

THE NEBRASKAN

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THE STORY OF A CURSE.

I cannot tell a lie.—George Washington

"I," said the melancholy looking man, "am the victim of a curse!" These were the words which startled me as I awoke from such a troubled bit of slumber as one can catch when sprawled out over the seat of a railroad car, and I fixed my eyes on the party in the two seats ahead of mine. When last I had observed them they were enjoying a game of whist. I had then marked a little, dried up man, who sat facing in my direction and on whose countenance was a look of the most fixed and settled melancholy of which it is possible to conceive. He it was who, in a voice so loud as to render his every word distinct above the rattle and roar of the train, spoke the words above written. I settled myself to listen and he went on.

"My father was a retired druggist at the time of which I speak, and I a boy about ten years old. As I remember him he was a tall, portly man, with a round, red face and white whiskers, with every appearance of solid church-going respectability. His days he spent about town, and his nights in his own apartments, to which, on no pretext, was any one ever admitted, except two or three other old merchants, retired like himself. I never was allowed to visit him in his room, and he rarely came to visit me. This I attributed to dislike for me. It was not, alas! until long after that I found out the awful truth. My father was a magician!"

At this I could not restrain a start, while the Chicago drummer murmured something about a "fish story," most irrelevantly, I thought, but nothing heeding he with the melancholy face went on:

"Yes, my father was a magician, as were the other old merchants, his cronies. And their nights instead of being spent, as one would think, over a rubber and a quiet bottle, were devoted to the practice of black art, and such diversions as turning one another into rats, rabbits and the like."

Here a very audible sniff from the Chicago drummer caused the melancholy man to sink sulkily into his corner with a remark to the effect that he would not expose the sacred words of truth to the sneers of the unbeliever. An abject apology from the offending person restored the peace, and the melancholy man continued.

"Yes, I remember being told long after, that one night having changed one of their number into a cinnamon bear, they were unable, despite their utmost endeavors, to restore him to *propria persona*, and finally were compelled to turn him over to the authorities of the city park, in which he was dully installed, and became in time a universal favorite. My father and his friends visited him daily to supply him with peanuts, oranges and cakes, and he is said to have lived a happy life for years.

"One evening I was surprised beyond measure by being summoned, for the first time in my life, to my father's apartment. On entering, I found my father standing in the centre of the room, holding in his hand a vial containing a fluid of a beautiful amber color. By his side stood a gentleman I had never seen before. This personage was dressed entirely in black, had a complexion remarkably swarthy, wore a brilliant black moustache of great length and curled almost up to his eyes, which were also coal black and set deep in under eyebrows most unpleasantly arched. My father said simply, 'Come here, Frank.'"

"When I approached the stranger I laid his hand on my head, with the remark that I was a nice boy, and he hoped I would come and see him some time, accompanying the remark with a grin that was truly fiendish.

Without minding this by-play my father, removing the stopper from the vial, said:

"Frank, my boy, drink this."

I drank, and as I handed him the empty vial I said:

"What nice medicine, papa."

"It is not medicine," said my father, "but a charm; it conveys, my son, the greatest blessing on earth. Truthfulness, Frank, absolute, undeviating truth-

fulness is that blessing. To you alone it will be granted never to be able to tell a lie."

"Scarcely were the words spoken when the stranger grasped my father's arm, murmuring something about 'the time being up,' and hurried him through the door and out of the house. I never saw my father again."

"God bless me," ejaculated the drummer, "did the Mephistophelean stranger murder him?"

"I do not know," returned the melancholy man, "I only know that on the same day that this happened the pet cinnamon bear of the city park disappeared, as did also the two remaining cronies of my father, and none of them were ever seen or heard of from that day to this."

"But have you no theory?" the drummer was beginning, when the melancholy man interrupted:

"I have a theory of my own, but shall never divulge it," saying which he remained silent for so long a time that the drummer said:

"But about the cure?"

"Oh," resumed the melancholy man, "I had almost forgotten—it was the inability to speak anything but the truth! Truth, gentlemen, has been the great curse of my life. Listen:

"I will not mention the various calamities which attended my boyhood's days; suffice it to say that from sad and bitter, sometimes awful experience, I became but too well aware of my strange and unprecedented truthfulness, my inability to lie. From that experience I learned to guard myself closely in all that I said. And yet, alas! my most careful caution was of no avail. At fifteen, boy-like, I fell in love with a widow, much my senior, with a large and interesting family, and, loving her, swore she should be mine. Forthwith, she was mine!"

