

## A HEARSE POKER GAME

TWO DAYS AFTER IT AN UNDERTAKER CAME TO TOWN.

There was a storm, and so the Undertaker and His Guest Preferred to Ride Inside—The Result was that the Undertaker Lost His Outfit and His Trade.

'Speaking of gambling, remarked the retired turfman, 'did I ever tell you how a good poker won an undertaker's whole establishment one night while riding home from a funeral in a hearse?'

That was a proposition that the gamblers had never gone up against, but they were willing enough to hear the tale. The retired turfman vouched for its truth.

'This all happened years ago,' he said, 'and I got the story from the man who turned undertaker in a night. Out where I lived there was not much of a town. No pretensions were made for style, but a number of old aristocratic families had their being with us. These families were short on funds, but they were still playing the limit on style, and they showed it in the matter of a funeral. When a member of one of them died an undertaker from Greentown, fifteen miles distant, was summoned to bury him, and he generally did it in style. Well, one day old Col. Badger died. He had been a politician and had amassed considerable wealth and lost it all in bad speculation. His people wanted to bury him with more or less show, and so the funeral director from Greentown was summoned by wire. He came, handled the funeral in great shape, and got the body buried in the afternoon just before a big thunderstorm swept over the town. He expected to remain over night in the town, and was comfortably quartered at the hotel early in the evening when his assistant at Greentown telegraphed to him to hurry home for another funeral. So he had to go that night. The storm was spent, though the heavens were dark and gloomy and another spell of lightning and rain was not unexpected. While the negroes in the stable were hitching the horses to the hearse a young man who was at the hotel, a drummer, said he had missed his train out and would like to make Greentown that night so he could finish his work and leave early in the morning. The embalming artist offered him a seat on the hearse.

'It's not the kind of train I usually take,' said the drummer, 'but I want to reach your city, and if three of us can crowd on the seat I will risk it.'

'When the hearse was driven up to the hotel porch the guests ambled out to see it start. The undertaker had his trappings and the drummer had his grips. There was a lot of joking, and a moment later the death carriage rattled off through the sand.

'The night was dark and stormy. Five miles out drops of rain began to fall and rumblings of thunder made the drummer shiver further on the seat. The undertaker suggested that they go inside to escape the drenching which was certain to come, and the drummer consented. The driver had a stack of coats to keep himself dry. Just after the two men crawled in the hearse the rain began to come down in torrents. The passengers had a lantern, though they could not feel comfortable. The drummer opened his satchel and brought out a flask. He offered it to the undertaker, who took a heavy swig and then passed it back. The drummer finished it. As he fumbled with his grip a deck of cards fell out.

'Whew! remarked the funeral director, 'Whiskey and cards in a hearse at midnight, almost!'

'Well, to show our nerve,' said the drummer, 'we might play a bit here just to talk it off afterward. You can take those coffin nails there in the box for chips and I'll gamble that we'll have a story to tell at Greentown to-morrow, provided we get there alive. It would be funny though to see an undertaker die in his own hearse.'

'The road was not bad and the hearse jolted but little. The lantern was sufficient to cast a good light. The drummer took a cardboard box and turned out a handful of small-sized coffin nails—not cigarettes, young man, but the real things. He divided the pile evenly, and then offered to make each nail worth a nickel.

'At the most,' he said, 'you can't lose more than you buried in your pocket from your job today.'

'The undertaker went in the game simply for the novelty of the thing. He had been accustomed to many gruesome sights, but his hands trembled every time he fingered the cards. He played in luck, however, and soon the nails clinked alone on his side of the hearse. The drummer brought another handful and then played to win. He got the grave-digger's luck, and in less time than he had lost before he had won every nail. Then the director did the buying, and he worked hard to pull up but luck was against him and he soon was buying again. When he lost this stack he

bought more, like a man, and offered to raise the stakes.

'We are pulling for home now,' he said, 'and we might have a hot finish. We can keep this game going until we see the lights at Greentown. If you want we can play for table stakes. I've got a wad of money as big as your head in my clothes, and if you are the best man, why, then, you can take it.'

'The Drummer accepted the proposition. He pulled forth a purse which was unusually large for a man of his business. The rain was still rattling on the glass sides of the wagon as the new game began. For a time the playing was steady, with the best of the luck going to the traveller. The men were strangers, but the undertaker did not suspect anything wrong in the play for it was on his heels that he lost most. The drummer was game to the finish. All the playing was for jackpots and the drummer would call every time if he had nothing more than ace for high. By doing this once he got a big pile of the nails, of the funeral director was caught on a huge bluff. This put the men on their guard. One bad streak for the owner of the hearse gave all the cash to the drummer. The undertaker said he would give a note payable at Greentown on arrival, and with this he could keep the game going until the trip was done. All of this pleased the drummer. He felt that the hearse was his mascot and he was going to bank his last dollar on it. The first note was lost in a jiffy. Then another was scratched off; it was half gone when the crisis came.

