



Inside Ed's Head

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Transformations

(The First Coin Trick I Learned from David Roth)

Some time back in the late 80s, I took lessons from David Roth. As I mentioned in an earlier column, the first trick he taught me was a card trick. Here's the first coin trick. This trick does not appear in the two books I own that have his material. It is possible that he might have given it to one of the many magic magazines that were published but I didn't see it in *The Linking Ring* or *Genii*.

Effect

The magician shows a half-dollar and tosses it from one hand to the other several times. One of these times, the coin turns to an English penny. Both hands are shown—only the English penny is seen. The penny is tossed to the other hand—it changes back into a half-dollar. The magician rubs the half-dollar with his fingers—it turns back into the English penny.

The penny is changed into a half again, back to a penny and finally the penny is tossed from hand to hand, turns back into a half-dollar and is pocketed.

Props

You will need two coins of contrasting colors; they need not be the same size. I will use a half-dollar (H) and an English penny(P) in this explanation. I like the idea of using a half-dollar and a dollar coin but have never done it that way.

Method

This effect should be performed with the spectator directly in front of you. If you are performing for more than one person, you should direct your attention to the leftmost spectator. If you are sitting, make sure that you are a little further from the table than normal. When you get to Photo 9, you'll see what I mean.

Start with an English penny classic-palmed in your right hand. Display the H at your right fingertips as in Photo 1. (The classic-palmed coin is hidden by the base of your right thumb. The extended right fingers give an impression of an empty hand. This is called the "Kaps Subtlety." It will keep the P hidden during the next sequence.) Toss the H into your left hand as in Photo 2.



Toss the H back and forth between hands a few times, keeping your hands in the positions illustrated in the above photos. On one of the tosses from the left hand to the right, contrive to toss the coin so it lands in the right hand as in Photo 3. Notice that the left edge of the coin is barely touching the right side of the ring finger.



Now you will switch the two coins as you apparently toss the H into your left hand. What you really do is as follows: your right ring finger will move up and to the right, clipping the H between the middle and ring fingers as it revolves palm down. (Photos 4 and 5.) As the right hand continues its tossing action, it allows the P to fall into the left hand, which closes on it, making a rubbing action while the right hand drops to your side.



Extend the left hand forward and open the fingers, pointing out the transformation. As you are doing that, use your right thumb to push the H into deep back-clip in the right hand. (Photos 6 and 7.) All the H will not be hidden by the right fingers. Don't worry, this is not a problem.



As soon as the H is secured in deep back-clip, extend your right hand palm up and simultaneously dump the P onto your right fingers, hiding the



clipped H. (Photo 8.) Gesture with the left hand showing that hand empty.

Keeping both hands palm up, move your right hand over your left, cupping your left hand to receive a coin. (Photo 9.) Turn your right hand palm down to apparently dump the P into the left hand but instead, finger palm the P while releasing the clipped H into the left hand, which closes around it.

Make squeezing gestures with the left hand, then open it to show the H.



With the P still in right-hand fingerpalm, use the right index finger and thumb to lift the H out of the left hand. ((Photo 10.) Turn the right hand palm up briefly to display the H (Photo 11.) and then place it into "Spellbound" position in the left hand. (Photo 12.)

(Note that in Photo 11, the fingerpalmed P is hidden by the curled fingers, yet the hand looks empty. This is called the "Ramsay Subtlety.") Lean forward to blow on the coin in your left hand. As you do this, your right hand should drop to your waist, or your side where you reposition the coin by placing your right thumb on it and straightening the fingers. (Photos 13 and 14.)

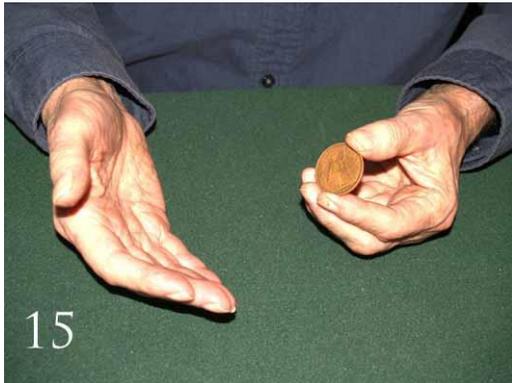


As you lean back, your right hand moves up to cover the H in the left fingers.



As it does so, it uses the knuckle of the right thumb to knock the H into fingerpalm

position. You then place the P in your right hand in the left hand's fingers, in the same position as the H previously occupied. (Photo 15.)



