

It was a wise thought to put the blame on the minister.

The news leaked out on Sunday morning, when the doctor was actually seen passing the Congregational church and going to High Mass at St. Michael's.

That nine days' sensation would have despatched Mrs. Captain to the side of her dear Captain beneath the granite monument if some neighbors had had their way. How could she do it? What was she thinking of? Questions interminable, and to all the same answer:

'Ask the minister. He advised it. Watch me convert the doctor.'

To the Catholics of Corning it was no less a source of wonder, but wonder that brought joy. At last they had a Catholic doctor, and for a long time Dr. Blake had little to do, so anxious was everybody to meet Dr. Marlowe and talk with him. But the nine days' wonder passed as all things mortal, and soon Dr. Marlowe was an established fact in the life of Corning. Nor was his popularity restricted to his own people. The fact that Mr. Harlowe vouched for him and declared himself his friend, much to the disgust of Dr. Blake, added to the weightier fact that Mrs. Captain, whose word was law, pronounced him the finest young man she ever met—who knew more about the Scriptures than she herself, no matter what folks said about Catholics never looking into a Bible, and being made to swallow anything the Pope of Rome gave them—was enough to ensure popularity to anybody, let alone a smart, handsome man like this young Irish doctor. It was, however, only after an acquaintanceship of three months that Mrs. Captain delivered such a fulsome eulogy in favor of the Church in general and Dr. Marlowe in particular.

It certainly demonstrated the ability of the doctor to undermine, in such a short time, the bed-rock principles of the Reformation as embodied in Mrs. Captain, even to the acknowledgment that he wasn't half bad for being a Catholic. Not that she had relinquished her idea of converting him to Congregationalism. That was a thought that grew upon her. Indeed, it was this perseverance that taught her how much the doctor knew of the Scriptures, when he over-turned with one text the argument she had spent all the afternoon in formulating. It disconcerted her for the moment, and she muttered to herself something about Satan's ability to quote Scripture, but in her heart she acknowledged that it was really hard work to snatch from the burning such a brand as the doctor. But it did not lessen her respect for him, even though she knew he had such idols as a crucifix and rosary upon his bureau. The good Lord, she trusted, would show him in time the folly of his ways.

The doctor, on the other hand, liked the old lady who constituted herself his guardian, spiritual and temporal. He discovered her soon for what she was, the soul of kindness and honor. Her religious animosity he knew to be a part of her existence, the result of prejudices of past generations, and while he smiled at her undisguised attempt to convert him, he let her argue, knowing that it gave him an opportunity to correct impressions which she fancied to be as true as the rising sun.

'Do tell!' she exclaimed, when, after her lengthy harangue about idol worship, he explained the real meaning of images. 'Well, Doctor, I've got to believe you, for I know you wouldn't lie to me, but, you see, you're the first Catholic I ever talked religion with, and I just always believed what Protestants said about your Church. There it is, as I often told the Captain—it's never too late to learn.'

The war of the angel of light—that was Mrs. Captain—against the angel of darkness—and necessarily that was the doctor—continued in this good-natured missionary spirit. Many of the staid Protestant neighbors looked with not too kindly an eye upon the liberal views of their social leader. She was becoming too Irish, they thought, when they beheld her time and again mixing up with some of the doctor's Hibernian patients, but it was really high time to remonstrate with her when it was the talk of the town that she went to Mass with the doctor. And remonstrate they did.

The minister's wife was the committee of one delegated to be the prophet's warning voice, but no prophet of good or ill ever received a greater shock than the same lady, who, as soon as she made known her business, was sent on her way again with such a scathing rebuke ringing in her ears that she declared to her husband she verily believed Mrs. Captain was possessed, all on account of that Irish doctor. Certainly, Mrs. Captain was possessed of something. The minister admitted that. She had laughed even at him when

he had quietly objected to the bad example a church member gave in passing her own meeting-house to assist at rites of idolatry.

'Idolatry! Why, Mr. Harlowe, it's you that's narrow now. Dr. Marlowe is a man, a real good man who is proud of his religion, and says his prayers when he eats, and always is doing good, and never refuses the poor. Why, he's a saint, he is, and any Church that can make such men as my doctor can't be very heathenish, so there!'

The discomfiture evinced in the minister's face as he hurriedly walked away was now a source of amusement to Mrs. Captain. Formerly it would have meant to her a sleepless night. But every word she said of the doctor was true. Piety and faith were to him a natural inheritance. He had never deemed it unmanly to be ardent in his faith. And thus it was that religion entered so deeply into his professional life. It was soon known that the doctor loved the poor; that he was always at home to them, always ready to aid them, and give them careful attention when he knew there was no money coming to him. Mrs. Captain admired this generosity. It preached to her more eloquently than any religious discussion. Yet it alarmed her, too.

'Doctor,' she said to him one day, 'you're just killing yourself. You're losing your appetite. I eat more'n you do now. Those long night drives will just bury you.'

'But what can a man do?—If people are sick the doctor must go.'

'I suppose so, but if you die some one else'll take your place—that is, in the town, not in my house, though. Nobody'll ever take your place here, if you die.'

'Very encouraging, surely,' laughed the doctor, as he returned to his room.

But Mrs. Captain was nearly right in her prophecy, and that time came sooner than she expected. Heavy work and neglect of self had undermined the doctor's constitution, and the next morning found him unable to leave his bed. He bade Mrs. Captain enter his room when she came to call him as usual, and she looked at him with an 'I-told-you-so' glance in her eye.

'Mrs. Pickering, I'm afraid it's pneumonia. Will you send over to Dr. Blake?'

'Dr. Blake? No, indeed. He'd only be too glad to see you leave town. I'll telephone to Dr. Bemis, to Pembroke. It won't take him long to get here.'

The doctor laughed at her rejection of Dr. Blake. 'Very well, Dr. Bemis, then, and, by the way, you might send for Father Johnson. It won't hurt me to see him. I can make my confession, anyway.'

'Confession, dear me, as if you had anything to confess. Very well, don't you stir, and we'll have you all fixed up in a jiffy.'

The doctor forgot his pains as he listened to her voice at the telephone. 'Yes, Father Johnson. That dear boy of mine is sick; pneumonia—just killed himself with charity. He's got something to confess, but I'm sure he never did a mean trick in his life. Right away? All right.'

A few words to Dr. Bemis at the telephone, and she returned to the room to put things in readiness for the coming of the priest. She obeyed, minutely, the orders which her patient gave, and prepared the table with the daintiest linens which had been laboriously made years before, and never used since the day they were first put away.

'I wish the busybodies of this town could see Father Johnson coming here,' she said, as she saw the priest coming up the front walk. 'I'd be the talk of the town for a year.'

You might light one of those candles, and meet Father Johnson at the door, if you will, Mrs. Pickering. He may be bringing the Blessed Sacrament.'

To Mrs. Captain it seemed almost like participating in idolatry, but she offered no objection. She descended the stairs with the candle in her hand, and without a word conducted the priest to the doctor's room and left him there.

(To be concluded next week.)

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