

The Old Beau's Story.



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I have hinted to you that I believed if ever the Old Beau told me his own story it would be the story of stories. There was something about the man, through all my acquaintance with him, which had impressed me with the feeling that his whole life had been one long tragedy. Yet, there was no more genial, companionable man in all the club. He was replete with anecdotes, with gentle humor, with the quality that is known as "the milk of human kindness," as you may have gathered from some of these tales that I have told you. Yet, there was a certain grave under-current in the man that had often caused me to wonder at its reason. While I desired his story, with all the keen avidity that a newspaper man is capable of, I had firmly made up my mind that I would never suggest this desire to him—for I was confident the tale would come of his own accord some day. And it did.

In the lighted street in front of the club, I was approached one night by a miserable vagrant who asked me for alms. Not from charity, but because it was the easiest way, I put my hand in my pocket and gave him a coin. As I handed it to him, the Old Beau came down the steps. He paused as though turned to stone when he saw the beggar, and grew all white, like one who is suddenly struck with death. And the beggar, seeing him, stayed the hand that had been stretched forth for the coin, and leered at him and called him jeeringly by name. I stood looking from one to the other, knowing that I was witnessing the culminating scene of a great drama, yet powerless to comprehend its meaning. After a pause that was, doubtless, not more than a moment, but that had spun out infinitely in my imagination, my friend came down the steps slowly, and placed his hand on my shoulder. His voice was quiet, but vibrated with a strange, deep tremor as he spoke to me.

"Do me this favor," he said; "go with this man, find him shelter and food, and whatever else he may need. Do for him all that he asks, for I owe him a great debt. I will wait for you here."

He turned, and went slowly up the steps again, while I gave my attention to the fellow before me. I do not need to tell you much of him. He seemed the worst of his class. Dressed in rags, filthy and palsied with drink, he was loathsome in the extreme. He mumbled now, in a maddened way, and staggered from sheer weakness. I soon saw that his mind was half gone, and that he was ill and miserable. Want had done almost its worst upon him. He easily submitted to being led, and I took him, first, to a place where he was bathed, and cleanly dressed, and fed. Then I saw more clearly how little strength was in him, and so we went forthwith to a hospital, and I procured a bed for him there. After the physician had examined him, he told me that the spark of life hung only by a thread. It might be a matter of a few hours; at the most, but a few days, before the end would come. It was far past midnight when I left him, and returned to the club.

The Old Beau was alone in an upper room. A dim light burned on the table, a low fire in the grate. The usual accessories, tobacco and liquors, were notable for their absence. He looked up when I entered, and I saw that he was still very white. I thought I could detect the signs of a

severe mental struggle—a struggle for self-control. A sad smile fitted about his gentle mouth—a sad smile, yet one that was not utterly without joy. He mentioned me to a chair near the grate, and I sat down and waited for him to speak. This he did after a time, looking dreamily into the fire while

"It is a memory from the past," he said; "more—a ghost from the grave. That man—that poor wreck and cilly of a man—was the friend of my early days. We loved the same woman, quarreled for her, and fought. It was in the south, and in the time when hot blood carried men to the dueling ground. We fought beneath the arched live-oaks in the Old Parish road below the city where so many of the foolish youths of New Orleans have met. I ran him through with my sword, and left him for dead upon the field. I was forced to fly, with my seconds. The physician was a stranger to me, a friend of his. He sent me a paper later, marked with an account of the duel, and the death of my opponent. I went abroad. Before

leaving I tried to see her—the woman we had fought for. I knew that she loved me, and not him."

He paused—and was silent so long that I thought he had forgotten me. I made a little movement to attract his attention. He looked up at me and smiled again.

"I have been back in the long ago," he said. "There are pleasant memories there, as well as sad ones. It is much to know that you were once loved by a pure woman. I knew that, for she told me so in a little note that I have always kept. Nothing can take that knowledge from me. But she said that she could never marry a man who had the blood of another on his hands and on his soul."

Again he paused and seemed to dream, and I respected and did not break the silence.

"I have seen her many times since," he began again, presently, "as one sees the stars away off in the unreachable heavens. But never to touch her hand—her garments, even; not even to speak with her, except as we have met and passed in the street. She has never married, and I know that she has grown old, still loving me, as I have grown old, loving her."

After this he asked me to tell him what I had done, and I did this as briefly as I could.

"You say he has not long to live? Will you come with me?"

He started up eagerly, drawing on his coat. We went out together and I led the way to the hospital, where I had left the other.

"The touch of human sympathy that we had given him had mellowed the poor outcast, and silenced his jeers. The meeting between the two men was affecting. The long years seemed blotted out, and their hands clasped, as they had done in their youth. The stranger had grown weaker since I left him."

