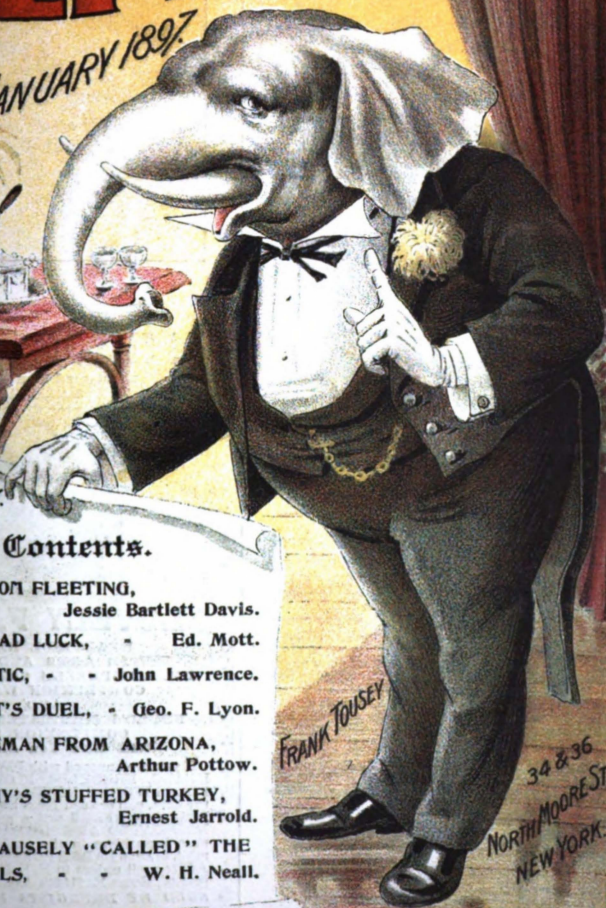


THE

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A Happy
New Year.

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FRANK TOUSEY

34 & 36
NORTH MOORE ST.,
NEW YORK.

A PECULIAR WAGER.

BY MORTIMER FELTENSTEIN.



THE Salama Allakoum Society was composed exclusively of M. D.'s. The name Salama Allakoum must have been adopted in a spirit of irony, for surely "Peace Unto Thee" is certainly not the motto of the medical profession. The purposes of the club, however, were not quite as mystical as the reasons for its appellations. These were purely of a social character, and the members were accustomed to gather periodically at the festive board to discuss the latest improvements in surgery and cookery—chiefly cookery.

There was one peculiarity about their regular social dinners which must be mentioned. They were not, as might be supposed, paid for out of the funds of the club; but a clause in the constitution of the Salama Allakoums provided that after every such affair the members should, as soon thereafter as convenience dictated, assemble and play a "freeze-out," the ultimate winner to defray the expense of the banquet. And as the victors on these occasions were the only ones eligible for the office of President at the yearly elections, interest in the game was by no means lacking.

One of the regular meetings was approaching, and printed notices, apprising the members of the date and place of the repast, as well as of the subsequent poker tournament, were dispatched. These notices, couched in mock Oriental fashion, commanded the "despicable reptiles"—by which was meant the members—to crawl on their knees to the feet of the "Royal Muck-a-Muck"—which stood for the President—who would enable them to "gorge their base bellies with all the delicacies of the season."

The command was obeyed. At the appointed time the banquet was held, the inevitable toasts made, and then an adjournment was taken in the gaming rooms of the club.

There were twenty-four in the party, so they separated into groups of six. The play began. The talk was, for the most part, strictly confined to the game, and no other sound was heard except the abrupt click, click of the chips, and an occasional smack-

ing of the lips consequent on the gulping down of the delectable liquid refreshments which had been placed in readiness for the players. It would be tedious to relate how the number finally dwindled down to a last two. Suffice it to say, that the first wavering lines of the early dawn found the chips divided equally between Dr. Muir, the President of the Society, and Dr. Fergus, its secretary.

"Aha, Fergus," said Dr. Muir, who was fond of indulging in grandiloquent English, "you, is it? Permit me, my dear sir, gently to insinuate into your auricular members my impression, that, to utilize the sesquipedalian phraseology of the occidental bard, you are, as a poker player, a veritable, silver plated cinch."

