

The Wager

The Cafe Jean was situated at the corner of a quiet street in Paris—remarkably quiet at all times, considering the near proximity of a noisy and much frequented boulevard, but particularly so after 11 o'clock at night.

Late one evening most of the habitués of this bright and comfortable cafe had taken their departure, raising their hats, as the manner is in France, to Mme. Jean, the smartly dressed and dignified proprietress, who, sitting at her post behind the marble comptoir, smiled and bowed in return as they went out. The blinds were already down and the doors closed in preparation for the night.

Madame sat a little longer, listening to the gossip of the neighborhood gathered during the day by the head waiter to retail for her special amusement when the day's work was over and one could indulge in a little relaxation. Then, looking round and seeing that nearly all the well known customers who every evening played dominoes or cards and sipped coffee or drank can secure or stronger mixtures under her vigilant but friendly eye had left, she retired for the night, leaving the remainder to the care of her faithful Alphonse. There were only about a dozen people now, and everything was sleeping quiet in the cafe, when suddenly the stillness was rudely broken by a loud voice exclaiming angrily:

"It is a lie! I don't believe a word of it, and I defy you to prove it!"

All looked up, startled, from game or newspaper as these words burst from one of the occupants of a small table at the farthest end of the room. The speaker seemed very much excited. His companion, on the contrary, remained cool and self possessed under the provocation, but his white face and peculiar glittering eyes belied that outward appearance and arrested attention when noticed.

The two had been engaged for some time in close and earnest conversation, without raising their voices, interrupted only now and then by subdued exclamations and incredulous remarks from the excited man, which evidently did not succeed in either shaking or moving the pale man, who continued talking to him and answering his objections quietly until his opponent, losing all self control, sprang to his feet and violently disturbed the inmates of the cafe by the angry words quoted above.

Seeing that he had attracted general attention, he looked around and said:

"Gentlemen, I appeal to you all. I am sorry if I have disturbed you with somewhat violent language, but you shall judge whether I am justified in refusing to believe the story I have just heard. We happened to sit at the same table and naturally entered into conversation. Our talk drifted from one subject to another until I made some joking remark about the so called scientific research into the mysteries of the spiritual world. I grant it is a fascinating subject even for an unbeliever like myself and a good one for conversation and playful badinage, but to be told seriously and as an undeniable fact that the spirits of the departed can and do revisit this earth when they have promised to do so passes the bounds of credulity. My neighbor tells this most extraordinary story: Two years ago tonight he lost his dearest friend, a lifelong friend, who on his deathbed, seeing his despair, solemnly promised that he would appear to him on the anniversary of his death, which took place about midnight, if this friend invoked his spirit. He affirms that he has already seen him once since he died. Now, I ask you as men of sense, living in the nineteenth century, is it possible to believe such a statement?"

The pale man had flushed angrily during this speech, but it was only a transient betrayal of feeling, for his face resumed its former pallor, although his eyes retained their strange light, and it was with a marked expression more of annoyance than anger that he replied calmly:

"It is nothing to me whether you believe or not. I have simply stated a fact, and it is the truth. You pressed me with questions concerning that great trouble of my life until I told you all—my despair when I lost my friend after years of mutual devotion and attachment, and his promise to return. I told you truthfully that he had already kept his promise once, but you did not believe me. I do not wonder. The spiritual world is a closed book to the majority. A glimpse is obtained now and then by some, but chiefly by conjecture and speculation only, whereas actual experimental knowledge is rare and not often communicated. I told you what my privileged experience had been, and I can prove it, incredible as it may appear to you."

While he was speaking a number of new arrivals had invaded the cafe, calling in on their way from a neighboring theater for a drink or a cigar. Their curiosity being aroused by the words they had partially heard, they drew near to listen and, being informed of what

had happened, joined the others in discussing the pros and cons of this debatable topic, some laughingly, some seriously, according to the view they took of the subject. No one seemed to take it very seriously, however, except a few, who shook their heads doubtfully, while others laughed at them and joked about spirits. Above the babel-like noise exclamations and snatches of conversation could be heard, such as: "Impossible!" "Who knows? Do you?" "What will you bet?" "I am no fool!" "I bet a hundred francs he can't prove it!" "Strange things happen!" etc.

The gambling element asserting itself, bets ran high, and it was finally agreed to deposit the stakes in the hands of the incredulous man, and then they called upon the spiritualist with the weird look in his eyes to make good his words.

He seemed strangely reluctant and sighed and hesitated, but at last he made up his mind and said: "If I comply with your request, you must all submit to my conditions. You must give me your promise that no one will attempt to intrude upon me or disturb me in any way and that I shall have one witness with me."

This was considered quite reasonable, and all consented readily.

"I need not add that of course you will hold yourselves bound in honor to keep the conditions faithfully. You, sir," he continued, fixing his basilisk eye on his opponent, who winced perceptibly, "shall be that witness. You must accompany me into the next room. The doors shall be left open, and you will have to describe aloud whatever you may see. If the experience turns out to be a painful one, you have only yourself to thank for it."

