

Christmas Day. Jem was deaf, so the doctor did not trouble himself to knock, but walked into the room, to find his nostrils again greeted by—surely not fowl again?

Jem, who was alone in the world, was doing his own cooking in his own way over a handful of cinders, but the little roast that hung from a nail by the string which he was twirling between his finger and thumb, dry and blackened though it was, still preserved the shape of a fowl.

'The priest it was that brought it,' Jem explained, when he had apologised for not getting up from his chair, and still twirling at his string, 'and a lovely bird it is, and a fine-looking creature it must have been.' The old man fumbled in the ashes and held up a golden head, 'It's the very breed they have up at the Earl's,' he said, 'I see that by the feathers, and a heap they think o' them there.'

More news for Mary! Dr. Bruton's eyes were dancing with amusement, as, his shilling given, he hurried home.

Mary was in the kitchen, quite a pucker of care between her eyebrows as she superintended the cooking of her dinner, but in her dismay at her husband's tidings she sat down on a chair by the table.

'He shall have a dinner,' she said at last, and to emphasise the words, she gave the table a little tap with the spoon she had in her hand.

'He shall have a Christmas dinner, and, Teddy, you shall take it to him.'

'I suppose I must do as I am told.' The husband shrugged his shoulders. 'Wrap it up, then, and I'll take it over.'

'Wrap it up? Do you think I am going to send Mr. MacCarthy another pair of fowls to give away?' Mary looked at her husband with contempt. 'No, you shall take him over a wing of the turkey and a big bit of the breast.'

'My dear, you cannot do such a thing,' the husband remonstrated. 'It would be an insult to Mr. MacCarthy.'

'No, it wouldn't,' Mary was firm. 'And, Teddy, you will have to take it.'

'Not I,' Dr. Bruton shook his head.

'Then I shall. Yes, I will, Teddy; you don't understand. Men never understand these things. Mr. MacCarthy is going to have a good dinner, and I am going to take it to him.'

'How do you know he is not eating a very good dinner at this moment?'

'I know he isn't.'

'He may have his larder so full of turkeys and geese that he was glad to get rid of your Indians.'

'You know he has not.'

'Well, well.' The doctor began to laugh. 'Have it your own way, but don't ask me to take it, that's all.'

'I shall take it myself. Phyllis, that is not the turkey burning. Oh, Teddy dear, do run away and leave Phyllis and me to finish the dinner.'

'Can't I do anything? Stir the plum-pudding?'

'Stir the plum-pudding? That shows how much you know about cooking, sir. Go and smoke a cigar and stay in the surgery till I call you.'

At two o'clock Mary opened the door. 'Please, Teddy, will you come and cut off Mr. MacCarthy's wing for me?'

'Certainly,' Dr. Bruton followed his wife to the dining-room. 'And so that Mr. MacCarthy may have a Christmas dinner, I am to sit down to a mutilated turkey.'

'You are not to tease, Teddy. Now give the plate to me—so—under my cloak; and now open the front door, please, my hands are full.'

'So I see. Well, I hope Mr. MacCarthy may enjoy having his dinner taken to him like a pauper.'

'Teddy! As if anyone could see.'

'Anyone could smell, at any rate.'

'There isn't anyone to see or smell either, everyone is at dinner. Quick, Teddy, open the door or it will get cold. I shall be back in a moment.'

'In less if you like. I quite appreciate your sentiments about turkey getting cold!' But in spite of his words the doctor's face was very tender as he stood on the doorstep watching his wife go down the steps.

Mary Bruton went carefully across the street. Not a creature was to be seen, and—balancing her plate and its cover as well as she could—she knocked at the priest's door. No answer came and she knocked again. Still no answer, so she tried the handle of the door, and, finding it gave, pushed it softly open and stepped into the passage, and then—she stood still.

Facing her, by the table, in the little room he used as a parlor, stood the priest, one hand upraised as he besought the blessing of God on the food that lay before him—a plate of porridge. But his face of content and recollection—there must be good in the faith that made a man look like that: 'Full of faith and the Holy Ghost.' Yes, that was it. Mary did not hesitate. Gently as she had come she slipped away and re-crossed the street, plate still in her hand.

'Wouldn't have it?' her husband cried triumphantly.

'Wouldn't have it? Oh, Teddy! Mary, her dish put on the table, threw herself on her husband's breast. 'I believe Mr. MacCarthy has the only good dinner in Lesser Barton to-day.'

