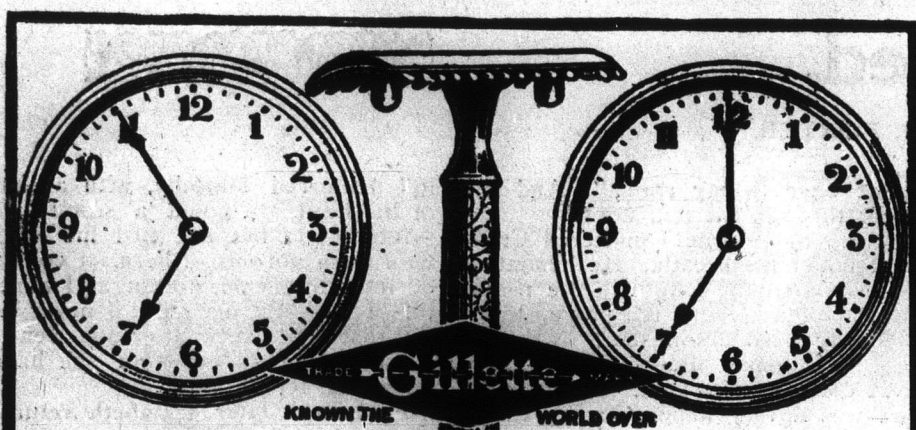




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The Family Feud.

BY ANNIE O'HAGEN.



SIDE by side the Caseys and the Dwyers had dwelt in amity for more years than they often took the trouble to count. Amazingly untroubled had been the neighborliness between them. The men had voted the same ticket, smoked the same tobacco, marched together in the "Patrick's Day" parades, and employed the same methods of family discipline. Their opinions as to the proper degree of authority of the church in the United States coincided—which was fortunate for both of them, as it enabled them to present a united front against their wives, who argued in a futile, loyal, ignorant feminine fashion for the maintenance of the temporal power everywhere.

John Dwyer had bought the lot of land on which his small frame house stood at the advice of Michael Casey. Casey had bought the adjoining tract, and had built his duplicate small frame house on the enthusiastic testimony of John Dwyer that there was not another such real estate chance in New York—despite the fact that within a stone's throw of their dwellings there were whole rows of similar little houses, standing in similar little rectangles of earth, bulging with monotonous little piazzas, and boasting brick walks that led down besides grass plots to the gates in the wicket fences.

The men had "stood godfathers" for each other's firstborn. The women had been as proud, almost, in their godmotherhood for the second children of each family as they were of their own motherhood. Mrs. Dwyer and Mrs. Casey had talked together cheerfully and affectionately on uncounted Monday mornings as they hung out the wash in their respective back yards. On innumerable Saturday afternoons they had taken their broods down to One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Street, making a holiday of shoe-buying, a festivity of bringing home the Sunday roast. They had nursed each other's sick and sorrowed with full hearts over each other's dead, sharing their deeper life as simply as they shared cuttings from each other's garden plots, or "drawings of tea."

It was war that ended the idyl. The spring afternoon when John Dwyer had met Michael Casey with the tidings that his eldest son, Jim, had enlisted in the Sixty-Ninth was the fatal day.

"Yis, sorr!" the proud father had rumbled. "Niver a worrud to me, mind ye, till the thing was done, the young rascal! Oh, I had a notion to give it to him hot an' heavy. But I tell ye, Mike, I was proud of the scamp. Only twenty-two, ye mind. Now, if your Johnny gets in the same company of the Sixty-Ninth—the Fightin' Sixty-Ninth, ye mind, they called it durin' the Civil War—they'll be together all the time, savin' each other, belike. It's two hayroes we'll be havin' out on Locust Street."

"If my Johnny makes anny such fool of himself," Mr. Casey had announced heavily, "it's a bootin' he'll get from me. The Sixty-Ninth, it is? Let him be larnin' his trade an' mindin' his business an' helpin' his parents, not runnin' after the first band that brays."

The father of the hero, eyed Johnny's father with an indignation almost speechless, but unfortunately not quite so. And when the Casey gate slammed behind its owner with a vicious click, the friendship of more than a quarter of a century was broken. The head of each house, raging greatly, issued its patriarchal orders to his clan—"No colloquin' wid the people next dure!"

The "colloquin'" had ceased. The two wives might sigh and shake their

heads over the back fence, might even whisper that "this couldn't last long"; but the habit of obedience was strong. Moreover, the quarrel was augmented rapidly. Mr. Dwyer was reported to have called Mr. Casey's courage, and that of all his house, into question at a neighboring resort of refreshment and conversation. Mr. Casey, so the obliging intermediary informed Mr. Dwyer, had met the criticism with a threat.

The whole neighborhood became divided. Jim Dwyer took to feeling himself a hero in every truth, though the idea had been far enough from him in the first flush of his half-patriotic, half-adventurous enlistment. He adopted what he considered a heroic swagger in consequence. John Casey, on the other hand—a good, steady, hardworking youth, with no deep-seated prejudices against the bearing of arms when that might be necessary—soon found himself cherishing opinions of the most contemptuous sort toward "fire-eaters" and "jingoes."

When Jim Dwyer, from the State camp, used to make occasional descents upon his home, the Casey house next door was darkened. When his regiment was ordered South, and all Locust Street affectionately decided to go to the station to see him off, the Caseys invited relatives to a merry making. When poor Mrs. Dwyer, weeping out her frightened heart on her pillow that night, and praying incoherently for her boy, heard the piano in the next house jingling with the loudest, most joyous tunes, she decided that after all her husband had been right. They lacked not only patriotism, but every good feeling, these Caseys!

Locust street was divided with the families. The attendance at St. Ann's fell off woefully when Michael Casey bore his flock and his following from the parish church, polluted, he said, by the devotion of the blood-thirsty Dwyers, to St. Stephen's. There were days when the fierce old man, reading the papers, half longed to have his hatred of the whole affair justified by the death of the foolish boy whom lust of battle had lured from the path of every-day duty. But when he found himself thinking this thought, he always hastily crossed himself and said: "The saints forgive me!"

When Jim came back, stripes upon his sleeve, his hollow cheek tanned by the Southern sun, even the part of Locust Street most disaffected toward the Dwyers turned out to give him greeting. Only the Casey house put out no welcoming banner, sounded no jubilant note of praise. Ella Casey, to be sure, looked through a chink in the blinds in her mother's room and thought Jim marvellously improved. But Ella was just beginning to read Shakespeare's plays at school, and was dipping privately into "Romeo and Juliet."

There was another feminine fancy to whom the return of Sergeant Dwyer was a little disquieting. Mollie Husted did not live so far from Locust street that rumors of its great feud did not reach her from time to time. Though she was keeping "steady company" with Johnny Casey, and was glad and proud in the assurance of that earnest, steady, successful young man's affection, yet, when the hero came home and the old stories were revived, she sometimes looked questioningly at Johnny. She half envied the girls with whom Jim danced at the ball given by the Fordham Heights Young Men's Pleasure Society. Her John had not gone to that festivity, declining to run the risk of meeting his enemy and of precipitating a row. Even a row, it seemed to Mollie, would have been preferable to this questionable biding at home. Could it be, after all, that Johnny was—well, not quite brave?

The months passed, and a steady,