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FAY'S FAITH IN KNOTS COSTLY

Houdini's Skill Takes
\$5800 From Him.

Twelve Other Somerset Club
Men Bet Heavily.

Nearly \$10,000 Wagered
at Private Exhibition.

Between \$3000 and \$10,000 changed hands among 13 members of the Somerset club yesterday when Houdini succeeded in extricating himself from the knots of heavy woven cord and waxed fishline which J. S. Fay Jr had taken one hour and 45 minutes to tie, bind and interlace.

In the presence of the group of Somerset men who had laid heavy wagers against each other on the success of Houdini, the wizard freed himself in one hour and 13 minutes from the harness of rope and twine.

The test, which Houdini says is the most severe to which he has ever been put, was made in a room in the home of J. S. Fay Jr at 169 Commonwealth av yesterday forenoon. The experiment was the result of a discussion at the Somerset club several days ago between Mr Fay and Herbert C. Leeds. Both men are prominent in amateur sport. Mr Fay is the old Harvard oarsman, who went to England in '69 with the crew. Mr Leeds holds so prominent a place in yachting that he has always sailed on the America cup defenders as one of the expert headsails men.

My Fay asserted that he would bet he could tie Houdini so securely that he could not escape, and Mr Leeds promptly declared that he could not.

"How much will you bet?" asked Mr Leeds.

"I'll bet \$1000 that if I am given my own terms I can tie him up so that he cannot get away," answered Mr Fay.

"I'll take that bet," said Mr Leeds.

Both men immediately communicated with Keith's theatre, and when the terms were laid before Houdini he agreed that he would submit himself to Mr Fay at the latter's home, that there should be no person present representing him, and that those in attendance should be selected by Mr Fay. It was provided that Mr Fay could employ any means he saw fit. Mr Leeds was so confident that Houdini would win that he offered no objections to Mr Fay's stipulations.

The wager had been a matter of gossip about the Somerset club and yesterday forenoon when Houdini presented himself at Mr Fay's home there were 13 men in a front room on the lower floor of the house to observe the contest. In the center of the room was a roped arena, not unlike a prize ring.

The men present were chaffing Mr Fay on his overconfidence, and he replied by offering to take any bets that were made on Houdini winning. Dr William Appleton responded with a wager of more than \$1000, and four other men came forward with different amounts, until Mr Fay stood to lose \$5800 unless he tied Houdini so tightly that he could not struggle free.

In the meantime there were various bets among others of the party, for of the 13 men present six believed that the conjuror would be defeated. Before the men ceased backing their opinions with cash, nearly \$10,000 was at stake.

When the test began, these members of Boston's exclusive club stood outside the ropes as guests of Mr Fay:

Herbert C. Leeds, James Parker, Dr William Appleton, Alan M. Day, W. Redman Fay, a student at Harvard; John E. Thayer of Lancaster, Theophilus Parsons, the mill treasurer; Parkman B. Haven, the architect; N. G. Read of Cambridge, Dr Franklin Dex-

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ter, Dr H. C. Haven of Stockbridge and J. Story Fay 3d.

J. S. Fay Jr was primarily the opponent of Houdini, and he directed the test. In response to Mr Fay's demand, Houdini removed his coat, vest, trousers, collar and necktie. Mr Fay would not allow him to take off his shoes, as he had heard that the wizard was as dexterous with his toes as his fingers.

Mr Fay had provided several balls of stout cord, some heavy silk fishline and twine, also a marlin spike and a coarse needle. While the men outside the roped enclosure were guying him and offering bets that he could not tie Houdini tightly enough to prevent his release, Mr Fay got to work, though he stopped occasionally to show his confidence in his plans by taking up a few wagers.

Just How He Was Bound.

Mr Fay commenced operations by winding the cord about Houdini's neck, and so hard did he tug on the ends that the poor man's tongue was thrust out by the pressure. Drs Dexter and Haven protested that he was choking his victim.

"He is expanding the muscles of his neck," said Mr Fay, "and I have to pull the rope tight enough to overcome that."

"I can not breathe," Houdini said, but Mr Fay answered that the rope would stretch.

Dr Dexter finally protested so earnestly that Mr Fay loosened the cord enough to permit Houdini to breathe. Mr Fay made a harness of cord about Houdini's neck and chest, and brought the two loose ends behind his back. With the silk fishline he bound each finger and thumb, and then tied each member to the adjoining one.

He wound the fishline so tightly about the man's wrists that the string was lost to view in the swelling flesh. He drew Houdini's hands up behind his back and fastened them to the chest harness, and with the fine twine and the needle he laced the knots he had made. So difficult was the process that Mr Fay had to use the marlin spike to wind the heavy cord in and out of the meshes in making the knots.