"For twelve long and weary years did I bitterly regret my boyish enthusiasm. What with a shrewish wife, a large and growing family, and a mother-in-law, my life was a burden indeed.

Finally, thanks to a kindly providence, my wife joined the innumerable caravan, yet, alas, I was not free. For once, in a moment of passionate anger I had exclaimed to my mother-in-law,

"Hag! You will never die!"

She is now 103 years of age, toothless, deaf, almost blind, and will live until my death renders my hasty words no longer binding.

Some time after my wife's death I met a young and beautiful girl whom I learned to love devoutly. God! how I loved that woman! And my suit prospered; she was to be my wife. The December morning which was to be our wedding day, I stood before the glass, arranging my toilet, when word was brought me that a man whom I wished most particularly to avoid, wished to see me.

"But what shall I tell him?" asked the servant who brought in his card.

"Tell him? Tell him," I exclaimed, in a moment of unhappy thoughtlessness, "that I'm out in the country and won't be back for a month!"

Gentlemen, in an instant I found myself alone in the midst of a lonely moor which was covered with snow and ice. In stumbling along searching for a highway or dwelling house I slipped on a bit of ice, fell, and sprained my ankle.

It was just one month later when I returned to the home of the woman I loved! Returned, to be met by an angry and indignant woman who dismissed me unheard with words of scorn and contumely.

From that day to this my life has been one of disgrace and agony. When I left, and left forever, the woman I loved, I left behind me all the better and nobler part of myself. I plunged into a career of reckless and prodigal dissipation, and there was no depth of shame to which I did not probe. I sank lower and lower in the social scale; my old friends and companions deserted me, and their places were taken by a multitude of parasites of either sex. You may be certain that I did not lack for money, for why should he lack for money who can coin it by the barrel and by the mere word of his mouth?

One night, as I sat drinking and carousing in a dive in the city of ——— I was startled beyond measure by the

sight of the stranger in whose company my father had departed many, many years ago. He was seated at a solitary table in one corner of the room, regarding the assemblage with a diabolical leer, when my eyes fell upon him. I started, rubbed my eyes, pinched myself to make sure that I was awake, half rose from my chair, then sank back into it faint and trembling, I knew not why. There he sat, looking not a year older, not a bit less swarthy, with the same look of cruel exultation on his face, the same light of fiendish cunning shining in his eyes, which I had marked when last I saw him, more than a score of years before! Almost at the same moment that I saw him, he saw, and, strange to say, recognized me. When I saw the light of recognition in his eyes, I was seized with a sudden and violent fury, and springing up,

"Curse you!" I cried, "curse you! take that!"

My *that* was the rapid successive discharge of the six chambers of my revolver, point blank at his breast, at a distance of less than five paces. To my terror and dismay he sat calm and smiling through the fusillade. I was myself no longer.

"The devil take me if I do not kill you!" I roared, casting my weapon from me and throwing myself upon him.

"Done!" I heard a mocking and exulting voice exclaim as I crashed through him against the wall!

On picking myself up and turning again to the stranger, the chair was empty, he was gone. But a "bouncer" belonging to the establishment was upon me, and very soon ejected me, neatly and expeditiously, into the street.

From that day, gentlemen, I have never passed a day in peace. I have searched the world, wandering from place to place, seeking only rest and quiet, but it may not be. The single word "Done!" is ever ringing in my ears; the malevolent, gloating face of him who uttered it is ever before my eyes.

"And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming"—dreaming of I know not what.

And as I grow old, as I feel instinctively the clammy fingers of death closing about my throat, I am filled with a horror and a terror no man can imagine. For I did not kill him, and I know but too well, from a long life time of experience, that my rash and terrible words, uttered as I sprang at that demon's throat will too surely come true. And so—

"Glendale!" here shouted the brakeman, whereupon our strangely gifted friend rose and said hurriedly:

"Adieu, gentlemen, I get off here. Hear my last words: TRUTH IS A GOOD SERVANT BUT A BAD MASTER!"

