

'My dear Maurice,' it ran, 'when I concluded to write this I inquired of a Catholic friend as to the proper form of addressing a dear friend who is a Catholic priest, and was informed I should begin, "My dear Father So-and-So," but I balk. I absolutely and finally refuse. In the first place, you are nobody's father, and in the next place, the institution that presumes to dub you such contrary to the fact is a nuisance, and to it I will not defer, even as a matter of good manners, unless (and here's the *raison d'être* of this letter) unless you can get it to induce a young woman whom I know to be my wife. She is a most uncompromising Catholic, and looks upon me as a heretic, or something else terribly vicious and wicked, with whom an alliance would be the essence of misfortune and evil. Aside from that little impediment she knows that I am a good fellow; in fact, I am satisfied she thinks there is none better. And that's where you fit, if anybody does. If you wanted a job puddling iron, or there was anything else in my line you wanted, I could and would get it for you, and it seems as if you ought to reciprocate. I haven't said a word yet, because I know it would be of no use, and I don't want to score a loss.

'Seriously, Maurice, that is my dilemma, and I am afraid I will lose her. I know there is no hope for me except by becoming a Catholic. Can't you send me a lot of theological works of such convincing strength that I might glean from them sufficient excuse to pose as a Catholic without losing my self-respect? I am really ready to give the matter deep and earnest study, and am reading Protestant controversial works so as to know my own side of the case.

'I know you'll help me if you can, old boy, and that, though I do, I need not subscribe myself very earnestly yours,

'JONATHAN SPENCER, Jr.'

Very promptly the answer came. It read:

My Dear Jonathan,—I am not acquainted with your heart-breaker; in fact, have never heard of her, unless she be a certain Mary Ann O' something, about whom you used to rave in our college days. And yet I know her as well as if I were her playfellow and schoolmate, and knowing you also, I am afraid that your cause is hopeless.

'So assured am I of this that, although I know you to be the best of good fellows, and yours is a case in which the Church would be justified in relaxing its rule, if it ever were, yet, if your girl should agree to abide by my advice, I should feel obliged to advise against you.

Neither can I, in the matter of referring you to Catholic controversial works, do anything to help you. I know your limitations and am satisfied that you would reason yourself into infidelity pure and simple instead of into Catholicity, and I would infinitely rather have you a good Baptist than an infidel. You can become a Catholic only by having faith in the teaching of the Church, and that is a pure gift which cannot be acquired philosophically; and to obtain which those who do not have it cannot do much but deserve it and pray for it. I think you deserve it, but the only help I can be to you is to advise you to pray. Ask God that you may have faith in His Church and its teachings, whatever that Church may be. I can give you a few books of instruction when you are ready for them, but nothing controversial.

'If it should ever happen that you feel ready to accept the teachings of my Church, go to some priest—any priest will do—and ask him to instruct you. Don't approach him in any argumentative mood, for if he has any sense (and some of us have sense), he will not argue with you. The province of the Church is to teach, not to wrangle.'

'I have the kindest remembrance of the goodness of your mother, and I beg that you will convey to her my great love and esteem, and with the best of wishes for the prosperity of yourself in all matters, in love as well as everything else, I remain, devotedly yours,

(Rev.) MAURICE O'DONNELL.'

Maurice feared that this would mean the end of his friendly relations with Jonathan, but almost immediately he received a reply which reassured him. It was very brief, and read:

'Dear Maurice,—If you are ever asked to pose as Cupid, don't do it. You will be a glittering, scintillating, monumental failure. I can't understand why I have never been able to get you to Oldtown. Surely the poverty with which you excused your freakishness when we were boys together no longer prevents. It would seem good to have you about again for a week or two. Can you come? I would go to you if you had a home. My mother says she loves you as much as ever, and adds her entreaties to mine that you will come to Oldtown. Earnestly,

'JONATHAN.'