With these words he rose and walked toward the corridor leading to the inner part of the house and beckoned to the other man, who, by this time considerably subdued, hesitated for a minute, but, putting on the best face he could, he took up a lighted lamp from a table and followed him into the first room to the right, leaving the doors wide open.

As they disappeared a strange hush fell over the noisy and excited company. Silence reigned for some time, until the twelve strokes of midnight were heard sounding distantly from a church clock. Then a voice arose in the next room, saying slowly and solemnly:

"Maurice Durand, thou who didst promise that on the anniversary of our cruel parting thou wouldst give me the consolation of seeing thee again if I called upon thee to appear, remember thy promise! Dear friend, I entreat thee come! Maurice, appear!"

Then came a pause, amid breathless silence, but soon the voice was heard again, saying:

"Maurice, remember thy vow! I beseech thee, appear!"

Another silence. Then another voice was heard, saying in tremulous accents:

"There is a faint light in the darkest part of the room. It takes a shape! It approaches! It is—ah! Away!"

An unearthly shriek rent the air, followed by a crash and a heavy fall, and then all was silence once more. The startled listeners looked at each other with dismay. Some had turned pale, while others looked ill at ease, but all felt uncertain, irresolute what to do. Some time elapsed before it was suggested that they ought to disregard their promise and go in and see what had happened, so as to render assistance if it were needed. A move was made toward the room, but it was in total darkness. A light was procured, and this was what they found:

The room was empty, the lamp was upset, the table overturned and the window wide open—the two men had gone and the stakes with them.

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HE HAS SWORN OFF.

Mr. Jerry Dugan Tells a Little Story.

An uncouth specimen of the human family, giving his name as Jerry Dugan, appeared before the orderly sergeant's desk at the central Police Station last night and filed his application for a night's lodging. His hair was through his hat and his feet was through his shoes. He was just an ordinary hobo, who dropped in to stay over until morning with the cops.

"Yes, I have had a few little ups and downs in my day," remarked the tramp to a Reporter after he was securely locked up in a cell. "I've been ship-wrecked, lost and drowned, as the sayin' goes, but I butted into a proposition a few weeks ago that would make the worst of Edgar A. Poe's midnight dreams go 'way back and sit down forever. And I might as well make it understood before wading any further into this recital that me and Mr. Booze have severed co-partnership now and for all time to come. The cup that cheers and paints landscapes on the imagination has played its last and final prank with my thinking organs and my reasons therefor are good and competent. Through the gross oversight and carelessness of a youthful surgeon in a big public hospital in a western town I missed by a hair's breadth being put away in Potter's Field alive. But, as good luck would have it, for one time in my checkered career I woke up before the operation was completed, and now I live to give out the facts of that experience for the benefit of mankind in general and for a certain class of embryo doctors in particular.

"A short time back I was hanging around a corner gin mill in one of the big burges on the Great Lakes. It was Saturday night and the first thing I knew a gang of guys had me at a table filling my carcass up on all the mixed beverages in the barkeeper's catalogue. I kept on loading up until I went down and out; just toppled off my perch into the sand on the floor and positively refused to rise again. They let me doze for an hour or more and then undertook to bring me around, but it was no go. I was done for all to appearances—completely knocked out. I shall always maintain that some guy doctored my last drink, for prior to that I had never had any sort of alcoholic mixtures to limber me up in such a manner. They pounded and thumped and punched; stood me on my feet, but I was limp as a dish rag. In desperation the cop on the beat was called. He rung for an ambulance and I was thrust into the vehicle, whirled up to the emergency ward of the hospital and stretched out on a cot. Of course, I didn't know all this at that time; I didn't know anything until I woke up in the morgue, where dead bodies are placed for safekeeping—now we're talking—one of these places where the departed spirits are laid away until the expiration of thirty days and if no one claims said deceased he is transferred to the people's graveyard and interred. But I'm switching from the main yarn.

"When I came to myself I was lying alongside the pleasantest looking stiff you ever feasted your vision on. The pair of us occupied a double berth in the big refrigerator. I was rigged in a little white shroud with fringes around the borders. My arms were folded placidly across my breast and my feet were neatly tied together by a bandage wound around my ankles. The party who laid me out for my journey hence must have thought me too lovely to die—plucked in life's morning, as the feller says.

"Well, maybe I didn't let a yell out of me when I opened my lamps and saw where I was. Cold? I should smile. You know stiff has to be kept cool. The morgue keepers generally keep the mercury hanging around the goose egg in the box summer and winter through. All I had on was a little tissue paper shroud that caught me just below the knees and whose graceful folds clung fondly about my bearded neck. When I think of what an artist dream I must have looked then I have to laugh. But you can put up long odds that I was not disposed to regard the matter in a light vein at the time. As I say, I let go an Indian war whoop that came near arousing my bed fellow, who, I learned later, had preceded me by several days.