When he was gone the Chicago drummer sat for some minutes in apparently profound meditation. Finally, slapping his leg he murmured, "God bless my soul!" after which he, in common with the very respectable audience which had listened to the melancholy man's strange tale, sank into a fitful slumber for the rest of the night. As to the melancholy man, as he himself said of his father, "I never saw nor heard of him again."

ATHLETIC.

The University ball team met the Omaha Y. M. C. A. Saturday afternoon and after tussling hard were sadly defeated. A more perfect base ball day could not have been chosen. Just a light breeze was stirring which served to cool the players and the sympathizers of the University when some fielder or base man would make a glorious muff.

The Y. M. C. A.'s ability to turn out a crowd was able to be seen here as the grand stands were filled to the overflow. Alumni of the Uni were out—as many as could get out—and yelling for the boys. Very noticeable was our base ball friend, Charlie Stroman, '93. He was right down on players' bench and as much interested as if he were playing, and through the extreme carelessness of Robinson of the Y. M. C. A. he was badly hurt. Robinson started to run to first and gave his bat a fling, the end of which struck Stroman above the eye, cutting an ugly gash.

Hayward's pitching was good enough

to thoroughly trounce the Omaha's if he had had any support.

Barnes pitched one inning, succeeding in fanning out two men in that time. Hopwell pitched the last two.

The boys went to bat each inning and nearly always came away in the order of one, two, three.

Packard's playing deserves compliments. His sliding made him three bases and though few balls came to him yet his good work saved two runs. Snaaberg made a beautiful catch in right field. Heald played splendidly.

The game led out with the boys at bat. Hopwell and Hayward were first victims. Randolph got to first on balls and out while trying to reach the bag covered by Crawford. The religious friends scored once in this half. Stoney, aided by Crawford and Abbott's sacrifices and by Robinson's hit, moved over the plate. But Crawford and Robinson were beautifully nailed. Heald in the second showed what he could do at the bat by making a safe hit. The Y. M. C. A. scored twice when they came in.

No score was made in the third and home team was laid most horribly low, and then the Uni made its first score. Barnes made a hot liner, muffed by Stoney; went to third on passed ball but was fired back to second by the umpire, but made up for it by making a pretty steal and scored on Heald's hit to left field.

McKelvey collided with a fielder while chasing after Heald's fly and was laid out for about five minutes.

In their half they scored twice, and Shaberg brought in a run for U. on fourth. In the sixth Barnes went to the box and the cheers of the crowd, and yelling for Phenomenal Barnes was heard throughout the rest of the game. Four runs were made by the Christians through the poor in and out field work.

Hopwell pitched the remainder of the game. Barnes could find no good reason for not pitching only that he would not. University made no more scores but a good many blunders. Benedict imagined that he saw Heald sitting on the fence fifty yards back and threw his ball accordingly. Raymond tried to catch his flies on the bounce. In batting, though, the boys found Robinson's balls with ease. But on the whole the team was too light for the Y. M. C. A. foot ball men.

Here is the record:

Y. M. C. A.										
Stoney, s. s.	4	2	3	0	0	0	1	1		
Crawford, 2 b.	5	2	1	0	0	4	0	0		
Abbott, c.	5	1	1	0	0	6	5	1		
Robinson, p.	5	1	3	0	0	1	1	0		
Jefferis, 1 b.	4	1	1	0	0	13	1	0		
Jellen, m.	5	4	3	0	0	0	0	0		
McKelvey, 3 b.	5	3	5	0	0	1	8	1		
Marquette, r. f.	5	2	2	0	0	0	0	0		
Lawler, l. f.	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0		
41 16 19 0 0 27 16 3										

COLLEGIATES.										
Hopwell, 2 b.	4	0	0	0	0	4	2	1		
Hayward, p.	3	0	2	0	0	0	4	2		
Randolph, 3 b.	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	3		
Benedict, s. s.	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2		
Barnes, c. p.	2	4	0	0	0	2	5	0		
Heald, 2 b.	4	0	2	0	0	3	0	0		
Packard, m.	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0		
Shaberg, r. f.	2	1	0	0	0	1	2	0		
Raymond, l. f.	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0		
Bells, c.	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0		
29 2 6 0 6 24 17 6										

SCORE BY INNINGS.