"Oh, I am, am I?" growled Dr. Fergus, in a subterranean voice; "nevertheless, I intend to do you up so brown that there won't be enough left of you to hold a post-mortem examination over. You a poker player? In the expressive phrase of one Shakespeare—NIT!"

"Oh, dry up; you'll raise a tempest between you!" exclaimed the Vice-President, in a disgusted tone. "Say, Muir, what's in that package you've brought along?"

"Oh, this; only a stomach-pump I purchased on my way here. Come on, Fergus; let's to our mutton."

The two sat down, and the cards were dealt. For a short time nothing of interest developed; after awhile it was Dr. Muir's turn to manipulate the pasteboards, and shuffling them to his satisfaction, he placed the deck on the table, and said:

"Cut."

The cards were cut and given out.

"Well," observed Dr. Fergus, frowning down on his hand, "it will cost you exactly two silver dollars to monkey with this pot!"

"Your statement," answered the verbose President, after a look at his cards, "is characterized by reprehensible inaccuracy. It will cost me four dollars, and you no less. Accuracy, you will perceive, is not, as is commonly supposed, based on an absolute standard. It is relative; at least in poker; for had my hand been of less value, your statement might have been more correct."

Dr. Fergus put his cards down on the table, and folded his arms.

"Are you going to shut up and play poker, or should you prefer to give us a lecture?"

"Sir, do you consider it necessary for me to suspend the operation of my vocal organs in order for me to play?"

"No; but it is in order for me to play. Without accusing you of inaccuracy, let me tell you that it will cost you eight, and not four dollars to draw cards."

"I am delighted to hear it. But aren't you getting slightly reckless? No? Then I'll make it an even ten."

"Twenty."

"H'm. You must measure your hand by the yard. I'll raise that a tenner."

"Twenty."

The spectators were becoming interested.

"You are getting decidedly reckless. I chip along. How many cards?"

"Cards? Don't let me trouble you; serve yourself."

"Oho! Bluffing is your forte, is it? I'll take two cards. Can't use any less. May the genius of poker have mercy on your miserable little soul."

"You may have to draw a tooth, sometimes. Better preserve your gas! I bet five dollars."

"I'll bet that, if nothing more;" said Dr. Muir, indifferently, briskly shuffling his five cards. "Let me see—yes, here are five bones to see, and five more to gauge the size of your bluff."

He had drawn to three kings.

"I'll raise that a like amount," remarked the secretary.

"Ditto here."

"In that case I'll elevate you to the extent of an X."

"I like that so much that I'll follow your example."

"Whew! You've got 'em this time, sure. Well, I'll raise you one more tenner."

"Fergus, you're kindness personified. I have here just thirty bones left; I'll put them all up, and I'm sorry that I haven't any more."

"So an I. There you are; this covers your raise, and now I have got——"

"Hold on, by Jove! You said you would do me up brown, and now I'm going to give you a chance to do it."

"All right, let's hear it."

"I've a proposition to make."

"Then make it."

"I'll lay you a private wager."

"No, no," chorused the bystanders, who had watched the

game with increasing interest, "that's not allowable by the rules of the society.

"Shut up, the whole lot of you," yelled the president, whose verbosity left him as his excitement rose. "I am president, ain't I? Don't you suppose I know the rules of this club? I don't propose to bet him any more money. Fergus," continued the president, turning to the secretary, "you think you've got the best hand, don't you?"

The secretary shrugged his shoulders and pointed to the heap of chips on the table.

"That speaks for itself, I guess," said he.

"In that case you'll have no hesitation in accepting my wager. It's this: You've drunk a good deal to-night; so have I. Now I propose that if my hand beats yours, I'm to be at liberty to pump out of you with this stomach pump every blessed drop you've swallowed to-night, and if your hand beats mine, you have the right to do the same by me. Well, what do you say? Do you take water?"

"Not on your cathodograph!" roared Doctor Fergus. "I'm your hairpin!"

A roar of laughter from the members signified their appreciation of the situation.

"Well, what have you got?" asked the secretary.

"What have I got, eh? Just direct your optics on these, will you? Three big kings and two big aces. Well, my friend, can you beat a king full on aces?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Haw, haw, haw! Fooled him by Juggernauts! Caught in your own trap, Muir! *Hand me that pump! I stood pat on four deuces!*"