'The hands for several rounds were changing and luck was with the undertaker. His little spurt gave him double assurance that he could pull up even and win the drummer's bad besides before coming in sight of his city. All the while the rain continued to fall and the tired horses were getting fagged. But there was no fog to the game inside. It was on the deal by the undertaker that the sensational finish arrived. The pot had passed repeatedly and the stack of nails looked like a woodyard to the man who expected to rake in it. The drummer had said he could not open it, or rather he said he would pass. The undertaker opened for what appeared to be a pound of nails and every nail was valuable.

'Well, I'll raise that,' said the drummer quietly, 'or my name isn't McNulty.'

'All well, then. Mr. Mack I am glad to know you. I am Undertaker Brown as you've doubtless heard, and I'll raise that a bit.'

'There were several raises before the cards were drawn. The drummer McNulty, took a single card, and Brown drew a couple. The betting followed this. Raise after raise came.

'I've got my habits to-night,' said McNulty, 'and I'm going to play this to a standstill. Nothing is going to come too high for me.'

'The undertaker was rather nettled at the persistency with which McNulty met his raises, though he saw him every time. Brown put up all he had handy, but there appeared to be no end to McNulty's string.

'I've got you sure,' said the undertaker, 'and it's foolish for you to keep the thing up. But as you seem to have unlimited money I will show you something by betting my business at Greentown, look, stock, and barrel. It's worth at least \$25,000, and I'll just raise you that.'

'Oh, you are certainly easy,' replied the drummer, 'and I am not carrying my boss's money for nothing. Here you are,' and with that he began to unroll a wad of crisp new bills. The undertaker was astonished. He did not look for anything of the kind. He had only expected to get all the drummer had by a big raise. He was willing to see it through, however. After counting \$25,000, most of which was brought from secret pockets and belts, the drummer said he would put on a \$5,000 raise. Brown said he had a house worth that and he would call with the house.

'That's good enough,' said the drummer, 'and now, if you want to pay to see, I've got a lovely straight flush, nine high, here.'

'The undertaker dropped his cards without looking at the drummer's. When he did glance at them he studied the cards carefully.

'Well, you've played me to a finish,' said he, 'and you can have my shop tomorrow. It's a good thing I've got nobody but myself. Like a fool I was risking all on the best full house in the deck, but then you know that's poker. But don't tell any body that you won my shop. Tell them rather that you bought it. I will go away tomorrow.'

'I was banking on the hearse,' said the drummer, 'and I was playing with other folks' money. Had I lost, you could have carried me to the train in this same old hearse, but I couldn't have gone alone. I drew to that inside flush and filled it. I'll never try it again, though.'

'As they looked out the lights of the city came in view. The hearse rattled on, and two days later the papers announced that a new undertaker had come—McNulty.'

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## CAPITULATED.

'Father,' said the beautiful girl, 'George Fitzmontmorency will call on you to-day.'

The old gentleman started from his chair and brought his fist down on the table with a violence that indicated great indignation.

'For three years,' went on the fair girl, 'Mr. Fitz-Montmorency played centre forward in his college football team.'

The old gentleman was about to bring his fist down again and swear, but he paused.

'He is the champion boxer of his club,' went on the girl, 'and he holds the championship belt for middle-weight wrestling.'

The old gentleman sank back into his chair.

'He will ask for my hand,' said the beautiful maiden.

'He may have it,' returned the old gentleman with what sounded rather like a sigh.

## TOPICS OF THE DAY.

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## MOLES VERSUS MEN.

Mr. Richard Lyddiker, the naturalist, states that he has traced a tunnel made by a mole in a single night for a distance of a hundred yards. He calculates that in order to perform equivalent work a man would have to excavate in a single night a tunnel thirty-seven miles long and of sufficient size to permit him to walk through it.

It may be recalled that William of Orange lost his life through the stumbling of his horse over a mole hill. After that the English and Irish Jacobites used to drink 'to the little gentleman in the brown velvet coat.'

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In a hamlet on the banks of the River Ayr, one of Her Majesty's inspectors was examining a class on Scottish history, and wishing to elicit the fact of James V. quarrel with his Queen Mary of Lorraine, asked the question: 'Why was Mary Queen of Scots born at Linlithgow?' when up starts a little fellow and shouts, 'Because her mither was there.'

Little Girl—'That's the second time your mamma has called you.' Little Boy (busy playing)—'I know.' Little girl—'Won't she whip you, if you don't go?' Little Boy—'No; she's got company, and she'll say, 'He's been very deaf since he had the measles, poor little fellow.'

## FLASHES OF FUN.

A high-toned affair—a piccolo.

He—'Je t'adore!' She—'Shut it yourself.'

'A life on the ocean wave' was once turned into 'A wife on the lotion rave.'

Dentist—'What are the last teeth that come?' Brilliant Student—'False teeth.'

A distinguished commoner who cannot vote for doing away with 'Lords'—Dr. Grace.

'Well,' said the monkey to the organ-grinder, 'I'm simply carried away with the music.'

