

# Eureka in Disgrace!

AND it came to pass, in the year 2042 A.D., that there lived an inventive genius in the Land of Realism, whose sole dream was to discover how to do away with death. Long did he seek the answer, and finally, on one stormy night, he hit upon the formula that spelled death to death!

Intoxicated, he proclaimed his discovery to the whole world. He imagined unrestrained joy, tumultuous applause, unbounded adulation, and wild excitement. His elation knew no bounds.

The announcement fell upon the people like thunder. They were stunned. An investigative body corroborated the discovery. Man could no longer die!

There was an immediate roar of disapproval and anger. The first to protest was the Undertakers' Union.

"The Undertakers' Union is a member of the New Undertakers' Trust (NUT), established seventy years ago," shouted their president, wild with rage. "All our reforms for the betterment of the undertakers have been gained at snail pace. We have had to fight for every progressive measure. And now, when we have achieved recognition and a semblance of respectability, along comes this madman, who, in one stroke would destroy all that we have built over a period of years, render jobless all our members, and place our families on relief!"

Aligned with the undertakers were the Gravediggers' Brotherhood and the Association of the Drivers of Ambulances and Hearses. Militantly aroused by their great leaders, the members sent letters of protest to their Congressmen.

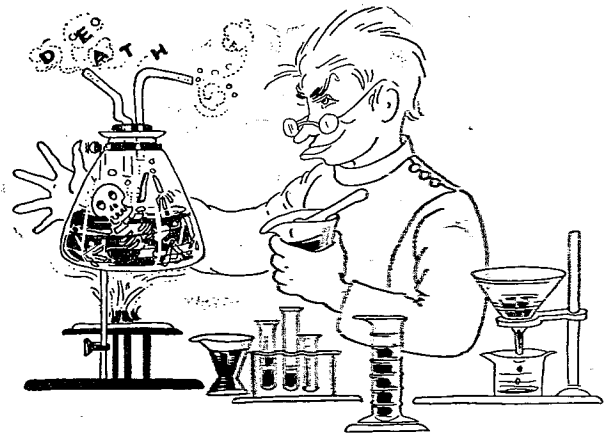
The Chairman Emeritus of the Medical Association was called out of retirement, and in his tired, quaking voice, shaking with suppressed emotion, he roundly denounced the scoundrel.

"Through thousands of years, the doctor has been a friend of the people. How many sleepless nights he has spent watching the bedside of the sick! How he has striven, how he has sought for some remedy for the various diseases of mankind! What terrible infamy this! Just when we are learning the various remedies for the plagues of humanity, we have to give up our well-respected careers, researches, ideas and dreams of curing our brothers! Within a short time the doctors—this great profession—would have to seek jobs as mechanics, porters, waiters and the like. A disgrace! All progress would cease. Man would search no more. Like an animal, he would be content to live his life uncared for and undoctored!"

Joining in his heated complaint were the Commissioners of Health, Hospitals and Public Welfare. The latter reminded his hearers of the widows and orphans his Department watched over. The president of the Pharmacists' Alliance asked his brethren to imagine the calamity if there were no more physicians in the government services.

There was a hurried conference in Capital City, and the chairman of the Economists' Malthusian Association spoke to the millions of listeners over the SLY network. His powerful speech caused a tremendous ovation, and was favorably echoed by all the influential newspaper organs.

"We are no longer children!" he thundered. "Our society has gone a long way since the dark days of the past, when men were still seeking their simple cures. We no longer believe in cure-all quakeries. My dear friends, let us examine the facts. Do you realize what would happen if we allowed everyone to live? Do you realize the world would soon be so crowded that the millions now employed would have to fight for a small piece of bread? Can you imagine what a slash in wages this overcrowding of people would create? Arise to smash this dangerous fanatic who is out to destroy your families and yourselves!"



The Bar Association was meeting that night, hastily called to order by the former Chief Judge of the Court of Higher Justice, who, after starting off with a number of clever anecdotes, assailed the inventor.

"I am not now speaking of the thousands of our members who will lose their extensive decedents' estate practice, nor of the great and honorable Surrogates who today so ably fill their seats, all of whom would be ruthlessly cast down by a man whose conception of science is truly a travesty on justice. Nor am I now speaking on behalf of the great practitioners and judges of the criminal courts, who will also be thusly destroyed. I am thinking rather of the army of stenographers, law clerks, court attendants, law school teachers, elevator operators and cleaners, and the parents of the young lawyers who had to struggle so hard to send their children through law school. All of these would suffer. Ah, mad thou art, oh world, to let this madman rule!"

