cord may be pulled straight through the sleeves and leave the performer free of all bonds.

MONEY SENSE

Tommy Downs was how he was introduced to us when we met the Hoia King along with his ever present buddy Eddie McLaughlin. It was around 1928-29 that it happened and the man who wrought up London with his manipulations in 1907 treated us fairly and squarely when our tricks so proudly displayed morning after morning for a week did or did not fool him. It meant a lot to our, then limited, perspective on magic and magicians.

We can never forget the Downs' trick of being cordial to the point of putting his hand up on the shoulder of an assistant while he confidentially showed the other hand devoid of coins just placed within. That the stack of half dollars was resting on the shoulder of the amazed audienccr, while, for a gesture, he saw both hands displayed completely empty, is not here nor there. It was T. Nelson's "savoir faire" during the vanish and subsequent production that impressed the onlookers, if any. It was, more or less, a one man mystery.

Using one of the coins provided with a shell, the following routine of events makes for good mystery. First provide yourself with a coin dated in a year the digits of which do not contain a zero. Start the effect by forcing upon four people cards the value of which represent these figures -- each card being a different one of the four suits. Thus 1938 would possibly be represented by AH-9C-3D-8S. On top of these force one more card, say the JS.

Don't worry about the forcing of five cards. Mr. Downs used the "classical" fan force, and, when he failed to "give" a card, merely passed on to another. Thus, in forcing the five cards one might have to approach seven or eight people. This does not hurt the effect for it encompasses a greater percentage of the audience than is usual in a trick, a proceeding which always is of psychological value. Then, after the five force cards were out, he would return to those few who had gotten free choices by their stubbornness and have them returned for another trick which he would culminate. Then, having disposed of the outlaw cards, those left were the ones pertinent to the trick we are talking about.

Now the performer tells of the uses and abuses of money -- how it turns people's heads --- and has a spectator step forward. He is shown a coin and asked how many he sees. The answer is one, of course, but when the performer touches the spectator's eyes and puts the coin back on the palm, the man from the audience sees two. The spectator in the audience who took the Jack of Spades is asked to concentrate upon his card while the person assisting the performer looks intently at the pennies and names whatever card he may visualise. He does so correctly!

Immediately the performer stops any applause forthcoming and says that many may think it is merely a trick with the coin. Therefore, he does insist, he'd like to try a similar effect with a borrowed bit of money. This time the coin comes from the audience and it is given another person to hold. Four ladies are called to the front and

EDITRIVIA

The weekly editions of The Jinx must be getting us down or eight days to Bermuda wouldn't and couldn't have made such an improvement in our appearance (according to Miss Rriscella Pratt, successor to Miss Romaine Featherngill, our last checker-upper). Officially it comes that there will be no daily Jinx. If, as and when such an (official) occurrence takes place, there will be but one consecutive issue.

The present occurring display of magical history a la collection material has New York quite agog, if certain magical papers can be believed. The man who talks and writes like a magician has done not a little thing in garnering much space in type and on the air for his acumen. One cannot deny this temporary curator of the Museum of the City of New York his prowess for obtaining erudite inches of columns in the better papers even though a majority of the boys are wont to deny him credit for deserving it from a performer's point of view. Be that as it may, John Mulholland gets into print while others bash their heads against the wrong side of a handkerchief box.

Dr. Samuel Hooker's rising card and bear's head masterpiece of mystery was bequeathed to Mulholland and Quimby. The Sphinx of Sept. 1936 said "for performance from time to time in the future as opportunities occur." After Hugar'd detailed the effect in "Greater Magic" a lot of interest was shown by the new generation. We saw the last presentation of the Rising Cards and Miltiades III. we think it's high time for those tricks to be shown again --- even though it must be done by invitation to keep the audience within bounds. Charley Larsen, it is said, has offered to underwrite the costs of such a production, and, if true, there is no doubt but that he would duplicate the procedure for his west coast friends.

