

THE AIRS ROBERT HOUDIN

8, BOULEVARD DES ITALIENS



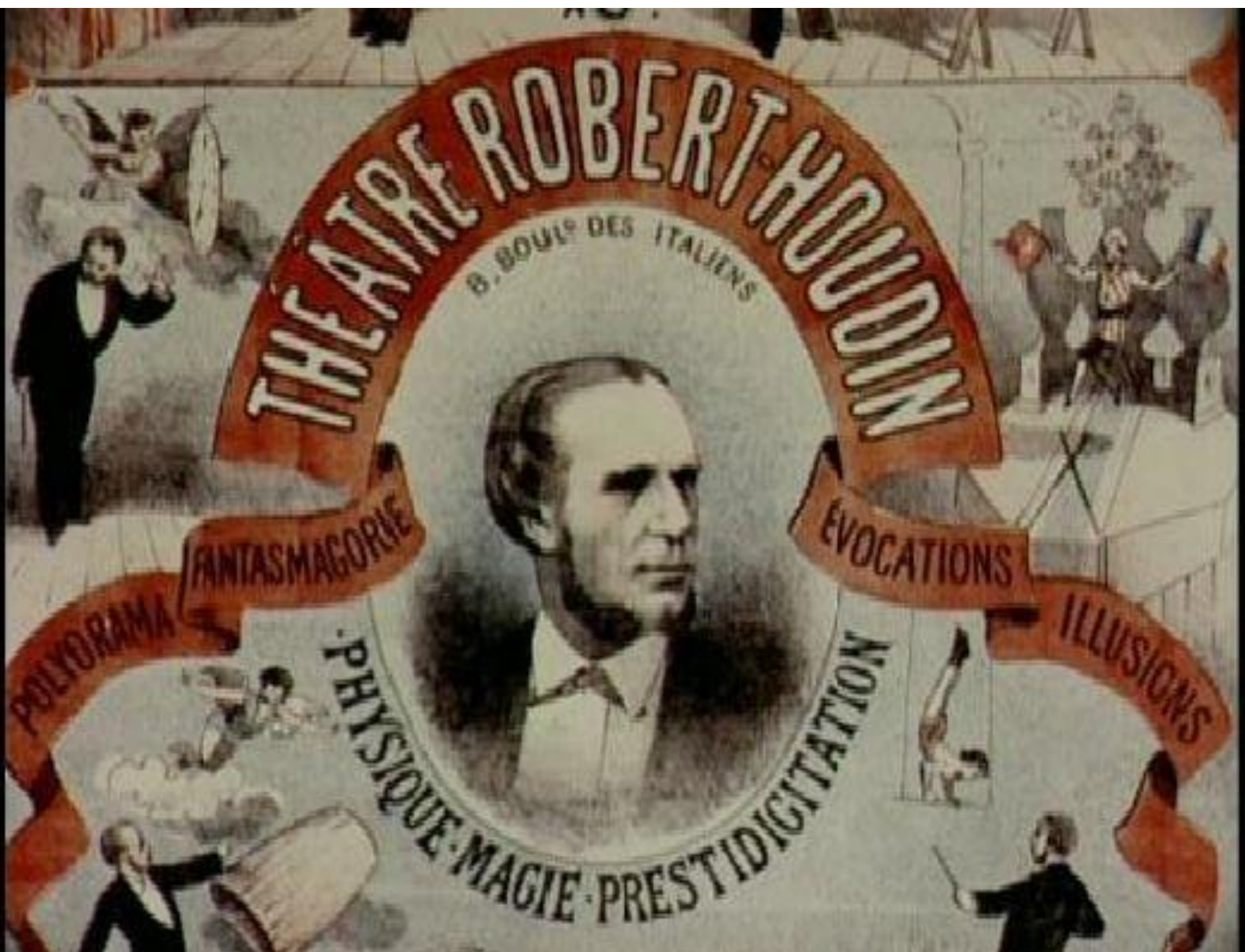
FANTASMAGORIE

EVOCATIONS

POLYORAMA

ILLUSIONS

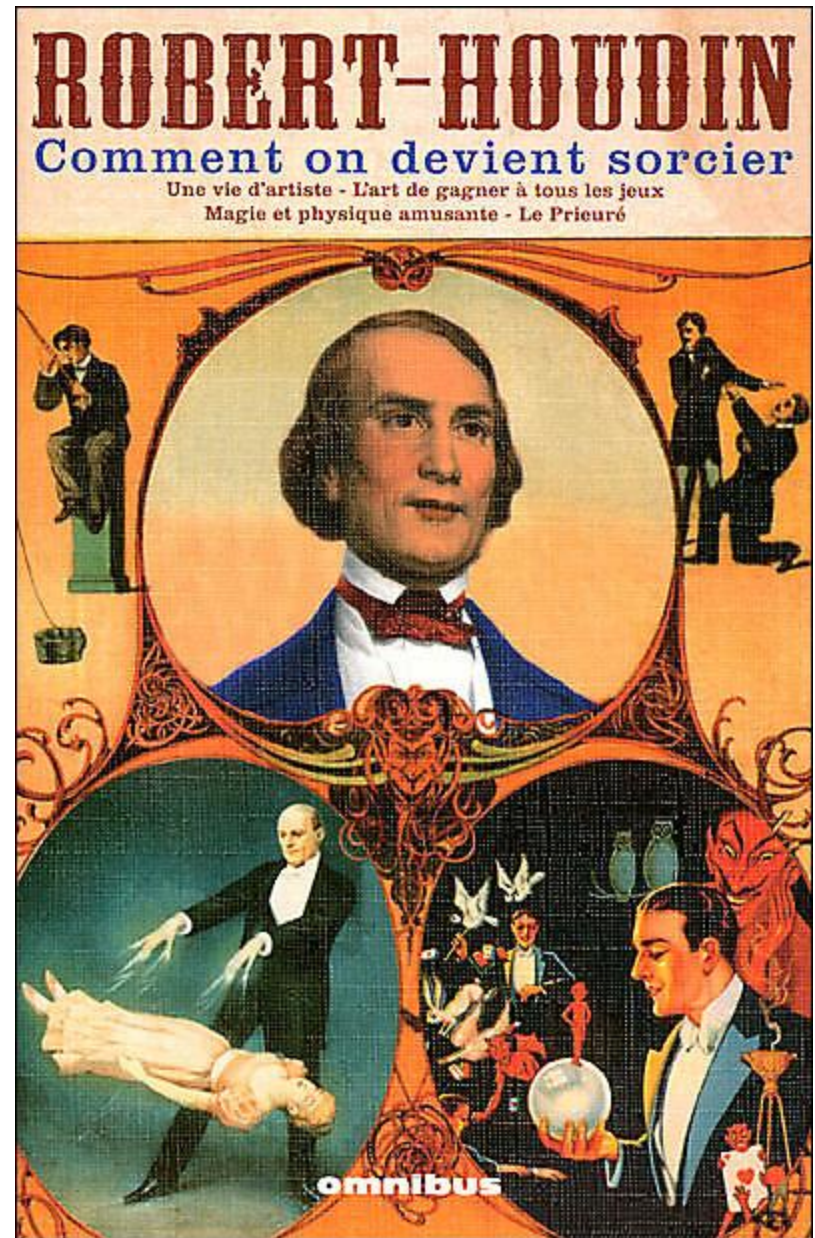
