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A LAMENT.

Sixty or more years ago there flourished in France a class of bullies, the most detestable one could conceive, men who had perfected themselves in the use of arms, who gleefully boasted of the number of people they had done to death, and took rank accordingly, as a Red Indian brave takes rank by the number of scalps in his girdle.

One of these bravos, who styled himself Jules de la Magny, took up his residence in Lyons. Magny was a man of about 40, tall, rather slim, and of a military bearing. His very features, it was said, were intimidatory, his pale face, without a speck of color, being crowned by coal-black hair. His eyes were blacker still, and gave him a sinister aspect, which was increased when he assumed his cold smile. This scoundrel, who dressed elegantly, who dined on the best—he preyed on a rich widow, who adored him—and affected the most elegant and aristocratic manners, boasted that he meant to kill eight men before the year closed. "I have a method," he said, "the method of progression. Last year it was seven, this year eight. Behold, it is September, and I have only accounted for five, so this city must supply me with three." Incredible as it may seem, the picture is not overdrawn; these fiendish butchers, with their sensitive "honor," were as regardless of life as an eastern despot.

Monsieur de Magny opened his campaign at Lyons with a duel that pleased the citizens. There was already a minor bully in the town, who called himself Captain Ferreuse, and who had terrorized the law-abiding for some time. It was only a week after De Magny's advent in the town that he insulted Capt. Ferreuse in the Palais Cafe, the swell cafe of the city, one evening. He sat down at the same table as the captain, called for a glass of wine, and when it was brought to him swept the captain's glass off the table with his cane, saying to the waiter: "Request this fellow to find another table, garcon. I like not the society of camills" (the scum).

The captain replied by taking up De Magny's glass and throwing its contents in his face. Monsieur only smiled his cold smile, and wiped his face delicately with his perfumed handkerchief. The meeting took place an hour or two later, and after a few passes the captain fell with a gaping wound in his throat. Decent people congratulated themselves, but soon they found that they only exchanged King Log for King Stork, and no man was safe. Of course De Magny has his friends—there were always to be found a dozen or two who looked up to him as their chief and leader, and took pride from being recognized as a friend of so redoubtable a man.

Ernest Soleau was a young doctor in the city—a most able young man, who was steadily making a name for himself. He was respected by his equals and almost loved by the poor, from whom he would take no fee. Shortly after De Magny's advent to the city he was married, after a year's engagement, to a beautiful and charming girl, the daughter of a deceased colonel. They were passionately devoted to each other, and it was a pure love match. They spent their honeymoon in Italy, where they stayed six weeks, it being the first holiday the doctor had given himself in three years.

On a Sunday afternoon a week after their return they were enjoying the sunshine in the public park. They were seated, talking and laughing merrily, when by evil fortune Monsieur de Magny came by. Now, it happened that the day after his return, Dr. Soleau had been called to attend the seventh victim of De Magny, a barrister, who had been wantonly insulted and then killed. The doctor, as the bravo passed, could not help showing his loathing. The cold smile that meant death came on the face of the bully. He walked on a few yards, then turned back and, ignoring the husband, he stopped before Mme. Soleau, and with well-simulated politeness said:

"Good afternoon, madam; with your permission I will seat myself beside you and we will chat together. I love to talk to the beautiful," with another bow.

Estelle, who had never heard of the bravo, turned her inquiring eyes on her husband, thinking the man was either drunk or a madman. Soleau's face became frightfully pale, and he controlled himself with the greatest difficulty, understanding well that De Magny was seeking to insult him.

"Monsieur," he said, "you are speaking to my wife and you are offensive. Pray leave us."

De Magny affected neither to notice nor hear him. "Will madam give me permission to sit beside her, or will she take my arm for a stroll? I find madame charming, and I adore charming women," and he made her another bow.

"Go away! go away!" said Estelle, now thoroughly alarmed.

"Monsieur, you are grossly offensive, I tell you," said Soleau, trembling with restrained passion. "Your behavior is that of a cad."

"Ah," said De Magny, still affecting to ignore the husband, "madame is fatigued, and does not care to talk. I will leave madame, and will call upon her this evening. But permit me to anticipate this evening," and before husband and wife could guess what was coming, he had kissed her.

* * *

With a spring like a tiger's Soleau was on him, beating him wildly about the face with his fists. Estelle screamed in terror, and several people who had witnessed the altercation at a little distance, came up. De Magny, with a confused face, but with his demon's smile, had disengaged himself, and was asking for satisfaction.

"Satisfaction! Yes," cried the young doctor, "satisfaction and your deserts."

The meeting took place early the next morning. There could only be one result—considering between disparity and skill, it was a duel between wolf and lamb. With the glee of a fiend, De Magny played with his victim, giving him a wound for every blow, as he said, finishing with a thrust in the left side. Ten minutes later Estelle was a widow.

It was not until her husband was brought home to her dead that she learned that he had gone out to inevitable death, that De Magny had purposely insulted her, and it was, in fact, most deliberate murder, sanctioned by the false code of so-called "honor," under which the vilest and most bloodthirsty wretches could commit the most inhuman murders with impunity.

