

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1896.—COPYRIGHT, 1896, BY W. R. HEARST.

MARVELLOUS STORY OF HERRMANN, THE DEAD MAGICIAN.



THE INSIDE OF HERRMANN'S HAND, SHOWING THE PLAY OF MUSCLES, NOT DEVELOPED IN THE ORDINARY MAN'S HAND, WHICH ENABLED HIM TO DO HIS "PALMING" TRICKS.

Herrmann, the great magician, who died on Thursday, had the most remarkable hands of any man of his generation. He had devoted many years to the development of every single muscle in the palm of each hand, with the result that he could control the finest of them as thoroughly as the ordinary man controls his sleep.

His hands were covered with a network of muscles so perfectly developed that he was able to make any particular spot take separate action and do surprising things on its own account. For instance, he could make the muscle of the ball of his thumb move by itself as easily as the ordinary man could move his whole thumb.

He had the same power in the muscles of his wrist, and he would cause a coin to move from the fingers to the wrist and then disappear altogether without any movement of the hand perceptible to the ordinary human eye.

One of the most bewildering illustrations of the power of his hands was the trick known as the on-hand pass. It is done by other magicians, but Herrmann was the most perfect. He would ask a man to look at the pack of cards and fix one of them in his mind. He would then cause the card to appear at the bottom of the pack. In order to do this he had simply to pick the card out of the pack with the fingers of the hand which held it and place it at the bottom. But he had to do it under the eyes of the other man.

His power of using both hands separately was very fascinating. Everybody knows that it is almost impossible to do two different but simple things, one with the left and the other with the right hand. Yet Herrmann could perform one difficult trick with his right hand and another with his left. In private life he could brush his hair with one hand while he tied his necktie with the other.

He could also move his fingers separately in a way that would surprise the ordinary man. But the tips of the first, third and little fingers of each hand together, bend the second finger of each hand and press the knuckles together. They try to pull the two third fingers apart without changing the position of the others. Unless you are a prodigy you will find that it is utterly impossible, but that a curious little pain will run down your forearms.

When Herrmann left New York this Fall arrangements had been concluded to pay off the last of these obligations, and he was eagerly looking forward to this winter's work to clear him of debt. Then he intended to start in again and build up another fortune, as he was undoubtedly capable of doing had his life been spared.

AMUSING ANECDOTES OF HERRMANN RELATED BY PEOPLE WHO KNEW HIM WELL.

F. C. Whitney. "The rabbits that Herrmann used in his performances were a source of much amusement to his friends in various ways. On more than one occasion the act had to be cut because the little bunnies had disappeared. Sometimes they turned up again—more often they didn't."

George Lederer. "One night, in Cincinnati, the rabbit trick was billed to end the first part of the entertainment. A confederate had been in the front of the house during the show with two little rabbits tucked in his pockets, to be discovered by the magician when the proper time came. Whether he became unduly attached to the little animals and did it purposely, or whether it simply indicated a fit of absent-mindedness, we never ascertained, but just before Herrmann started in to do the trick the man got up from his seat and left the house."

James H. Breslin. "At the Gilsey House Herrmann was always a welcome visitor and never failed to astonish and amuse the employees and guests whenever opportunity offered."

Will McConnell. "I was the unfortunate victim of one of Herrmann's practical jokes. It occurred in Chicago some five years ago," said W. A. McConnell, manager of Koester & Bin's.

Abe Hummel. "Next to Chauncey M. Depew, Herrmann probably had more friends all over the country than any other man," said "Abe" Hummel.

Judge Leonard Geigrich. "The most amusing thing I ever heard about Herrmann was an experience that he had in the City of Mexico. There is a law there that whatever a man finds on the public highway half of its value belongs to him if the owner appears."

Oscar Hammerstein. "I once thought Herrmann had made me a very valuable present," said Oscar Hammerstein.

"A professional man who had struck a streak of hard luck went to Herrmann for a loan. He wanted \$2,500, and was willing to secure it with a life insurance policy for \$15,000. Herrmann let him have the money and took the policy, as it was purely a business proposition and not a matter of friendship. The borrower's fortunes fluctuated from bad to worse, and about a year after the loan was made he died, leaving his affairs in a very tangled condition."

"The death notice of the man recalled the circumstances of the loan to Herrmann, and he hunted up the policy, which he had forgotten entirely. He was on the point of placing it in the hands of an attorney for collection—in fact, I believe he had given it to his lawyer—when he heard that the dead man's wife was absolutely penniless and helpless, with several children on her hands. He instructed the attorney to discontinue proceedings, and the policy was transferred to the widow with the explanation that the debt had been canceled before her husband's death, and that the policy having been misplaced accounted for the delay in its return."

"It was about two years ago that Herrmann was invited to perform for the benefit of an uptown club at the Standard Theatre. His performance made the hit of the evening. After the entertainment the more prominent of the clubmen invited the magician to a little supper at the Gilsey House and at the same time informed him that he would be presented with a ring."

"Herrmann felt sure he would be the owner of another diamond before he went home that night. Toward the end of the supper one of the members made a little speech, thanking the guest of the evening for his valuable services, etc., at the benefit and hoped he would accept the ring which would be presented as soon as the speech was finished. The applause which followed this speech was the signal for Herrmann's well-colored boy to enter the room carrying a big brass gong. Herrmann at the time said he was more taken in by that joke than he ever had been before."

"The man kicked. 'Nit,' or its equivalent in Mexican, was his reply. 'The law says that whatever I find I get one-half.' In vain Herrmann expostulated, bluffed and threatened. The result was that a magistrate was appealed to, and he sustained the peasant. Herrmann was out \$10 for that trick."

"He told him that if he would pick up a paving block lying by the roadside he would find \$25 under it. The man looked as if excited, and found the money, but when Herrmann asked for it back there was trouble."

"I explained what had happened, and he was profuse in his apologies for the way his servant had talked to me. He was in a hurry to begin the performance, and suddenly seized the big diamond-studded lock of which he always wore, broke it from his chain, and, as I thought, wrapped it up tightly in a little piece of paper and handed it to me, saying: 'Here, Hammerstein, here's a little trifle which I hope you will accept for the manner in which you have been treated to-night. Keep it and remember me by it.' I took the little package to my private office, opened it, and, instead of the lock, found an old baggage check belonging to some West-ern railroad company."