He was wildly cheered, and his resolution to investigate

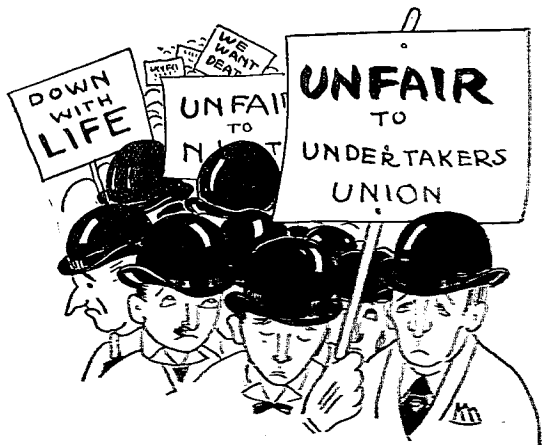
the inventor was unanimously carried. A telegram was immediately dispatched to Capital City.

At the same time, in a different part of the country, General Warrior was delivering a bitter tirade.

"It has been recognized for years that a military life is the finest and noblest career for our young men. People join various services of our country to defend it against all aggression. What would happen to the army, navy, air force, and their related branches if death were abolished? We would be the laughing stock of the world. Our proud tradition would crumble. The great heroes of military history, who have been a source of infinite inspiration to our young, would be forgotten. We would be a nation without song or memory, a dreamless land of dreamless men!"

He was joined in a telegram of denunciation by the leaders of the other forces of public protection, the Commissioners of Fire, Police, and the very good-looking Chairman of Life-guard Patrol.

The clairvoyants and fakirs protested that they would be



deprived of their livelihoods. One of them very brilliantly showed the tragedy that would befall mankind.

"Those who are already dead could not come back to life. What about all of us here who have some dear departed in the Other World? There would forever exist a gulf between them and us. We, the living, would never see them again. It would be the living who would really be dead!"

There was a great excitement among the heads of the insurance companies. These benefactors of mankind held a meeting which lasted far into the night.

"Insurance is the greatest invention of man," declaimed the president of one of the largest companies. "By means of insurance man does not shirk his responsibility; the near and dear are protected. Saving and thrift are encouraged. Social welfare and medicine are encouraged. The prospect of inevitable death makes man a sober and worthwhile individual. We dread to imagine the flighty notions that would take hold of man once death is no longer a reality. The knowledge that he, too, would soon die, makes man plan while he is still alive. That makes for progress. The knowledge that he could live forever would make him put off for

many tomorrows the things that he ordinarily accomplishes today. Think of the millions of widows and orphans of our original stockholders who would lose everything, together with the millions of our employees, and the many beneficiaries who today are paying the rates for their dearly insured? Would they not be horribly cheated of their forthcoming benefits?"

The penologists complained that crime would be encouraged since the death penalty would no longer be a deterrent. The morality societies protested that with the fear of venereal diseases gone, houses of prostitution would flourish. The Society of Prison Executives wailed. They were backed by the Union Prison Wardens. Electric companies which supplied current for the electric chairs, and the rope manufacturers who furnished the hangmen with materials, also assailed the fanatic. The coffin makers, the lumber landlords, the automobile manufacturers who make hearses and ambulances, the candlestock makers, and the florists who derived a great deal of their revenue from funerals, all joined in an outcry against the enemy of society.

The owner of the biggest munition plant in the world allowed himself to be quoted as follows:

"I don't have to remind the men and women who work for me that they would immediately lose their jobs."

He was warmly praised by the Chemists' Union, which perfected wonderful explosives for the destruction of mankind, and the Poison and Drug Association of Realism.

The powerful real estate boards, which derived their income from all of the above bodies, naturally grew alarmed. They demanded that the government take immediate steps to protect them. One realtor division, the cemetery associations, were especially vehement in their fight against the menace.

The Organization of Writers of Realism met to discuss the problem.

"It is a well-known fact," said a prominent mystery writer, "that the public thrives on mysteries. In fact, nothing else is demanded, unless it be personal confessions. Now, how can we plot mysteries, if the death factor, which is the main theme, is eliminated?"

Another person, a famous poet, took the floor.

"I can add that the finest poetry ever written deals with death. Throughout the centuries elegies have been a source of melancholy inspiration to millions of readers. Destroy death and you make a mockery of poetry."

He was enthusiastically applauded. The man who applauded the longest was a noted maker of bereavement cards. Cheers also came from the owner of a wax museum.

That same evening Murder, Inc., gathered to discuss the situation. The members were panic stricken.

"Youse guys know wot's up," shouted the Boss. "It ain't nothin' to make fun of. We will have to turn respectable if sumpin' ain't done to put the guy on skids."