It was the most heartrending tragedy those present, when the body was taken home, had ever witnessed. In her eyes there was none like her husband, so clever, so handsome, so sure of becoming one of France's greatest sons. And now he lay dead by the hand of a vile monster! She knelt beside the corpse, calling on him, now in yearning accents, now in the softest and gentlest tones of entreaty, now with a smile, to speak to her, to say one word. Mercifully she fell beside him. For a week she lay unconscious, on the verge of death, and only by most devoted and skillful attention of a professional friend of her husband—Dr. Leres—was her life saved.

"You have been cruelly kind," she said to him when she was recovering; "it would have been truer kindness to let me die. But now I have been restored to life, I will devote it to ridding the earth of that monster. He shall die; by a just God, I swear it."

"Dear madame," said the doctor, "dismiss all such thoughts. I see what you mean; you would assassinate him, and the law would have no pity on you. You would be a victim."

"Doctor," she said firmly, "he shall die."

Mme. Soleau gained strength slowly. She would go away for a change, she said, and one day she set out for Paris. Dr. Leres was glad, feeling certain that she had forgotten her vow.

One evening seven months later, just after another scandalous "affair" of De Magny's, a handsome and unknown young gentleman entered the Palais cafe at Lyons. The newcomer, who, to judge by his tone, was a mere boy, walked with much swagger, talked loudly and authoritatively, and altogether conducted himself with aristocratic insolence.

A little later De Magny entered with three of his particular friends. The stranger favored them with a rude stare that did not pass unnoticed. In a few minutes he got up to go. He went a little out of his way to pass near where the four were sitting, and when close to Demagny he stumbled, or pretended to stumble—none of the onlookers doubted for a moment that it was intentional—and lurched against him as he was raising a glass of wine to his lips. The consequence was that the liquid was spilled on the duellist's immaculate shirt and silken waistcoat. He turned round as if he had been stung. "Monsieur!" he cried to the young fellow, who stood with an insolently proud smile on his features.

"Monsieur!" said the Unknown.

"Monsieur!" said De Magny, more furious than his friends had ever seen him. "You will apologize for your rudeness or clumsiness, which ever it be."

"Monsieur! I never apologize for accidents!"

There was the stillness of death in the cafe. It was evident that the reckless stranger knew not the fearsome reputation of De Magny.

"Monsieur, you will apologize, or——"

"Monsieur, I never apologize——"

"Nor do I apologize for that!" cried De Magny, in a tempest of rage, as he picked up a friend's glass and flung its contents in his opponent's face.

The youngster calmly wiped his face. "Monsieur has wontonly insulted me," he said. "I shall demand satisfaction."

"Willingly," said De Magny, with his terrible, icy smile. "I shall kill you, puppy."

"Perhaps, pig," retorted the other calmly, and then, turning to the spectators, he asked in a clear voice, "Are there any gentlemen here who will act for a stranger of good birth who has no friends at hand?"

There was a little hesitation, then two gentlemen, one a notary, the other a silk merchant, signified that they would.

"Thank you, gentlemen. Shall we confer outside?" and the young fellow led the way.

"My dear sir," said the notary, with agitation, "I warn you, you will be killed," and in trembling accents he told of De Magny's reputation and many villanies.

The Unknown heard him with a smile. "Thank you," he said; "I have heard of him, and that is why I came here. Before this time to-morrow you will be well rid of him. For I shall kill him, gentlemen; the good God shall aid me. I am the insulted party and I select pistols. Arrange it as you will; I can trust you without reserve. You will find me at the cafe opposite. And allow me to express the deepest gratitude for your kindness."

Again they tried to explain, but the Unknown would not listen, and with heavy hearts they went to confer with De Magny's seconds. In half an hour they were back. It was to be a duel with pistols at ten paces in the garden behind the Palais, the time midnight. The seconds were to toss for the first shot.

"Thank you, gentlemen; you have done me great service. And, now, if you please, we will have supper."

* * *

Just before midnight they walked across to the Palais, and were admitted through a private entrance into the garden, where presently De Magny, his seconds and Dr. Leres joined them. Dr. Leres had been obtained by the notary on the suggestion of the Unknown.

The preliminaries were soon arranged, and the respective seconds threw the dice for the right of first fire. De Magny's second threw a three, the stranger's five.

"You have the right to fire first, M. Inconnu," said the notary.

A smile of satisfaction overspread his features. "Ah, I knew it! I knew it!" he cried in a tone of absolute conviction. "It is the finger of God."

The five spectators looked at De Magny. For the first time, it is said, a look of anxiety, even of fear, was observed on his features. He was tinged with superstition, and the Unknown's confidence had shaken his nerve, and in vain did he try to appear unconcerned.

They had been placed opposite to each other, when the Unknown said to the notary: "Monsieur, fire off my pistol, if you please, and load afresh. There must be no mishaps."