It was nearly two years after his correspondence with Father Maurice before anything more was said between Jonathan and his mother, but in the meantime she had many convincing proofs that Jonathan still had the matter on his mind. She frequently found him engrossed in

books—historical works dealing with the so-called Reformation—and though this seemed a harmless, if not a laudable, pursuit, still she had misgivings. She knew of the 'sophistry and cunning of Jesuitical writers,' and was not unaware that they 'sometimes posed as Protestants.'

She watched Mary Ann O', too, during that time. The girl was unaffected in her presence, and always treated Jonathan with a jolly, light-hearted frankness, characteristic of her race. But his mother's feminine instinct soon told her what a lover's instinct had already told Jonathan: that, although he was very dear to her, he was wholly impossible as an accepted suitor, and she feared sooner or later Jonathan would overcome the only obstacle preventing his acceptance by joining the Catholic Church. The thought was very painful to her at first, but, like all misfortunes, did not seem so dreadful as she became more accustomed to considering it. She soon referred to the Church as the 'Catholic communion' instead of the 'Romish Church,' and commenced to see many praiseworthy features where before she saw only evil. And, besides, she had, as everybody in Oldtown had, a most sincere fondness for Mary Ann O', aside from her religious predilections. So that when Jonathan referred to the matter again it was not so much of a shock to her as it had been two years before.

'I've got bad news for you, mother,' he said to her one evening after tea.

'You are going to become a Catholic,' she replied, with a calmness that surprised him.

'Yes, I am. I am convinced that I should defer it no longer.'

'I am sorry, Jonathan, but I have nothing to reproach myself for.'

'I am overjoyed, mother, that you take it in that way. My desire to do as you would like me to do has been the hardest thing for me to overcome.'

'I cannot understand the change that has come over you. I know you would not sacrifice your religious convictions to suit even the girl you would make your wife, and I know that the conviction under which you are acting has not been a sudden conviction, because I have watched it stealing over you for months. Maybe nobody but your mother could have discerned it, but it has been very plain to me. Do not think, though, that I have ever been or am now reconciled to it. I consider it a great misfortune. I cannot understand how a clear-headed man like you can be deceived by the sophistries of the Church of Rome.'

He listened very attentively to what she said, and did not reply for some moments afterwards.

'I wish I could make you understand, mother,' he said then, 'but I know I cannot, and it might only widen the breach between us if I should try. I can only pray that the faith that has come to me will come to you, too.'

He smoked a great many pipes that evening and did not retire until very late. The step had been taken. The thing had been accomplished. He had made up his mind as to his course weeks before, but the first, greatest, and most difficult step for him to take was to announce it to his mother, and that was done.

Mary Ann O' noticed that he was nervous, and strained the next day, and when he asked her to stay in the office after business hours became somewhat agitated herself. Though he had always carefully repressed every evidence of his affection for her, he had not been able to wholly conceal it, and for a long time she had anticipated the ordeal of a declaration. She feared it was now at hand.

'Why do you suppose I have asked you to remain?' he asked when they were alone.

'Maybe, I've been remiss in something,' she answered. 'Indeed, no. I have a very grave announcement to make. I am going to become a Catholic.'

'Did you say you are about to become a Catholic?' she asked in quivering astonishment.

'Well, I am surprised and delighted. I congratulate you. What made—when did you make up your mind?'

'That isn't the only surprise I have for you,' he said presently.

'Goodness! Are you going to become a priest?'

'Oh, no; I hope not. Do you know that I have loved you for a long time?'

'Yes.'

'You do?'

'I used to be afraid you did.'

'Used to? How about now?'

'Well, possibly I may overcome it. Is that why you become a Catholic?'

'Not why, but how.'

'Father O'Donnell,' old Dennis said to the officiating priest at the wedding, 'tell me what part of Ireland did your father come from?'

'Galway,' answered Father O'Donnell.

'Is that so? I was wishin' you come from Tipperary.'

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