

golden moments—bestowed by a munificent Providence. She lived quietly and sparingly—none of her guests doubted it—not that she was poor, ah, no! she frowned coldly at such an insinuation. The dear, good Captain, she said, had left her an honorable competence to withstand the ravages of time, but she lived humbly as a protest against the extravagance of these latter days, when even that Irishman, Maloney, who had made money by nearly being killed in a railroad accident, had bid for social eminence by paying more for one dinner than would support an ordinary Irish family for two years. The way that Mrs. Captain delivered herself of this bit of social economy was sufficient to establish her equality with the best Pharisee that ever lived.

It was a shock, therefore, to the rural sensibility when it was learned that the great leader of society had let out her front parlor and spare chamber to the new doctor. The young ladies who had commented enthusiastically upon the doctor's good looks, his apparent prosperity and other undebatable qualifications were dumfounded to see him pass the hotel—where it was presumed he would stay—and enter the aristocratic abode of Mrs. Captain Pickering, who had been cautiously peeping out from behind her lace curtains from the moment she heard the train whistling its approach to the station.

Here was fresh material for the gossips! Mrs. Captain taking in boarders! She wasn't so wealthy after all! And the doctor—what could have possessed him to go there? Well, he must be a Protestant, even though someone had said that Father Johnson said he was a Catholic. But, bless you, Mrs. Captain would never give up her front parlor and its lustrous hair-cloth set to a Catholic, even if he was a doctor and young and handsome. So that point was settled, to his credit or discredit, according to the mind of the observer.

The fact that he had no 'O' or 'Mc' or something as positively Gaelic—and she had never met never supposed there existed Catholics with other titles—was sufficient not to disturb her peace of mind or cause any doubt to arise when Dr. Pickering, of Boston, her late husband's second cousin, had written to ask her to board his dear friend, Dr. Harlowe.

There was no occasion for a discussion of the subject till the Friday of that week. From the very first the landlady had been won to her boarder. He was amiability itself, easy to suit, ready to help her, and above all a good listener, a fact that demonstrated his wonderful patience when Mrs. Captain had the floor, which was about all the time, generally speaking.

Friday night was meeting night at the Congregational church, of which the doctor's hostess was an ancient and honorable member. It was always a sacred evening to her, and nothing short of a monument on top of her could keep her away from divine service. It was necessary for her to have a double portion of devotion, for the Captain in his day had been known, to himself, as a free-thinker, and to others as an old heathen, despite his honorable rank. And this religious disposition she carried after his demise, not that she thought it would better him—for somehow she fancied he had reached the nine choirs after all his vagaries and attacks upon things ecclesiastic and ministerial—but because it had become to her a second nature.

'Doctor,' she said, as she opened her parlor door, 'you don't forget Friday night, I hope?'

'Friday night?'

'Yes, Friday night is meeting night, you know. You will come with me?'

She imagined the sensation she would make entering the church on the arm of the man about whom all the town was talking.

'Oh, meeting night, is it? But, Mrs. Pickering, I don't belong to your Church.'

'Oh, that don't matter much. I'm a Congregationalist, but I can stand Baptists or Presbyterians. Lots of 'em come to our church.'

'But I am not either Baptist or Presbyterian. I'm a Catholic.'

'A Catholic! Why, doctor, you astound me!'

She sank upon her sofa, for the second time in its many years of service.

'Why, yes, Mrs. Pickering, didn't you know? I told Dr. Pickering to mention the fact to you, fearing that such a blot on my character might lead you to reject me, and I fancied he had done so.'

The doctor actually laughed at the woe-begone face of the woman on the sofa, but she hardly heard him. She was thinking of the effect such an announcement would have upon her townspeople and co-religionists. Her house, the house that had sheltered Minister Browne when his own home was burnt, that had been

sanctified by her daily scriptural readings—she forbore to think of the many times the Captain had raised the roof with other than pious ejaculations—now to be made the retreat of a Catholic!

'Doctor, how could you deceive me so? Oh, it is terrible, terrible! I am disgraced. I can't look dear Mr. Harlowe in the face again. Oh, you must go; you must.'

With tears and groans, the sorrowing Mrs. Captain slammed the front door after her and crossed the street to the meeting-house, entering late for the first time in her life. She paid little attention to the service, and could not bless the Lord in any terms of joy and gladness. It was the period of her affliction, and in the burden of all the hymns she fancied that every voice was shrieking at her, 'Heretic!' 'Romanist!' 'dirty Irish!' If she could have read the thoughts of many she might have found such questions as—'Mrs. Captain, where is the doctor?' 'Mrs. Captain, why didn't he come?' 'Mrs. Captain, how do you like him?' and so on.

There was only one thing to be done—she must have spiritual advice. She must go to Minister Harlowe and tell him all about her defection, weep out her affliction of spirit, and take counsel from him as to the reparation of the scandal. She forgot all about the members of the terrible inquisition who were waiting for the meeting to be over to ply her with questions, and, heedless of the remarks that were passed about her being more haughty than ever on account of her boarder—oh, the ignominy concentrated in the pronouncement of that word!—she went to the minister and unburdened her soul to him.

'To think of it, Mr. Harlowe, he's a Catholic.'

'Who's a Catholic? The doctor? Why, I know it. What harm?'

The minister was forced to laugh at the tragedy so evident in her face.

'Why, Mr. Harlowe! She was beginning to have doubts of his orthodoxy. How can you laugh at such a terrible calamity, and you the one we all look to for good example?'

'Very well, Mrs. Pickering, and why not give an example of religious tolerance? You told me yesterday that you liked the doctor, he was so kind.'

'Yes, and he paid me a month in advance. But it's the money of sin. You should have told me, you should, you should—the tears were flowing again—but I'll give it all back, if it breaks my poor heart.'

'Patience, Mrs. Pickering; the doctor strikes me as an amiable, intelligent young man. If he was an atheist you wouldn't think of putting him out. Be not unchristian to a fellow-Christian.'

'Oh, Mr. Harlowe, it does me so much good to hear you say that, and I need the money so bad! But what will people say? But if you think it is all right, why, I will bear my cross, and pray for his conversion, and perhaps he will see the error of his ways. Good-night, Mr. Harlowe.'

'Good-night, Mrs. Pickering. But I think you will have a heavy task converting him.'

Mrs. Captain returned home somewhat mollified. She was determined to brazen it out with carping neighbors, and cast her burden this time not on the Lord but on the minister. She regretted the scene she had enacted before the doctor, fearing that perhaps he would demand his money back and seek other quarters, but she was loath to go to him and explain that there was no necessity for him to retreat. He saved her the trouble at breakfast by venturing on the subject himself.

'I suppose I must look for other quarters immediately,' he said, looking intently at her, and wondering at the smile on her face.

'No, indeed, Doctor. Forgive me, but it was such a surprise. You must stop right here, even if you are a Catholic. Why, even poor Captain didn't have any religion to speak of, you know, and I never thought of putting him away.'

'Indeed!'

The doctor knew it was not the fitting reply, but he was at a loss for something better. He was then in the class with the heathens and publicans along with the Captain. He smiled blandly, and went vigorously at the oatmeal before him.

And so the danger of removal passed with only a shadow. Mrs. Captain became kinder, if possible, than she had been. Her best preserves, hitherto reserved for state occasions, were in great danger of being exhausted, so frequently were they employed to tempt the appetite of the doctor, notwithstanding the fact that the athletic and voracious youth needed no such incentives to demolish the 'dainty lunch' that took the place of breakfast, dinner, or supper at very short notice.