PHYSIQUE · MAGIE · PRESTIDIGITATION



Father of Modern Magic

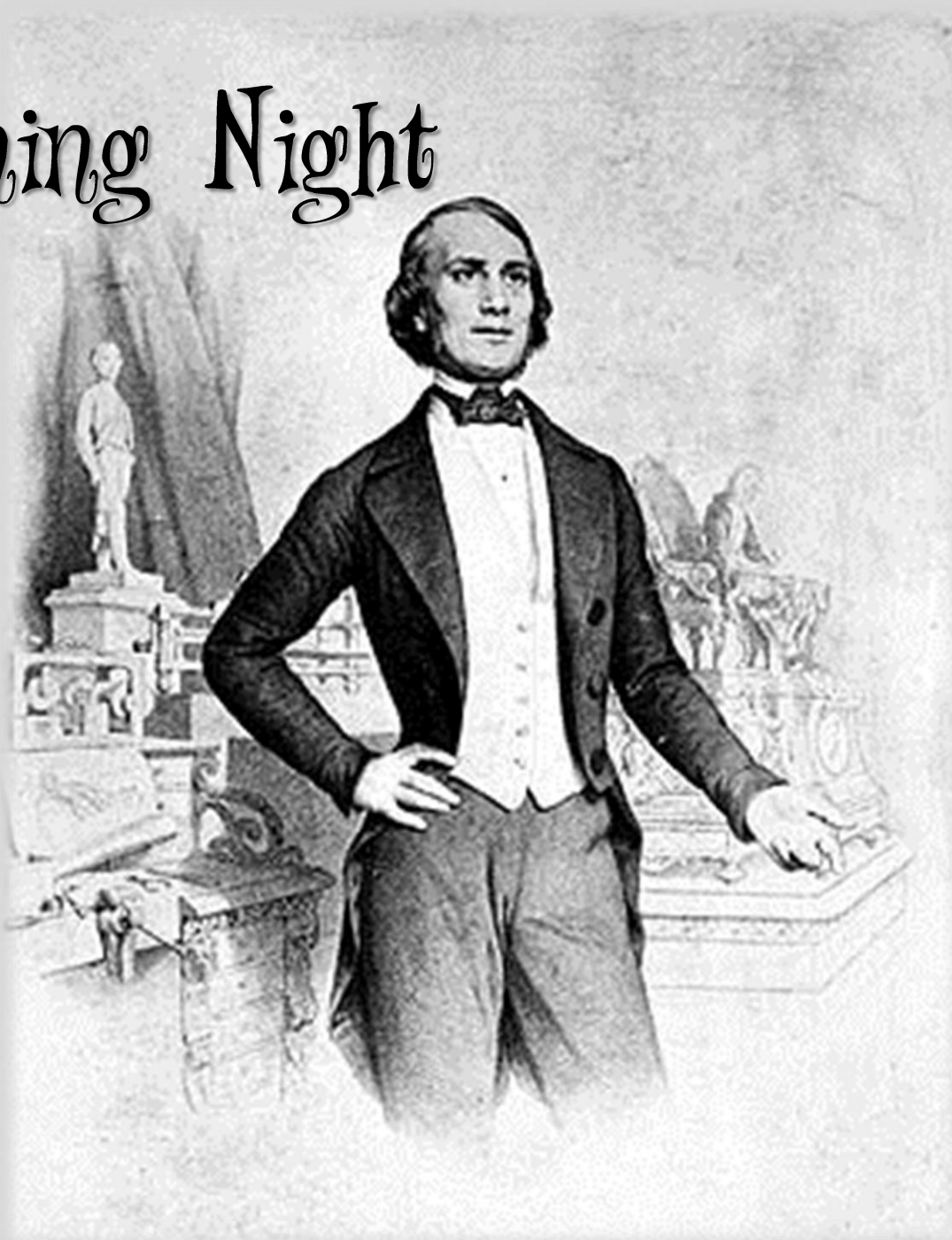
Even though his career
in magic only lasted
ten years, Jean-Eugene
Robert-Houdin