This done, Mr Fay wound the heavier cord about Houdini's waist, tied numerous knots and bound them with twine, and then passed the rope around his hips a score of times, securing each loop. A network of cord was made to hold Houdini's legs together, and his crossed ankles were secured. Apprehensive of the wizard's supposed command over the muscles of his feet, Mr Fay tied Houdini's shoes on with twine.

During this time Houdini lay on the floor in a strained position, and, as he described it, "in agony from the pain in his right shoulder." At the end of one hour and 45 minutes Mr Fay stepped back and said he was satisfied.

The Task of Release.

"Are you ready?" asked Mr Leeds.

"Yes, I am," answered Mr Fay.

"Go ahead," he ordered Houdini.

The conjuror began to work on the cords which bound his fingers, and as it was stipulated that he must free himself within the sight of all, Houdini had to work with Mr Fay's penetrating eye upon him. The host of the occasion bent over the recumbent man, and with his eyes within six inches of Houdini watched his contortions, to be sure that no secreted knife was employed.

The victim spent half an hour struggling against the knots which held his hands, and then managed to free his fingers. After another long lapse he succeeded in unraveling the twisting of twine about his hands, though his finger nails were badly mangled.

That accomplished, it was a long, tedious job disengaging his arms, apparently so securely locked well behind him. But when he finally threw out his arms, Mr Fay was ready to believe what he had deemed impossible, and Houdini went on loosening the knots and unwrapping the coils of rope. Finally, as the bands about his feet were cast away and he squirmed out and rose to his feet, the timekeeper announced 1 hour and 13 minutes.

Mr Fay was the first to congratulate him.

"I was so sure you couldn't do it that I had made up my mind that only a few of my friends should know of your failure," said he. "I could not have believed it possible, but now that you have won you may give this all the publicity you wish. It was a remarkable exhibition."

The men present helped Houdini on with his clothes and were solicitous of his welfare, for the man was well-nigh exhausted. He was breathing heavily and his joints were so stiff that he had to spend some time limbering up.

When the wizard was himself again, the enthusiastic group settled the bets, and large rolls of money were counted and passed from one hand to another.

"It was pretty expensive sport," said one Somerset club man who had wagered against Houdini, "but it was worth it."

When Houdini was ready to go, Mr Fay called a carriage for him, and everybody shook his hand. He was given \$500, because, though he had offered to take several bets made against him, the wizard was not allowed to wager with the men present. In lieu of the opportunity to make something on the test, the \$500 was subscribed.

"It was the hardest experience I ever had," said Houdini in describing Mr Fay's work last evening. "He tied me so tightly that I shall have these welts on my wrists for weeks. I thought one time he was going to choke me, and I guess he would if the doctors present had not made him desist. Mr Fay had his idea well thought out, and he carried it out to perfection, only he could not prevent me getting free."

"Though I am physically sore, I had a good time, and I am glad if I gave a company of very entertaining gentlemen a pleasant morning."

When he left Mr Fay's home, Houdini carried a statement, signed by every witness, as to the time it took to bind him and the lapse required to free himself.

TWO BOXES EASY AS ONE.

Houdini, Nailed and Tied in Little
One, and Both Placed in Another,
Escapes in 20 Minutes.

That the mere number of boxes has nothing to do with the case, was proven conclusively last night, when Houdini made his escape from two boxes, one placed inside the other, in the record-breaking time of 20 minutes at Keith's theatre.

The challenge to escape from the double box came from the shipping department of Henry Siegel company. It was signed by J. J. Atwood, superintendent of carpenters; Arthur H. Curran, S. P. Smith and R. L. Hickman, and it provided that Houdini should escape from a box within a box, each to be composed of one-inch lumber; the inner one to be nailed, roped and placed inside the larger one, which in turn was to be nailed and roped from the outside.

The size of the smaller box was 3 feet by 2 feet by 2 feet 9 inches, and the larger box was 4 by 2½ by 3 feet. Houdini entered the first box at 10:10, and at 10:20 both boxes had been nailed and roped and the cabinet placed about them.

A crowd of reporters, committeemen, employes and some from the auditorium, sat around the cabinet, and it seemed to be the general impression that it would be some time before Houdini released himself.

"The champion long-distance orchestra," as Houdini facetiously calls conductor Peck's aggregation, was apparently taking it pretty easy in anticipation of a long siege. Even the stage hands went off and sat down to wait, while a man in the audience created a little diversion by fainting.

Suddenly at 10:35 the curtains were whisked apart, and there stood Houdini, the perspiration running down his face, and he without collar and cuffs.

The box was hauled out by the committee, who insisted upon opening it. The closest scrutiny failed to show that it was not just as it was when they last saw it. The same was true of the inside box.

"Why, the rope is not touched," cried a man with a beard, pushing his way through the crowd on the stage to get a nearer view of the inside box.

"To be sure," smiled Houdini.

"Well, how did you get out of it?" asked the man.

Which is what everyone wants to know.