

Une Bonne Absinthe
By Jouy & Gerny
Told by M. Vaunel, of The Eldorado
Circa 1900

A

GOOD ABSINTHE

A MONOLOGUE

OF

JOUY & GERNY

Told by M. Vaunel, of The Eldorado

I am a member of a temperance society. The goal of this society is to fight, as far as possible, the disastrous effects produced by consumption of strong liquors in general and absinthe in particular. Who of you, Messrs, has not had seen with his own eyes the disturbing spectacle of the unfortunates who seek in this pernicious drink a phony and mind-numbed life? Who of you has not found himself opposite one of these parrot stranglers in ecstasy before a glass of this greenish liquid, seeking to seize it, hesitant, then all of sudden, seizing it with clenched fists and carrying it to his lips with convulsive tremors?

I have seen them as have you; I was moved by it and bound to think that it must be possible to render this beverage inoffensive - certain authorities think that this poison should be done away with completely; others say that absinthe isn't more harmful than the next thing. I am not intransigent, I am not an opportunist, I am not a radical...I don't know if you get my meaning... consequently I will not say to you when in doubt, *ab-sinthe*-stain...abstain, but what I will say to you, is that I have found the means of taking an absinthe without it being able to cause the least evil. I believe I would forsake all duty to humanity if I did not indicate this means to you. Please, Messrs, please, Mesdames... I do not know if you get my meaning... but I do not address myself to those among you who are accustomed to taking a *verte* before their meal, please, say I, do not lose sight of the fact and follow me well.

Do you know why absinthe is harmful? In the first place it is because those who drink it cannot take and especially cannot make a good absinthe. Then, do you know what is worse than absinthe? Eh well, it is water! The water of the Seine, river water, even spring water is worthless for absinthe. One needs rainwater; I do not say well water, I say rainwater... I do not know if you get my meaning - of the water which, in a word, wets.

You know moreover that to make a thick and tasty absinthe; it is necessary that the water falls into the glass from a certain height and especially drop by drop. This being the case, here is what you do. Every time it rains, half an hour or three quarters of an hour afterwards, you take a glass, not a thick glass, a goblet... I do not know if you get my meaning... not a goblet which... a goblet that...

You then take a bottle of absinthe, not the kind made of vitriol and spinaches, but real absinthe; you remove the cork... I do not know if you get my meaning... the cork. You fill the glass a little, you go down in the courtyard and you find a gutter. You know that when it rains, there are always drops of water which fall from the roof.

When you have found a place where water drips regularly, you put your glass under it. You go up to your room, you open the window, you take a newspaper and you don't trouble yourself about anything, other than taking care to look out the window every three seconds to see whether the absinthe is well done and especially to take care that the water drops do not fall outside the glass - that would take too long.

When the glass is full, you go down and get it, you go up, you set it on a table, you take three steps back and you say three times the blessing "Ah, the good mixture!" You lovingly contemplate the absinthe one last time, you take it.... and chuck it out the window. It is the only manner of taking an absinthe which is not harmful.