inarguably
inaugurated a Golden
Age for magic, making
magic an art in its own
right.



Opening Night

- In 1845 he opened his “Theater of Enchanted Evenings” in Paris, France.
- He had envisioned a stage that would be as elegant as the drawing rooms in which he had been hired to perform.
- He also thought that a magician should be dressed as such by wearing traditional evening clothes.



And that's a...flop!

- The show was a disaster! Suffering from stage fright he talked too fast and in a monotone, he did not know what he was saying or doing, and everything was a blur.
- He believed that a magician should not present a trick until it was mechanically perfected to be certain of avoiding failure, and this caused him to over-rehearse.



The Silliest Thing I've Ever Heard

After the first show, he was about to have a nervous breakdown. He closed the theatre and had every intention to close it for good, until a friend agreed that the venture was a very silly idea.



Affiche de spectacle au Théâtre Robert-Houdin
(source : revue *Contrastes* de Guéret, 1995)

Fueling the Fire

Instead of admitting defeat, Robert-Houdin, irked at his friend's impudence, used this insult to regain his courage, and persevered in giving the show a long run at his little theatre.

He soon gained the confidence required for the stage and with each performance, Robert-Houdin got better, and began to receive critical acclaim.



We Want More!



Robert-Houdin's little theatre had become a mecca for magic enthusiasts, everyone wanted to be there. People complained, because Robert-Houdin could not magically make his theatre bigger!

Defeating Destiny

The theatre would remain packed every single show for years on end, and the magician who had been destined for a career as a clock-maker ended up giving command performances for European royalty.



Strong Build-up

Robert-Houdin felt that every magic program should be arranged so one trick builds upon each other. One surprise should lead to an even bigger surprise which leads to an even bigger one and so on.

Some of the tricks and illusions Robert-Houdin presented became classics.





ROBERT-HOUDIN'S INCREDIBLE MAGIC.

