

England town made into a Catholic parish with a priest to live in a home of his own! That was quite intolerable.

But the great trouble was over the house. The Catholics had bought the finest house in town, on which old Deacon Fillmore had spent a fortune; and the crime was intensified by the fact that the deed was done quietly and before anybody in the town knew that the place was up for sale.

When Richard Cushing had heard of the transaction and learned that a priest was going to be his neighbor, he flew into the rage which had caused such a sensation in Jack's life. Nor was his anger softened when he found out that this same priest had been talking to his boy.

Jacky broke the news at the supper table. 'Dad, you said the man next door was bad. Well, he ain't, 'cause he gave me a quarter.'

'What man?'

'The priest—-with the funny collar and necktie.'

'He's here, is he?'

'Yes; came to-day. He's ever so nice.'

'And he gave you a quarter, did he?' sneered the father.

'Yes, a whole quarter.'

'Trying his funny tricks already. Wants to convert you, I suppose. Jacky, you go over there in the morning and give back that money. Understand?'

'Yes, sir.'

Jacky understood too well. He knew his father's word was law, especially when he was so angry. But it was a hard struggle to assent to such a command. Besides, he had spent some of the quarter already—five cents for peanuts and one cent for gum, and he had 'chawed' the gum and eaten half of the 'peanuts.' It was the burden of his meditations that night when his mother was tucking him into bed.

'Say, ma!'

'Yes, Jacky.'

'I don't think that priest is a bad man. He's got a nice face, and any one that gives little boys a whole quarter—'

But the argument was too much for Jacky, and he dropped off to sleep to dream of men with funny collars who said they made little boys good and gave quarters to them to make them good, and how every little boy wanted to be good if he got a quarter every time. It was no wonder that Jacky awoke with the quarter haunting him. He did not have his accustomed jovial air at breakfast. How could he, with such a sacrifice before him? But he said not a word about it. There was a lump in his throat that threatened to do damage if he spoke, so he kept his troubles to himself, wondering how he could make himself right with the good man whom his father called bad.

Breakfast over, he solemnly walked out the back door, pulled aside the loose picket of the fence—through which he and the former little neighbors often had exchanged visits—and was soon at the back door of the next house.

'Is the priest in?' he asked of the maid who came to answer his timid knock.

'Yes, child, come in.'

Father Foley was at his breakfast. He heard the voice and recognised his friend of the previous day.

'Come in here, Jacky,' he called from the dining-room; and Jacky, half-wondering whether he ought to obey or not, with reluctant feet went in where the man who made boys good was sitting.

Jacky did not wait for any further preamble to the little speech he had been formulating all through his breakfast.

'Dad says I can't keep that quarter, but I spent some of it.'

A little hand went into one pocket and drew out the remains of the treasure—a dime, a nickel, and four coppers—which Jacky placed by the priest's plate.

'There's your old money,' he said, his mouth quivering at this enormous sacrifice.

The hand went into another pocket and drew out a paper bag, much the worse for wear, which took its place with the money.

'There's your old peanuts.'

There was something else, but Jacky could not find it. His hands went into his pockets, one after the other, till all had been ransacked, but with no success. The gum was not to be had.

'Guess you'll have to go without the gum,' said Jacky, and then he remembered. The gum was in his mouth.

Another second and it was being rolled into a tiny ball between the chubby hands, and was then laid with the other treasures.

'It's all chawed and the sweeten's out of it, but you can use it yet. Gum will last a long time if you don't swallow it.'

Father Foley burst into a hearty laugh, and Jacky took advantage of the distraction to run from the house, heedless of Nora's calling him to have a cookie. But what was the use of taking things if you had a father that made you give them back? Out through the hole in the fence into his own domain again, went Jacky. But he did not go near anybody in the house. He was angry with them all. He heard his mother talking in the kitchen and was tempted to tell her that he had given back everything, but he would not.

He ran upstairs to his little room, and only then did his courage fail him completely; burying his face in the pillows, he wept over the first tragedy of his life.

During the succeeding days Jacky kept out of the priest's way. He might offer him more quarters, and you can't expect a little boy to refuse such things all the time, even from a bad man. So whenever he saw Father Foley approaching, he made his escape in another direction. He felt ashamed of himself and realized that there was something not quite right in giving back what a man gives you—so what was the use of making believe you were friends when you were not?

Father Foley had observed the tragedy of the whole affair. He had laughed when the lad brought back the spoils, though he pitied the child and regretted the prejudice of which he was the victim. But he made no further attempt to gain the friendship of Jacky. Mr. Cushing was opposed to him—openly opposed to him—in fact, had aired his views about the inexpediency of allowing a priest to live in the town. But Father Foley was not the man to be disquieted by such treatment. His people loved him. Gradually it became known that the new priest was bettering the town; that he was the foe of vice; ever the first for law and order. The old prejudice began to die away, and many of his most bitter opponents became his admirers.

But one man held to his preconceived notions, and that man was Jack's father. In his heart he saw the priest as he was—the soul of kindness and honor—but his pride did not suffer him to acknowledge it. He was half ashamed that he had been so brutal with Jacky for having made friends with the priest, but the lad never broached the subject to him, and the incident of the quarter was never recalled.

Jacky, however, had ideas of his own. He could not analyse his thoughts, but he felt sure his father had made a big mistake in calling the priest a bad man. Nobody else called him that. All the little boys in his school were always talking of Father Foley's kindness to them, and if little boys did not know a good man from a bad man, well, Jacky Cushing was sadly lacking in experience. Very often he approached the broken fence—with the intention of renewing his visit—to run the risk of having Nora offer him one of those enticing cookies; but somehow or other, he guessed it was not quite square to his father, and so he refused to commit himself.

For two months he continued this struggle with himself, and then he forgot all about it; but it required no less an event than the approach of Christmas to put him in harmony with the world once more. It couldn't be expected that a boy should worry over anything at such a time, except the things he wanted Santa Claus to bring him; and of course, if a boy was cross and disobedient, old Santa was apt to slip by without noticing him; so it was best to be good and jolly even if a fellow did have to give back nineteen cents out of a quarter. But these days of eager planning were destined to have a shadow cast upon them.

Father Foley was going to have a Christmas tree. The 'Irish kids' told Jacky all about it. It was to be a great big tree, not like the little scrubby pine that his father had in the front parlor every Christmas, but a real truly Christmas tree, that had something on it for everybody, and there was going to be a show and singing songs and speaking pieces. For the second time in his life Jacky wished that he could be an 'Irish kid,' too, and have nice generous priesters and big Christmas trees.

Christmas morning found him again tempted to forget his next-door neighbor, for the joy of a new drum and a horn, and a train of cars and ever so much candy, was balm enough for any wound, but as the day wore on, and the candy was gradually stored away, and the drum and horn and train were put by because they made so much noise, the thought of the big tree made him despise the poor little bush, now