"I am dying, Willis," he said brokenly; "it may be but a matter of a few hours. I have wronged you, and I want your forgiveness. I know what I have made your life. I have been wretched, and weak, and miserable as any dog that walks the earth. But I accept it all as the just reward for what I did. I provoked you beyond

human endurance, compelled you to fight, because I hoped to kill you. When I fell, it would have been only right if I had died. But I lived, saved through the exertions of my physician, and then together we made up that lie, and sent it to you. I knew what that would do. Then, when I was very again, I drank and gambled until poverty and the devil claimed me, wholly; until I became the ruin you now see. I did not think ever to cross your path again, but I am glad that it has happened so. I can die easier for having said this."

"The Old Beau put his arms about the dying man, and his face down close beside him, and I heard him whisper:

"My dear Edgar, let the dead rest. Bury his dead."

We remained with him through the rest of that night, and through the following day, and through the next night. He grew gradually weaker, and his life went out just as the sun of a new day had risen. When it was all over, we went back to the club and there my friend wrote a brief note.

"Will you take it to this address," he asked me; "but wait," he added; "you should have the right to read this."

He unfolded the paper and laid it before me, and I looked and saw these words:

"The hand of God has turned back the leaves of the book of the past. I have just come from the deathbed of Edgar Freeman. We were friends again, at the last; and my hands and my soul are free from his blood. May I come to you?"

When I had read this I saw already the dawning of a new and glorious day for the Old Beau, as I trust one had already dawned for the poor outcast. I went with a light heart, with speeding feet.

I had thought to find an old woman—a woman grown old before her time. But I found her in the sweet and full maturity of womanhood. I will not try and tell you of her. She was worthy to have been served for seven times the seven years that Jacob served for Rachel.

I was her slave from the moment that I saw her. I could have fallen down at her feet and worshiped her when she said to me:

"He must love you, or he would not have trusted you with this message. Tell him that I wait for his coming."

Shall I tell you the rest? No, I think I will not. But I may say to you that I think my friend has found the Fountain of Youth; for his step is lighter, his eye brighter, his smile more joyful, his voice merrier and his heart more full of the milk of human kindness even than it was before. Yet his gain is my loss, for there are no more cozy hours in the club alone, and no more stories of the Old Beau.

—She—"And so you have been to Washington and actually stepped upon the sacred floor of the house of representatives? Were you not fired with enthusiasm?" He—"No; by the door-keeper."—Boston Transcript.

AND GAVE HIM A COIN.

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TWO CLEVER POODLES.

One Snatched a Pipe, the Other (than a Boot-Blacking Stand.

Like all representative dogs of different countries, the French poodle possesses some of the characteristics of his nation. Vivacity and quick intelligence are the dog's most prominent traits.

The brightest poodles I have ever known, says Stuart Travis, were all proteges of shopkeepers, old soldiers and the bourgeois in general.

I used to see very often a veteran of the French wars. This old soldier had a poodle who was his pipe bearer.

It was a funny sight to see the dog walking gravely upright on his hind legs, and taking quick little steps to keep up with the martial stride of the veteran.

Every now and then the man would take a very black meerschaum pipe from his lips and give it to the dog.

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A Personal Allusion.

"I believe I'll go out and stretch my legs a little," said a tall gentleman, as the train stopped at a station on the New York Central.

"O, don't," said a gentleman passenger who had been sitting opposite to him, and who had been much embarrassed by the legs of the tall gentleman. "Don't do that. Don't stretch those legs any more. They are too long already."

The look the long man gave the critic who objected to such lengthy extremities will haunt the rash man as long as memory holds her seat.—Alex Sweet, in Texas Siftings.

Theory and Practice.

Wife—Do newspaper writers sit up all night?

Husband—I believe so.

"That explains it, then."

"Explains what?"

"The household department of this paper recommends roast potatoes for breakfast. One would have to sit up all night to have the oven hot enough."

—N. Y. Weekly.

Breaking It Gently.

Edgar—Miss Edith, I—ah—have something most important to ask you. May I—that is—

Edith (softly)—What is it, Edgar?

Edgar—May I—Edith, would you be willing to have our names printed in the papers, with a hyphen between?—Answers.

Valuable Information.

Dusty Rhodes—Walker owes his success to his knowledge of law and valuations.

Fitz William—How is that?

Dusty Rhodes—The minute he looks at an article of virtue, he knows whether it is grand or petty larceny.—N. Y. World.

Had Been There Before.

Judge—Have you formed any opinion on this case?

Mr. Wood B. Juror—Yes, your honor, I have; but that need not matter. I have served on juries before, and I know that I shall have no opinions at all when both sides get through.—Puck.

Spoiled the Parting.

Ferguson—You don't look like a man who has just said good night to his adored. Perhaps the old man came to the door in time to see you off.

Hankinson—He came to the door, blame him, in time to saw me off.—Chicago Tribune.

Love of Power.

"What ever induced Bingley to go into business? His wife has enough money to support the two of them."

"It wasn't money he was after. He opened an office so that he could have some place on earth where he would be boss."—Indianapolis Journal.