"Now, just imagine if you can my predicament. The last thing I was doing, as far as I know, I was sitting at a table in a corner saloon. There was music in the air and drinking material flowed freely. Now take me out of a nice warm room, while I am supposed to be getting about all the fun out of life that there is in it, and while I am still sleeping peacefully, shove me into an ice box with a dead man, then suddenly wake me up, turn on the light, and you have my plight. "I yelled and yelled; I beat on my temporary tomb the best I could with my hands and feet, hampered as they were, and soon I felt the receptacle in which I was resting slide out into the open air and into the presence of several men. I will have to make a

free and frank confession. I used some very strong language. Just at the time I was under the impression that the boys at the saloon had put up a joke on me and I was unable to appreciate the humor of the situation.

"But, to make a long story shorter, I was taken back to the ward, given my clothes and discharged from the institution as a well man. You see, it was this way: When I reached the hospital a young guy looked me over and pronounced me dead right off, without going to the trouble of making a close examination. Of course, having shaken off the mortal coil there was nothing to do but preserve my remains until somebody identified me. Failing in this Mr. Dugan would find a happy home underground.

"Suspended animation? I believe they let it go at that. Whatever it is it took away my thirst for all forms of alcoholic stimulants, a thirst which I would not have parted company with for millions. But then I guess there's no kick coming for me when I think how close I came to disappearing from public life."—News and Courier.

The World is Warned of Woe.

Death, disaster and terror, say the stars, will continue to astound the world this year, according to L. G. Key, an astrologer in the Masonic Temple. The disasters of the next few months will be appalling. Seldom has the world experienced such a series of calamities as are said to be in store.

"The months of June and July," said Mr. Key, the other day, "will be filled with calamities. There are to be terrific storms and many lives will be sacrificed. Saturn is in his own sign and disaster is bound to scatter over the earth. Disturbances in the earth like the eruption of the West Indian volcanoes were predicted by astrologers two years ago.

"At that time it was pointed out that the world would be startled before the end of two years by terrific earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. These will continue for a time and when the disturbances will be in the atmosphere. Storms will follow and lives are endangered."

Mr. Key advocates the establishment of a Government department of astronomy and astrology. If competent men were to have charge of such a department disasters such as the destruction of St. Pierre could not occur. People could have been warned of that in time for them to escape if astrologers had been employed to keep track of the conditions, according to Mr. Key.

Not only are lives and property imperiled, but Governments will be disturbed. According to the astrologer the stars point to serious trouble in the United States Congress and the nation is to have fresh trouble of threatening nature in the Philippines.

"There is sure to be an outbreak of the natives near Manila, and the nation will have trouble," said Mr. Key. "The signs of the stars indicate this very clearly. I think it will be only a short time before there is an alarming outbreak there and the government would better keep a good lookout on the conditions there."

All these things have been predicted and are printed in pamphlets that circulate among the astrologers. Mr. Key recently warned a friend who told him of his intention of going to Mexico not to go, because of the threatened disasters from earthquakes in that region.

Mr. Key has figured out on an astrological chart that on the morning the Mont Pelee eruption was in its greatest fury that Saturn was approaching the "house of death" and that Mars and the sun were in the same "house," the "house of disaster."—Chicago Chronicle.

Good Deeds Never Die.

Years ago an old, old man paid periodical visits to the business houses in Cleveland, O.

He was a crank. Some persons called him a nuisance. His unkempt beard gave him the appearance of an anarchist, but his fine eyes, and his mouth as tender as a woman's told of a heart as big as sorrow, and a soul filled with good impulses.

And this old man was a queer eccentric beggar. He begged nearly all the time, early and late, and he put all he owned and all he could beg and earn into caring for children, the children of the poor.

He established a fresh air camp and filled it with half-starved babies, little folks who were so pinched and wan and ill that you would think of white coffins and narrow graves if you saw them.

That old man would carry a baby in his arms for hours and croon over it and tend it like a mother. He would walk miles for a doctor, and pain—the pain that made children cry—actually hurt him.

And sometimes, when he would let the public have a look into his heart, a great ambition could be seen. There were so many to be cared for and so little to do with that all around there was suffering that could not be assuaged.

That fact was a knife thrust in this old man's heart, and he wanted a fresh air camp so big and broad and wide and free that it would have room for all—the babies of the tenements and cellars and garrets; the cripples, the children of poverty—all.

Wasn't that a grand idea?

One day the old man died with his work uncompleted. It is the way of mankind, for ambition nearly always covers more than a life can accomplish. The last thought of this old fellow was for the children, "his children," he called them.

The seed had been sown.

A good deed does not die. Sometimes its growth is slow. The frost nips it and it is stunted because of the lack of the sunshine of human love and the tender warmth of human kindness. But it doesn't die.

Last week J. H. Wade discovered the seed planted by this kind old man in his own breast.

J. H. Wade is a millionaire. He has a yacht and fine horses, and if he has known of the sufferings of the tenement babies, he hasn't said anything about it. If he has poked his way into garrets and heard children crying, no one but he knew it. He never sent for a reporter and asked to be interviewed. He didn't make any noise.

But he gave the Cleveland fresh-air camp and to the cause of humanity \$100,000, and he sent along \$20,000 in cash, because it is getting warm and the babies need immediate attention.

That is the flower that grew from the seed sown by Grand Old Father H. M. Addison 13 years ago.

Good deeds never die.—Cincinnati Post.

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