'You want exercise.' 'But, doctor, I'm a postman.' 'Then you need rest—join the police-force.'

Hobson—'I understand your daughter is taking great pains with her singing.' The Poor Father—'Taking is not the word, 'giving' is more like it.'

Mrs. Stout—'Your daughter sings beautifully. Is she studying music?' Mrs. Spare—'Indeed she is! She is studying to be a bella-donna!'

'Who was that lady I saw you with at the ball last night?' 'Lady P' ris, ha, ha! That's a good joke. I must tell her. That was no lady; it was my wife.'

'Well, my boy, do you know what syntax means?' said a schoolmaster to the child of a teetotaler. 'Yes, sir; the duty upon spirits.'

'What would six ounces of tea come to at two shillings a pound?' asked the teacher of a class in school. 'Leaves,' replied the small bad boy.

Father—'My son, do you know why there is a cock on the steeple of the church?' Hopetul—'To wake the people when the sermon is done, father.'

'They say it is electricity,' said the rustic, as he stopped before the incandescent street light, 'but I'm blessed if I see how it is they make the hairpin burn in the bottle.'

Tweezer—'Swales is your first cousin, isn't he?' Wesley—'Yes; but you can bet he'd be my last if I had my say in the matter.'

Teacher—'Why is the diameter of the earth greater at the Equator than at the Poles?' Tommy—'I suppose the heat at Equator swells it up.'

'I'd rather have a nutmeg than fame,' said the idiot. 'Why?' said the wise man. 'Because,' said the idiot, 'fame is for the great, but the nutmeg is for the greater.'

'What would you do if you should go to the post-office, buy a stamp, ask the man to stick it on for you, and he refused?' 'What would I do? Stick it on myself. I should stick it on the letter.'

He had lingered long, and, after a silence, she remarked, 'Do you know, I really believe papa thinks you're dead.' 'Why?' 'Because he has twice referred to you as the late Mr. Smith.'

A little girl, aged four, was given some sweets to keep for her sister. On being asked for them by her, she said—'Oh, Nellie, I put them in my mouth to keep them for you, and they melted all away.'

Miss Elders (sentimentally)—'Yes, I want to die before I get old.' Her Friend—'Oh, how selfish of you, Clara, when I want you to be my bridesmaid when I get married next month.'

'It's all nonsense, dear, about wedding cake. I put an enormous piece under my pillow, and dreamed of nobody.' 'Well?' 'And the next night I ate it and dreamed of everybody.'

Teacher (to pupils who are not listening)—'Now, boys, try and pay a little more attention. I am about to explain the peculiarities of the monkey, and the least you can do is to look at me.'

When Sheridan kept a school, he had in one of his classes a boy who always read partridges for partriarchs. 'Stop!' exclaimed the wag of a teacher, 'you should not make game of the partriarchs.'

'It may be all right to joke,' said the small boy, crawling through a hole in a fence, as his mother, with a stick in her hand, came running down the street in his direction, 'but dis comin' woman business matter to me.'

'I hope things are more peaceful in the choir, then formerly,' said the pastor. 'Yes sir,' replied the organist, 'it's perfectly calm now.' 'I'm glad to hear it. How was peace secured?' 'Everybody except myself resigned.'

One of the examinations papers of a young girl in a city school contained the question: 'When zone produces the highest type of man?' In unmistakable characters the answer read: 'The Temperance zone.'

Magistrate (to prisoner)—'Why did you leave that town?' 'Didn't think I was strong enough, your worship, to bring the town with me.' He was sent to prison for fourteen days in order that he might guess again.

Thackeray tells of an Irishwoman begging alms from him, who seeing him putting his hand in his pocket, said: 'May the blessings of God follow you,' but when he only pulled out his snuff-box, she immediately added, 'and never overtake you.'

Pastor—'It would surprise you to know how much counterfeit money we receive in the contribution boxes in the course of a year.' Thoughtless friend—'I suppose so. How do you manage to get rid of it all?'

'I don't believe in that proverb, 'Marry

in haste, and repent at leisure,' said Cynicus. 'Why not?' asked Rutter; 'it strikes me as being good.' 'Ah,' said Cynicus, 'but you forget the married man has no leisure.'

If a man would, according to law, give to another an orange, instead of saying, 'I give you that orange,' which one would think would be what is called in legal phraseology 'an absolute conveyance of all right and title therein,' the phrase should run thus: 'I give you, all and singular, my estate and interest, right, title and claim, and advantages of and in that orange, with all its rind, skin, juice, pulp, and all right and advantages therein, with full power to bite, cut, suck, or otherwise eat the said orange, or give the same away with or without all its rind, skin, juice, pulp, and pips, anything heretofore, or hereinafter, or in any other dead or deeds, instruments, of what nature or kind soever, to the contrary in anywise notwithstanding,' and much more to the same effect. Such is the language of lawyers; and it is gravely held by the most learned men among them that by the omission of any of those words the right to the said orange will not pass to the person for whom use the same was intended.



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