

'My poor darling,' I murmured, smoothing my wife's hair. Your sympathies have indeed been imposed upon. However, you think that if she had made up her mind to have a function instead of an obsequy she would not wish to change her mind. I wish you would not cry about it. Something has happened or else she would not travel abroad.'

'Probably she has changed her mind about the demise altogether, and thinks she will live a while longer. She claims that every condition is mental; that we can control circumstances by will power. I presume,' concluded Margaret, 'that, as she has everything arranged to run for two years after she has departed this life, she thinks she may as well take advantage of the situation and go abroad.'

I regarded my wife so seriously that she mistook the expression of my face for one of rebuke.

'You think me facetious, I know, Richard,' she said. 'I haven't told you half. The house was to have been decorated with palms, and the musicians were to play dirges and things in the Empire balcony.'

'And as we do not know in what condition my aunt is now, I think we should not jest,' I said.

But I was sorry on the instant of the utterance, for Margaret produced the ominous pocket handkerchief.

'There, there, dear!' I said, with all possible haste. 'We will wait and see. You are such an excellent prophet that I dare not dispute you. It would be jolly if Aunt Caroline should get well, you know.'

'She will outlive us all,' said my wife, with quiet assurance.

Talk the matter over as much as we would, Margaret and I could not seem to interpret the significance of Uncle Jacob's message. Perhaps he was bringing her over for some treatment not possible in America, and in that case she was not dead at all. In any event, I could not tax my wife with the care of the sick, so I took her to Switzerland at once, and after finding comfortable lodgings for her I went to Liverpool on the day of the arrival of the steamer to meet Uncle Jacob.

But the smiling lady with my uncle was no candidate for burial nor yet for a sanatorium. In her neat and stylish travelling coat Aunt Caroline was as trig and as well groomed as ever she was, and she bore not the least resemblance to her shade.

'How did it all come about?' I asked.

'Ah, Richard, my dear boy,' said my aunt, 'this is too good a world to leave, so I decided to stay. Death itself is much a matter of will power. I decided to live, and here I am.'

'A sensible and practical idea,' said I.

Uncle Jacob and I stepped out together a short time after they were settled in their hotel, and what he said was this:

'I didn't think any of the time that your aunt was going to die,' said he with his characteristic drawl. 'But I knew that she would never lie in bed if she had no plans to execute. When she took a notion to plan her own funeral, why, I let her do it. She fixed the whole house all over new. She cleaned the house, she made bedding, she made clothing for the girls, and she planned everything ahead for three years to come. You know your Aunt Caroline likes to run things. She has a great deal of executive ability. She always runs me. I'm used to it. She has so much force she is obliged to exhaust it in some way. Why, she runs all the charities in town, and all the reforms and all the clubs, the church and everything else. The notion of running her own funeral was a brand-new idea. Then she planned to run us all for the remainder of our lives. She's a master hand at running things. If she had been a man she would have been a Napoleon. But while she has been in bed thinking all these things over, she has been really enjoying herself. As soon as you and Margaret left she showed a disposition to abandon her plan of dying and decided to think about going abroad. She says she has fixed things so that she can stay three years if necessary.'

'Well,' I said, and I hope it did not sound as if I lacked cordiality, 'I have got to go home on the next steamer. If I had known you were coming we might have waited for you. In fact, as it has turned out, we needn't have come at all.'

But dear old Uncle Jacob never suspected what I meant.—'Ledger Monthly.'

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The Catholic World

ENGLAND.—Ladies of Charity

The Ladies of Charity have purchased and entered into possession of Troy House, near Monmouth. The house, which formerly belonged to the Duke of Beaufort, will accommodate some 60 persons, and will serve the purpose of an asylum for fallen women.

Diocese of Shrewsbury

The Bishop of Shrewsbury (Dr. Allen) laid recently the foundation stone of a Catholic church to be erected in Stockport. The new building, which will be one of the finest churches in the diocese, is estimated to cost between £10,000 and £11,000, and in addition there is to be a presbytery. The new church will supersede the Church of SS. Philip and James, Chapel Street, Edgeley, which is to be removed to provide a site for new schools.

Church-going in London

According to a cablegram the census of church attendance made by the 'Daily News' has concluded. It shows that the attendance on a given date was as follows:—Anglican churches, 430,153; Nonconformist, 416,225; Catholic, 93,572; other bodies, 62,990.

The League of the Cross

The General Council of the League of the Cross, the great temperance organisation founded by the late Cardinal Manning, has decided upon a new departure—the celebration of the birthday of Cardinal Manning, which will take the form of a monster procession from the Embankment to Hyde Park on Sunday, July 26, when trade unions, temperance, and friendly societies are to be invited to take part in the celebration. A sub-committee has been appointed to carry out the arrangements for the demonstration and also details of the Crystal Palace festival on August 24.

Catholics at Oxford

A party of 100 visited Oxford under the auspices of the Catholic Association on Whit Monday. They were met at the railway station by the Rev. Sir David Hunter-Blair, M.A., O.S.B., and were conducted by him through Worcester, St. John's, and Balliol Colleges. A visit was also paid to the Bodleian Library and the Sheldonian Theatre. At luncheon, Father Bannin, chairman of the committee of the Catholic Association, proposed the health of Father Hunter-Blair, and the rev. baronet in replying stated that there are now 72 Catholic undergraduates at the various colleges of the university. After luncheon Canon Kennard kindly took charge of the party.

FRANCE.—Douai College

Abbot Larkin, of Douai, and the community have issued a statement to the effect that the college has been finally closed and broken up. The religious and educational work so successfully carried on by the English Benedictines at Douai during the past three hundred years is to be resumed at Woolhampton. The re-opening of Woolhampton College under the direction of the English Benedictines of Douai will take place on Tuesday, September 8.

The Concordat

The Archbishops of Albi, Toulouse, and Aix have made statements which are published in the Paris 'Gaulois' pointing out that disastrous consequences would ensue to the Church in France from the denunciation of the Concordat. The Archbishop of Albi says: 'I have nearly eight hundred priests in my diocese. Half of them would die of starvation if their modest stipends were suppressed.'

The Premier and the Religious Orders

M. Combes had recently a conference with the delegates of the four groups comprising the majority in the French Chamber. The questions of female Congregations and the income tax, which is about to be brought before the Chamber, were discussed. With regard to the female Congregations, M. Combes stated that 390 of these had asked for authorisation, of which number 70 or 80 were teaching Orders. He proposed that all the petitions for authorisation presented by the latter should be rejected en bloc. He was, however, in favor of granting authorisation to Orders which were mainly devoted to charitable objects.

ROME.—The Franciscans

Father David Fleming (writes a Rome correspondent) has ceased to occupy the onerous position of Vicar-General to the Franciscan Order. Father Schuller, a German Franciscan, has been elected in his stead. Father David, as he is familiarly named, was called to rule over the Order of St. Francis by a special mandate