There was a great deal of rioting, and a lynching party was organized. The inventor was taken into protective custody, where after some persuasion he confessed to the com-

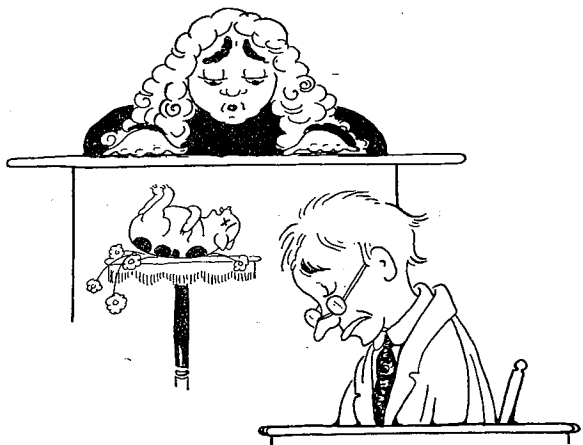
mission of a murder. It seems some of his guinea pigs had died.

The world was horrified. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Guinea Pigs immediately filed charges of pseudo-homicide. An old statute to that effect was dug up, and the District Attorney thundered that the culprit should be properly punished.

He was tried in a courtroom packed with both an angry jury and a hostile audience. The former Chief Judge of the Court of Higher Justice very graciously proffered his services free to the accused. The star witness for the prosecution was the Boss of Murder, Inc. The ex-Judge, on behalf of his client, immediately pleaded guilty, adding that the culprit, fully conscious of the gravity of his offense, threw himself upon the mercy of the court.

The plea was received by a grim-faced Presiding Justice who, after thanking the defense counsel for his open-mindedness in trying the case, addressed the defendant:

"Were this a case of lesser significance to the world, I might be inclined to accept the plea for clemency made by your distinguished attorney. However, through him, you have admitted the gravity of the offense, and I have no other course but to sentence you to death—and may God have mercy on your soul!" (This was contrary to law.)



Thus was the world purged of a lunatic. He was sent to a prison, headed by the President of the United Prison Wardens, and strapped into the electric chair by a world-renown member of the League of Prison Executioners. A neighborhood electric company very kindly sent a soul-searing current through the body of this hardened criminal. The Chairman Emeritus of the Medical Association pronounced him dead, and he was driven off by the president of the Association of the Drivers of Ambulances and Hearses in a coffin donated by the nation's largest coffin manufacturer. The Cemetery Association willingly contributed a beautiful spot for the burial. The insurance company sent a fat check to the widow, and many friends solaced her with bereavement cards.

## An Experiment in Assessment

By William Ryan

EARLY in the autumn of 1912, my friend Francis E. Bodin, who was associated with me in the New York Tax Reform Association, told me that the Democratic Party in his home township—North Plainfield, New Jersey—wanted to nominate him for the office of Tax Assessor. He said he would accept the nomination on one condition—namely, that if he was elected, I would go around with him in the assessment work and break him in on the job.

As North Plainfield had not elected a Democrat to any office in forty years, I did not hesitate to make the promise, and thought nothing more of it until the day after election. 1912 was the year Woodrow Wilson was elected President of the United States. Having been Governor of New Jersey, he swept that state for the Democratic Party, and my friend Bodin was the new Tax Assessor of his township. And so I had to make good my promise.

The backwardness of the assessment of property can be imagined from the facts that there were no tax maps of any of the properties, the assessment records were set up alphabetically, and the assessments were supposed to be on a basis of 50% of true value. Without tax maps, there is no way of knowing the size, shape or quantity of land embraced in any one ownership. If the owner is available, he may tell exactly the quantity of land he owns, but if the premises are occupied by a tenant, or are vacant, the quantity of land assessed is pure guess-work, or a mere copying of the amount set down in the previous year's records. When the records are made alphabetically, the fact that John Abbott's land was assessed as 100 acres at \$50 an acre, Samuel Jones' land as 65 acres at \$40 an acre and William Zander's land as 150 acres at \$30 an acre, may mean little to the Tax Assessor and nothing to the taxpayer. A survey may show that the three farms are consecutively contiguous along a highway and are approximately 200 acres each and worth \$100 an acre. As for the so-called 50% assessment, any assessment of land on any other

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After death mystery and obituary writers wrote columns about him, and the owner of the wax museum placed a wonderful reproduction of the death scene in his museum. The quarriers set up a beautiful tombstone in commemoration, upon which was a verse created by the famous poet:

Here lies a sinner 'neath this sod;  
Have mercy on him, Lord God.

Yesterday I had a conversation with a famous spiritualist, who after communicating with the dead man revealed his last message:

"Tell the world not to despair. Truth is ever hard to gain acceptance. It is not cruelty of mankind but its ignorance that causes the great tragedies of the world. Jesus realized this, for he said, 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"