Pause for a few beats, then snap the P into vertical position between your left index finger and thumb. (Photo 16.) Turn your right hand palm-up and drop the P onto it—in fingerpalm position. (Photo 17.) Pause a few

more beats to display the P in the right hand. Use this pause to allow the H to fall into fingertip rest. (Photo 18.)



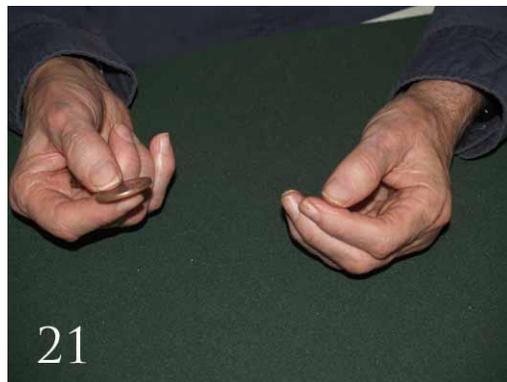
You'll now switch the two coins again, using a shuttle pass, as follows: Let the two hands approach each other until the left thumb is almost touching the base of the right pinky. (Photo 19.) The right hand will turn palm down, keeping the P



in finger palm, and the left will turn palm up—apparently dumping the P onto the left hand's fingers. (Photo 20.) The left fingers close around the H before the hand moves out from under the right hand. After a brief rubbing action, open the left hand to show the H. Pick it up between the right index finger and thumb and turn the right

hand palm up, using the Ramsay subtlety to apparently show the right hand otherwise empty. (Photo 21.)

If you are standing you can now pocket the coin(s) and end. If you are sitting you can turn your right hand palm down, lapping the fingerpalmed P as you toss the H across the table to be examined.



Afterword

This is what I remember of the routine David taught me ... except I have a nagging feeling that there was another pair of transformations before the routine ended. Somewhere, I have an audiotape of the lesson. If I ever find it and the tape player, I might update this article.

For those of you who might want another set of transformations and another convincer that you are only using one coin, here's a sequence I use. From the position shown in Photo 21 do a Bobo Switch as you apparently toss the H into your left hand. Here's how: extend your right thumb over the back of the coin as you display it. (Photo 22.)



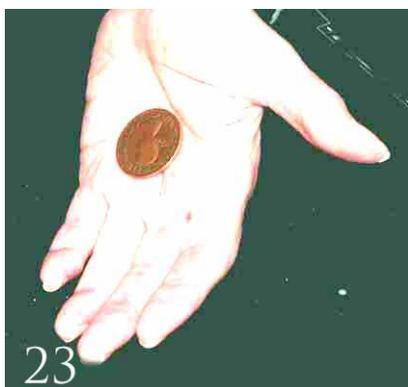
Now simulating a toss, turn your right

hand palm down as you let the fingerpalmed P drop into your waiting left hand, which closes over it.

Simultaneously, your right thumb pulls the H into fingerpalm position. Make a rubbing gesture with your left

fingers, then open them to display the P. ((Photo 23.)

The coin should be on the palm, with the fingers spread to clearly show a single coin in an empty hand.



Bring the right hand over the left, to pick up the P. As you do this, drop the fingerpalmed H onto the left hand fingers.

(Photo 24. The H on left fingers is hidden by the right hand.) Turn

the right hand palm up and the left hand palm down, fingerpalming the H as you do so. Display the P in your right hand as in Photo 25, mirroring the position of the left hand moments ago.

Use your left index finger and thumb to place the P in Spellbound position in the right hand and perform the Spellbound change mirroring the actions of Photos 13 - 16. You are now back at the ending position and may end as above.



Is It Worth the Work?

When David taught me this trick, I was conversant with coin magic. I had read *The Amateur Magician's Handbook* while in grammar school and Bobo years later, so I was proficient in basic coin handling. When David told me I needed to classic-palm a coin, I didn't blanch. I left the lesson feeling confident in my ability to learn the trick and in a reasonable amount of time, I did. I also noticed that this routine took less than a minute to perform. I wondered if it was worth mastering different palms and sleights for only forty-five seconds of magic. I concluded that if forty-five seconds was all I needed to create an enjoyable experience for my spectator, the work involved was irrelevant.

The more I think about this, the more I think it should be a "middle" in a longer coin routine. A longer routine could add elements of a presentation that could give the trick context and make it more magical. I'd like to add a reference to "Schrödinger's cat," where a coin is both a H and a P at the same time.

I think it might be time for me to give coin magic a more serious look.

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