Second Sight



The Ethereal Suspension



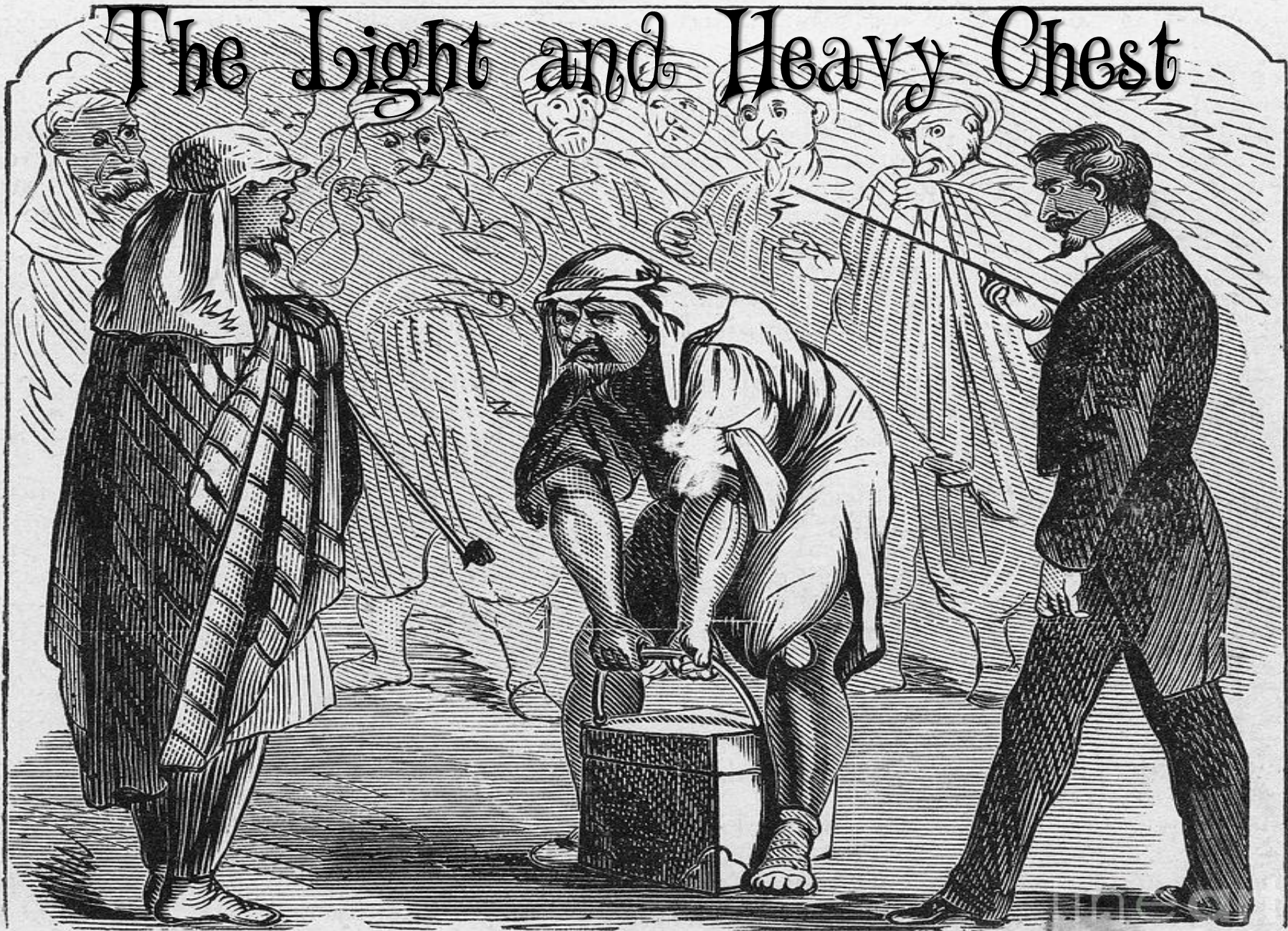
The Marvelous Orange Tree



Robert-Houdin's Portfolio



The Light and Heavy Chest



MARVELOUS CASKET — TRIUMPH OF HOUDIN'S CONJURING.

Magic Tricks for a Political Fix?



A TERRIBLE MOMENT.—THE MARABOUT AND THE CONJUROR.

Encore!

- In 1856 the French Emperor Napoleon III called on Robert-Houdin to perform one last great act. In the French colony of Algeria were a group of Marabouts (local Muslim religious leaders) who were encouraging various tribes to rebel against the French.
- The Marabouts were able to control the tribes through the use of faux magic and illusion. Napoleon III wanted Robert-Houdin to convince the tribes that French magic was far more powerful than the magic of the Marabouts.
- Robert-Houdin performed for the tribes, making objects disappear, levitating, and performing other acts of illusion. However it was Houdin's bullet catch trick and "light chest, heavy chest" act which astounded them the most.

Strong Teeth!

First Robert-Houdin had local tribesman attempt to shoot him using specially marked bullets. When the Algerian tribesman fired he caught the bullets with his teeth, with the marking still intact.

Making Strong Men Weak

Then Houdin asked the largest strongest man of the tribe to attempt to lift his “light chest, heavy chest”. On the first attempt the strong tribesman easily lifted the chest. Then Robert-Houdin waved his wand over the tribesman saying “Behold! Now you are weaker than a woman; try to lift the box.” When the tribesman tried to lift the handle of the chest, it would not budge. In a fit of anger the tribesman attempted to smash the box, which only gave the tribesman a strong electrical shock as Houdin had rigged it to do so if tampered with. Amazed by Houdin’s incredible French magic, the Algerian tribes were convinced to submit to France and the rebellion was peacefully suppressed.