A protest was raised by De Magny's seconds that it was irregular, but the Unknown insisted, and after some argument and appeals to the law and etiquette of dueling, both pistols were fired off. Strange to say, when the trigger was pulled the pistol of M. Inconnu missed fire, and a fresh cap had to be placed upon it before it was discharged.

"You see," said he, "there would have been a mishap, and God's purposes would have been frustrated."

Once more the pistols were loaded, and again the duelists took their places. The incident had further affected the bravo, and his face was ghastly.

"Inconnu, fire!"

The Unknown slowly raised his pistol until it was pointed at De Magny's heart. He held it there for a quarter of a minute, his arm as rigid as a bar of steel, then he lowered it again. "Monsieur," he said, slowly and coldly to his antagonist, "God has made me his minister to end your crimes. But I fire especially to avenge Dr. Soleau, whom you wantonly assassinated." And again he raised the pistol, this time pointing it at De Magny's forehead. The latter was almost in a state of collapse, and as the Unknown pulled the trigger, contrary to the regulations that had been made, he lifted his pistol and fired. It was almost a simultaneous report. De Magny's ball passed through the left arm of the Unknown, breaking the bone; but at the same instant he gave a leap in the air and fell—dead. The bullet had passed between the eyes.

"Infamous! infamous!" cried the notary to De Magny's seconds. "A scoundrel act."

"What matters it?" said the Unknown, solemnly, "he has been executed." And then his face turned ghastly, as if he were about to faint. In an instant Dr. Leres was at his side, ripped open the sleeve with his penknife and began to examine the wound. "The infernal scoundrel!" he cried.

"He had died as he had lived, Dr. Leres," said the Unknown. "Do you not know me?"

The doctor peered keenly into his face, then started back. "It—it cannot be!" he cried.

"But it is," said the Unknown. "I am Estelle Soleau, the unhappy widow of that scoundrel's victim. I have kept my oath. But it will not bring Ernest back"—and she fainted.

* * *

There was such incredible news for the city next morning that many would not believe until the seconds had been interviewed, and then the rejoicing was great. Mme. Soleau's act touched the popular imagination, and the bulletins as to her condition were scanned as eagerly as if they concerned the health of a crowned head. It was a dangerous wound, and it was only after weeks of anxiety that all danger was pronounced at an end.

A fortnight later she took the veil, not to live in seclusion, but to devote herself to the poor and needy in the slums of Paris.—Boston Traveller.

A Village Temperance Society.

We have a very flourishing so called "temperance society" in the village, and the result is seen in the increased comfort of the cottagers. I used sometimes to show my interest in the cause by taking the chair at a meeting now and then, but I have given it up since ladies have begun to appear on platforms, for ladies recognize no rules of the game. In the middle of a passionate address they think it not indecent to appeal to the chairman to set a good example by taking the pledge. At the last meeting I attended a lady speaker, the wife of a clergyman, told how her husband used always before his evening service to eat an egg beaten up with brandy, which made him bilious; but since he had left off this drunken habit he had also left off his bilious attacks. This was more than old B. could stand, for he roared out: "'Twere the egg, marm, what made he bilious. You tell your mister to take the brandy wi'out un."

One of the villagers at this meeting made a mysterious speech, in which he gave as his reason for taking the pledge that there was only in a pint of beer as much goodness as would lie on a shilling. I have one story that I used to keep in lavender for these occasions. I had it of the doctor. When he was walking the hospitals, there was a brewer's drayman who had broken his leg, and in six weeks the bone had not set. So they questioned him about his diet. "Was he accustomed to drink beer?" "Yes, a little." "About how much?" "Oh, not more than three gallons a day." So they allowed him a couple of quarts, and the leg began to mend at once.—Cornhill Magazine.

Miss Autumn—There seem to be more chaperons than young ladies here to-night."

Miss Barry—It does seem so, indeed. By the way, whom are you chaperoning?

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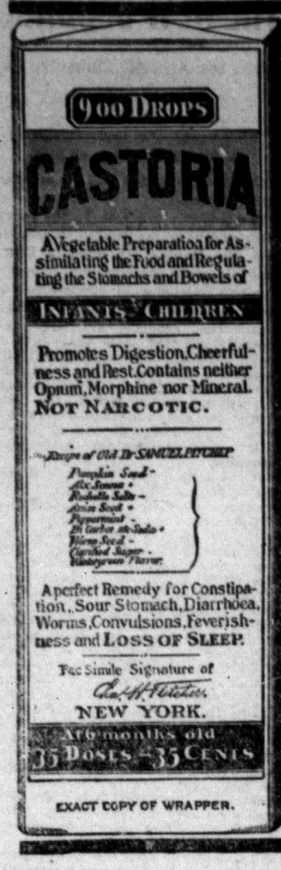

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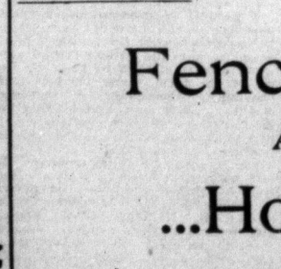

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