

'Gee!' whispered he to Riley, 'he's got Wise Mike with him.'

Now, be it known that 'Wise Mike' was a fiction; one day, in a moment of inspiration, Father Augustine had conjured him up and introduced him to the Fourth. He was a very subtle creation, with a marked tendency to sneer and to ask questions calculated to excite unrest in the faithful. Father Augustine always spoke of him as a 'Scoffer,' but he displayed such satanic wisdom, such undermining ingenuity, such preternatural malice that the Fourth dubbed him 'Wise Mike.'

The questions in the repertory of this malevolent invention numbered about a score; and for each of them Father Augustine had provided an answer—a shattering, triumphant answer that invariably put the mocker to the blush and, in the end, drove him forth sneering, still malignant, but silenced.

Hopkins told all this to Riley as they sat at their desk by the window.

'Is the Wise Mike questions hard?' asked Riley, who had never before heard of that gentleman.

'Something fierce! And he swings 'em in on you when you ain't expecting nothing.' Just then Martin and Kennedy, having taken off their surplices, entered and took their seats at the first desk. 'There ain't anybody in the class but them two, what knows 'em

There was no doubt but that both Martin and Kennedy were bright boys; but their weakness was that they wanted to impress the fact firmly upon the rest of the class. This parade gave Riley offence, and now he rubbed his thin shins and examined the vain ones carefully.

Father Augustine opened the examination in honor of the great Bishop of Hippo with a few light, scattering volleys from Butler's Catechism. But the answers did not come with the readiness and snap that he seemed to expect; so, suddenly, without a moment's warning, he unlimbered 'Wise Mike's' biggest gun and threw the most formidable shot of all into their midst. As luck would have it, Riley was the one fired upon; but as he had no knowledge of the wise one's sophistries he remained silent. He seemed to hear the question hiss as he sat there trying to grasp its intricacies; he had time to see Martin nudge Kennedy in an 'I-told-you-so' fashion, and then the troubles of the Fourth began.

For two mortal hours Father Augustine stormed up and down in the space between the first row of desks and the blackboard, bombarding them with questions in elemental doctrine without pity. But he at last grew tired, paused, mopped his heated face, and said to Brother Clement, 'Give me the books.'

Brother Clement handed him two beautiful books bound in red and gold, and the Father held them up so that the Fourth could see them.

'These,' said he, 'are the prizes which it is my custom to offer to this class on each St. Augustine's day, to be contested for. From your showing to-day you don't deserve anything, but,' tapping the books, 'the prizes are already bought, so I'll let it go and hope for improvement in the future. As is usual, the contest will be carried on by teams of two desk-mates; the books are both alike, being the "Life of St. Augustine," and each of the winning two will receive one.'

He put the books upon Brother Clement's desk, folded his arms across his big chest, and regarded the Fourth with much disapproval.

'There is no use in my making the subject of the contest one of doctrine,' spoke he, after a withering pause, 'because none of you seem to know anything about that. So I will make it,' he snapped his fingers thoughtfully and wrinkled his brow in an effort to think of a fitting subject. Just then his wandering gaze became fixed upon a large engraving of 'The Three Wise Men' which hung over the door, and he smiled. 'I'll have you tell me, one week from to-day, in a paper of not more than two hundred words in length, who were the three greatest men in the world.' He noticed the eyes of the Fourth directed upon the picture, and hastened to say, 'The men are not necessarily to be taken from sacred history; they may be chosen from any age and any walk in life.'

As they went down the stairs at the noon hour the Fourth talked it over shrilly, because it was a new thing. Riley, however, took no part in the discussion; he seemed to be cogitating. Martin and Kennedy passed him at the gate.

'I told you you'd take a fall,' said Kennedy, sneeringly.

'I heard you,' returned Riley.

'And when we pull down the prizes,' put in Martin, 'you'll fall harder still.'

'You ain't got 'em yet,' said Riley.

Martin and Kennedy stared, then burst into uproarious mirth.

'Maybe you think you'll get 'em—you and Fatty Hopkins.' Martin seemed greatly diverted at the idea, and poked Kennedy in the ribs. 'Ain't that the limit? He thinks they're going to win; and him only in the class a couple of months.'

'I'll bet,' said Riley, 'that you've got salt on the tail of every sparrow in your street. There ain't anything that don't belong to you. I think I'll pick you for one of the three wise ones,' because you know more than anybody I ever seen before.'

As they went down the street Riley said to Hopkins, 'Us two's going to win them books—we gotta win 'em!'

Hopkins had not heard the little exchange of repartee between his desk-mate and Martin, and was somewhat surprised at the sudden exhibition of resolution.

'How can we?' protested he. 'We don't know who the three greatest men was.'

'We can find out. We'll ask people.'

Riley thought the matter over with great care; and that afternoon he and Hopkins, when Brother Clement was not looking, compiled a list of persons to be applied to for information. The first on the list was old Shamus, who kept the fruit stand across the way; and they paid him a visit as soon as school was out.

'He's over eighty years old,' said Riley, 'and he ought to know a lot about people.'

When the question was put, Shamus stroked his white beard and reflected.

'The three greatest men in the world,' said he, slowly, 'was Brian Boru, Daniel O'Connell, and Charles Parnell.'

'I never heard of any of them,' said Hopkins as they went down the street; 'did you?'

'I know about Brian Boru,' answered Riley. 'He licked somebody in Ireland once. We got a picture of it being done.'

Next on the list was Dan Callahan. Dan was a friend of Riley's; he was six feet tall, and tended bar for Kerrigan. When he received the query, he leaned over the bar and regarded them with interest.

'The three greatest men in the world?' repeated he. 'That's easy. I got 'em right in a line—Jack Dempsey, John L., and Fitz; don't let anybody tell you different.'

'I guess Dan ain't just on to what we want,' said Riley as they emerged from Kerrigan's.

Next morning on their way to school they stepped in to see Herr Straubmuller, the blind man, who, day in and day out, could be seen weaving baskets, or playing his violin, in his little cellar under the shoe store on the corner.

'Ach!' cried he, 'dot was a hard question. But I think me I can gif you der answer. Der three greatest men by der world was Beethoven, Schiller, and Bismarck.'

'It ain't no use,' said Riley, after they had left the cellar; 'everybody says different; it's just according to who you ask.'

They sat on the horse block in front of the parish house, which was next door to the school, and silently pondered the matter.

'Say,' said Hopkins, suddenly, 'Father Augustine always be's the judge in these contests.'

'Well,' inquired Riley, 'what of that?'

'If everybody,' proceeded Hopkins, 'is got three wise men of their own, why Father Augustine must have his lot, too. And whatever three he's got picked is the three that would pull down the books.'

Riley looked at his chum with admiration.

'Say,' remarked he, 'you're all right. That's just the cheese. Now all we got to do is to find out what Father Augustine thinks—but hold on! I've got one of them already.'

'Who?'

'St. Augustine!' Hey, thumping Hopkins on the back delightedly. 'He must be one of them.'

'Sure, he must! Ain't Father Augustine named after him? Ain't he always telling us what's in his books? And don't he give us prizes on the name-day? We got one of them, all right.'

Riley took out a soft pencil and a soiled scrap of paper; then he wrote the name thus:

No. 1: St. Augustine.
on the paper, and placed it in his pocket with great care.

'We only got to dig up two more, now,' said he, 'so we'll lay low and not say a word.'

The Fourth was in turmoil all day; awed whisperers went about regarding the efforts of Martin and Kennedy to discover the three great ones of the earth, and report had them staggering under the weight of books, the like of which had never before been seen; and also as drinking many cups of strong coffee to keep them awake at night. During recess