The gentleman with the money plus a yen to further magic as he sees it is reported as having been rebuffed, staved off, and otherwise stalled. We know this can't be true because John certainly wouldn't pass up the opportunity of displaying, as beneficiary, the one great trick which has mystified magicians for many years. An "angel" -- to underwrite the presentation of the Hooker routine in key cities with Mulholland's lyceum contacts -- would break even to say the least on his initial investment. He'd be doing magic a great favor to dig up this bit

each is asked to select one of the four suits as they arrive. You impress that they have free choice but it is not so for there are only four suits and only four girls. You stand them before the audience in the order that you have forced the four "date" cards and their suits.

The man with the coin (borrowed(?)) now reads aloud the date. Then, connecting that first digit, 1, with the suit selected by the first girl, you ask the person holding the ace of Hearts (in this case) to name his card. Everything checks! He shows his card to all and you take the second girl together with the second digit on the coin and ask another of the spectators if he isn't holding the 9 of Clubs. He will have to show that card, or you are awfully bad at forcing and remembering. And so it goes with the remaining two.

You finish with the remark that whereas a quarter could make someone see (?) a chosen card, a half dollar has been able to divulge the identity of four. It's the power of money

of cherished chicanery --- provided, of course, that the present owners might see, not beyond their noses, but merely the distance from that back drop setting to the most important tablo.

In short, John, you're overlooking the most potent piece of publicity getting possession in that entire collection. Don't talk about what you have. Just get out and do what you've got. And I suppose that if you do it we'll all be jealous of the publicity it will get you.

On the newsstands as you read this is RED STAR MYSTERY magazine. It's a "thriller" bit of printing but it's about a magician. Buy it on our "say so" and revel or rave as is your way of thinking. --- Just before Walt Gibson left N.Y. for Miami and New Orleans he phoned to say that Sky Sense (No. 83) was extra good with a dovetail shuffle because, even if such a mixing does begin to separate the two important cards, the fact that the deck is cut into three piles (about 18 cards each) keeps the key close enough to the noted card to act as a trusty stool pigeon later on. --- "Shadow" Gibson had to leave town for the reason that the big city's night life was too much for the master and his plots began to bog down to where even Commissioner Weston could solve them. Either he had to find peace and quiet or Russ Swann would have had to go for that's where most of Walter's waking hours were spent -- and I mean spent!

Cardini helps to open Marden's Riviera this week, and Fairfax Burgher, the socialite magus, is at the Fox and Hounds. --- One of the "boys" is haunting his favorite bar where the man behind the rail is a stooge for his tricks. This alcoholic psychologist has found that so-called bar betting tricks are worthless for no one is dumb enough to bet on another man's game. However, it is a matter of pride with many when it comes to their personal capacity and this bet has to do with the quantity of beer one can swallow with a long breath. This malt monger says he can down a quart container and invariably is taken up on it. He suggests using the large glass (1 qt.) in which the scrapers are kept beside the taps. The bartender fills it, but not before he has put in an inverted celluloid cone around the lip of which has been applied beeswax to make it stick to the mug's bottom. Thus the fellow doesn't have to drink much more than a good glassfull and the insert is absolutely invisible through the sudsy glass. He hands it directly back to the stooge who dips it in the wash - losing the cone - and then replaces it in its accustomed and time honored position for examination if anyone wishes.

in hand that makes possible such farsightedness.

We hope that most readers have followed the effect with the method in mind. The shell coin came in at the beginning. It was thus able to make two from one. On the outside part of the genuine coin was tacked a miniature Jack of Spades. After the change of one to two, the shell was replaced and the coin turned over. Thus the spectator could name the Jack selected.

With the coin pocketed, and a borrowed one forthcoming, the performer merely exchanges it for one he has picked from his pocket when replacing the shell outfit. The correct date is thus assured and from there on it is merely a case of picking good looking girls, arranging them in the order of their selected suits and letting the rest of the trick take its course.

It is all a true example of Downs' simplicity of method combined with a terrifically complicated appearing effect plus the use of a great many people from the audience.