Y. M. C. A.	1	2	0	2	2	4	4	1	x	—16
Uni.	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	—2

SUMMARY.

Earned runs: Y. M. C. A., 16. Two-base hits: McKelvey, Abbott, Bills. Three-base hits: McKelvey, 3; Jellen, Robinson. Double plays: McKelvey to Jefferis; Packard to Heald. Base on balls: Off Robinson, 6; off Hopwell, 2. Hit by pitcher: Hopwell, 1. Struck out: by Robinson, 5; by Hayward, 1; by Barnes, 2. Passed balls: by Bills, 2; by Abbott, 1. Time of game: Two hours. Umpire: Mr. Farrish.

A match game of base ball came off Thursday afternoon between the Sigma Chi boys and the Phi Delta Theta. A large crowd of interested spectators assembled to witness the game and to "guy" the players. Jesse Becher was chosen umpire and the game proceeded, but on account of the dust storm and

increasing fatigue of the players and score keeper's fingers only seven innings were played. The teams lined up as follows:

PHI DELTAS.	SIGS.
Hayward, catcher	Frank Westerman, W. pitcher
Elliot, short stop	Dixon Packard
Westerman, J., 1st base	Hebard Raymond, 2nd base
Saxton Wheeler, 3rd base	Duff Jones, 4th base
Daubravo Haggard, c. field	Hicks Westerman, L. 1 field
Shepard	

Score was 22 to 19 in favor of the Phi. More inter-fraternity games may be looked for.

The Annual Contest of the Delian Literary Society was held in chapel Saturday evening. There was little enthusiasm shown in proportion to that usually exhibited at University oratorical contests. The attendance was very small. The lower portion of the chapel was only partly filled when President Miller announced the opening of the program. After the rendition of a vocal solo by Miss Davis, the contest began. Mr. C. J. Countryman was the first speaker. His subject was "Hawaii." He began by reviewing the history of the Hawaiian government, then talked on the relations existing between that government and the United States, making a strong plea for annexation. Mr. Countryman was at home on the stage, but his voice lacked the power of the orator. Mr. Graham's oration, "From Darkness to Dawn," was a discussion of the industrial situation. His delivery was very good. The audience now enjoyed a zither solo by Mrs. J. F. Frampton. Mr. G. A. Flippin was the last speaker and the successful contestant. The subject of his oration was "Time and Education will Solve the Negro Question." Mr. Flippin made a strong plea for the negro. He said that too much is expected of him, many thinking that in the short space of thirty years he should attain a civilization that it has taken the white race centuries to acquire. He said all the negroes wanted was to be let alone. He asked for no new legislation in his favor, but that he only be permitted to enjoy, without molestation, the privileges granted him by the constitution. Mr. Flippin also showed that the negro had made remarkable progress both morally and intellectually since he was granted his freedom.

While the markings of the judges were being obtained the audience was favored by a vocal duet by Misses Gilbert and Stevenson. According to the decision of the judges Mr. Flippin was awarded first place and Mr. Graham second. After the decision of the judges was announced, the friends of the winner proceeded to do the tossing act.

The Class of '96 held an election of the editors and managers for the Annual which they will publish next year. The election has been hotly contested the last week. The best of feeling, however, existed between the friends of the rival candidates. The attendance to the meeting was unusually large. After the snowing under of Mr. Leavitt's resolutions and points of order, the election of editors in chief was taken up. Mr. B. W. Wilson and Mr. Ned Abbott were chosen. Associate editors were then discussed with the following result: Miss Bruner and Miss Horne will represent the Delian Society; Miss Wheeler and Miss Prey, the Palladians; Mr. Porter, the Unions; Miss Whiting, the Kappas; Mr. Puls, the Sigs; Mr. Pillsbury, the Phis; and Mr. Adams, the Betas. Mr. V. R. McClucas and Mr. C. M. Barr were elected business managers. Upon motion the elections were made unanimous. The features of the meeting were speeches by Messrs. Leavitt, McClucas, Barr, Wilson and Abbott, and the closing address by Mr. Time. What can not the University expect from a corps of editors of this kind, and, as Mr. Abbott said, "The Class is to be congratulated upon their choice."

The several companies of the Battalion are each of them actively engaged in preparing to carry off the flag on the 26th inst., when the competition drills are to take place.