The Income Tax.

Citizen One—What do you think of this income tax?

Citizen Two—I haven't made up my mind yet. I've got to wait till the end of the fiscal year and see whether I've got any income or not.—Detroit Free Press.

When Lovely Woman Votes.

Miss Mawbank—Vote for that horrid man! Why, how can you, when he has such a big, ugly red beard?—Judge.

Always.

Jasper—I have noticed a peculiar thing about men who claim to be believe in nothing.

Jumpuppe—What is it?

Jasper—They always have an unspeakable belief in themselves.—Truth.

Met the Emergency.

Hotel Clerk—The old gentleman in No. 202 says that his room is full of steam from the laundry.

Proprietor—All right. Charge him one dollar and fifty cents for a Turkish bath.—N. Y. World.

Home Dentistry.

Johnnie—I pulled that tooth, mamma. I knew I could.

Mamma—How did you do it, dear?

Johnnie—Oh, I just put on my big Sunday straw hat and tied the string to my loose tooth, and when the hat blew off it pulled the tooth right out!—Arkansas Traveler.

Decadence of Dramatic Criticism.

First Nighter—The man who writes the dramatic criticisms for your paper does not know a good play from a bad one.

Editor—I know it, but what can we do? He is the only man on the staff who is tall enough to see over the bonnets.—N. Y. Weekly.

Its Properties.

She (nestling up to him)—I know we are poor, papa, but Charlie says that love will make a way.

Her Father (grimly)—Yes, yes. It has made away with about eight tons of coal and fifty dollars' worth of gas in the last twelve months.—Truth.

THE MAN OF THE HOUR.

Eugene V. Debs, President of the American Railway Union.

President Eugene V. Debs, of the American Railway union, as the directing head of the boycott against the Pullman company's cars, is a prominent figure in American affairs to-day. He brings to the present struggle between organized labor and organized capital great executive ability, and he is besides a wonderful organizer. Mr. Debs, too, is an orator of no mean pretensions. He has a good voice and presence, is magnetic and earnest. He possesses absolutely the confidence of the men in the American Railway union. President Debs was born in Terre Haute, Ind., in 1855. He received his education in the public schools of that city, and when sixteen years old began work as a painter in the Vandalla railroad shops. Afterward he worked for three years as a fireman on the same road. His first appearance in public life was his election to the office of city clerk of Terre Haute. He served two terms, and when he was twenty-six years old was chosen a member of the state legislature. While in that body he secured the passage of several laws in the interest of labor. His speech nominating Daniel Voorhees for the United States senate gave Mr. Debs wide reputation as an orator. At the end of his term in the legislature Mr. Debs was made grand secretary and treasurer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, and he filled that office for fourteen consecutive years. He was always an earnest advocate of a federation of railway men, and through his efforts the United Order of Railway Employees, composed of the brotherhoods of railway trainmen and conductors, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and of the Switchmen's Mutual Aid association, was formed and Mr. Debs became a member of its supreme council. The organization, however, was dissipated by a quarrel between two of the leading orders comprising it, and then Mr. Debs conceived the idea of the Ameri-

can Railway union. For a year and a half he worked at the details, and the union came into existence June 20, 1893. Since its organization it has prospered, and the union is now the largest body of railway men in the world. Its recent victory in the strike against the Great Northern railway was a signal one. That was Debs' first great fight and he won it. Mr. Debs is married and has a pleasant home in Terre Haute.

HIS FUNNY SHAPE.

The Young Lady Could Not Get Onto the Empire's Curves.

Not everyone who goes to a baseball game knows all about the game. Some of them, principally women, know considerably more about many other things.

This was illustrated at the Philadelphia baseball park the other day. She had been going for the last five games and began to think she knew something more than her sisters. But there was one thing that floored her, and that was the umpire.

"Hain't he got a funny shape," said she to her escort. He replied "yes," in an absent-minded way, for there were three on bases, with a tie score.

The crisis past, the conversation was resumed.

"Why do they have such a deformed man there?" asked she. Her escort

looked at the umpire several times, but could see no deformity. So he asked for information.

"Why, don't you see how his stomach is shaped?" was the reply. Then it began to dawn upon the baseball enthusiast that his fair companion did not realize that the umpire had on a chest protector and it made him look like a lean spring chicken. He explained.

Where Weddings Are Melancholy.

A Japanese wedding would appear to be a melancholy affair. It is not good form for the bride over there to admit that she is glad to get married. When she is told of the process she is expected to howl loudly and long. Also she must keep it up by day and by night until the ceremony takes place. After she has been richly dressed for the event she must renew her shrieks and hang back until one of her attendants throws a veil over her face. Then an old woman takes her on the back and carries her to a sedan chair. When she arrives at the bridegroom's house she is a wife, the simple ride in the flowery chair being the only legal ceremony required, though profuse entertainments and congratulations from assembled guests follow her arrival.



EUGENE V. DEBS.

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