'Father,' Dr. Bruton asked when Christmas Day had come round again to find the priest (who had that morning baptised the doctor's and Mary's first-born) a guest at his table. 'Father, what had you for dinner last Christmas Day?'

Mary shook her head vigorously at her husband from the head of the table.

The priest considered—'What had I for dinner last Christmas Day. Let me see. Yes, I remember, some charitable soul sent me a pair of fowls.'

'I believe he thinks he ate them,' Mary almost cried aloud.'

'You never heard of a Christmas dinner bringing two sinners into the fold? three if you count thatascal there,' Dr. Bruton added, under his breath, as he looked at the bundle in Phyllis' arms.

'Teddy!' Mary expostulated.

'I am afraid I don't quite understand.' The priest looked from his host to his hostess.

'Father, he is always talking nonsense,' Mary looked entreatingly at her husband.

'And nonsense is a very wholesome thing, sometimes,' the priest returned. 'But I am waiting for an explanation.'

Teddy looked at his wife; he could not withstand the entreaty in her eyes. 'Forgive me, Father,' he said, as Mary says, 'I am always talking nonsense; but I stick to it, I was converted by a Christmas dinner!'

The priest, on consideration, giving up the problem, gently shook his head—'Messenger of the Sacred Heart.'

The Catholic World

CANADA.—Irish Catholics

An American exchange states that the Irish Catholics in Montreal, Canada, at present number about 50,000, or one-fifth of that city's population.

ENGLAND.—The Royal Declaration

A petition to Parliament on the subject of the Royal Declaration is being prepared, and will shortly be offered for the signature of Catholics in every parish in England.

The Pope's Remarks

When receiving the members of the deputation of the Catholic Union of Great Britain, an officer of the Royal Navy was presented to the Pope by the Duke of Norfolk. Leo XIII., in giving him his blessing, remarked: 'Ah! La potenza Inglese e la marina.'—'The power of England lies in her navy.'

No Religious Test

Replying to a resolution of the Executive committee of the 'Protestant Reformation Society,' calling attention to the number of Catholics admitted into the Diplomatic Service, Lord Lansdowne says that no religious test is exacted in the case of candidates seeking employment under the Crown, and that, in his opinion, such proceeding would be repugnant to the feelings of the great majority of Englishmen.

FRANCE.—The Premier's Threat

A Paris paper announces that the Premier has sent to the various Prefects an order to ascertain whether the nuns belonging to the congregations dissolved by the Government decree are still living in their convents and continuing the same work which they carried on before the promulgation of the decree. If so, a period of 10 days will be allowed to the delinquents, after which legal proceedings will be taken against them and against the owners of houses in which they live, and anyone who receives them.

The Premier and the Monk

A short time ago a venerable French priest, Father Marie Antoine, of the Capuchin Convent, Toulouse, addressed a letter to M. Combes, the French Premier, but the latter has not so far replied to the appeal. Father Marie Antoine informs M. Combes that, though burdened with years and on the brink of the grave, he is threatened with expulsion from a convent which he founded 50 years ago, of which he is the legal owner, and for which he has regularly paid taxes. Now, after 50 years' work, he is to be flung out of his cell, in which he had hoped to end his days peacefully. The device of the Republic, he reminds the Premier, is 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.' For over half a century he has acted in the spirit of that motto; and now, he asks, is his reward to be violent expulsion from his home? He further tells M. Combes that he has personal claims on his sympathy, being a native of the department in which the Premier was born, having had as a friend a priest who was M. Combes' uncle and who acted as father to him, and having done acts of kindness for a brother of M. Combes when he desired to become a Capuchin. 'If,' says Father Marie Antoine, 'you do not prevent my expulsion; at least spare me in my old age the hardship of being thrown into the street and give me a shelter in one of the prisons, where I may live on equal terms with prisoners and console them in their captivity.'

INDIA.—More Catholic School Successes

We take the following from the 'Indian Daily News' of January 31.—We referred recently in these columns to the remarkable success of the Catholic schools in the High School examination for European schools. Now that we have the complete lists for the primary, middle, and high before us, and which we tabulate elsewhere in this issue, we find that this success is still further established. The six schools at the head of the tabulated list are all Catholic, with the exception of the Victoria School, Kurseong, which, being a Government institution, is undenominational. Four of these schools—viz., St. Joseph's High School, Bow Bazar; St. Michael's