

We both blunged into the woods not far away, with little hope of finding anything, or anybody, to help us out of our dilemma, for we could neither advance nor go back, and the rain was still pouring down.

"Pretty wet proposition, isn't it?" said my friend, mockingly.

"Well, it's the worst experience I have ever had," I said, between the gust of wind that swept the falling leaves into my face.

"Where are we going?" he said in answer.

"Indeed I don't know," I replied.

"But just then, both at once, we saw a light gleaming ahead of us.

"Bravo!" he cried. "There's a light! Now we have hope!"

And, very much encouraged, we both redoubled our speed, and soon found ourselves before a comfortable farmhouse standing back from the road, with light streaming from the windows. We hastened to the door, which in response to our repeated knocks, was opened by a slender young girl with a most prepossessing face—who drew back when she saw standing without, two men with caps pulled down on their faces, and coats dripping with rain.

"Come here, father!" she cried.

Instantly a sturdy farmer, his comfortable-looking wife, and two boys about twenty or twenty-two, loomed up from the interior of the house and blocked up the doorway. I tried to be courteous, standing in the rain. "We have been caught in the storm, and our automobile is sunk in the mud on the road," said I. "Besides a tree has fallen across the way, and we are not able to remove it. You see, we are soaking wet. Will you kindly give us shelter until the storm passes? Then if you are good enough to help us to raise the machine and remove the tree, we will pay you as generously as we can."

"Come right in!" said the farmer, heartily. "You are welcome strangers. You have got into hard lines, sure. Martha, put on two extra plates. Take off your wet coats, and come in to the fire. We are just sitting down to a late dinner. Come right in! Rachael (to the young girl), take their wet coats and hang them before the fire."

Extremely grateful for this most unexpected greeting, we stepped inside the hospitable doors, and found ourselves in a large comfortable kitchen, where a blazing fire, and a good odor of a most appetising meal greeted us. My friend gave his wet coat and cap to Rachael, who smilingly took them, and urged me to go to the fire. My friend was talking to the farmer, the wife was bustling around, the boys stood and stared, while I was left somewhat in the shadow.

I ran my hand through my disordered hair, arranged my Roman collar which had been covered by my coat, and looked down at my wet shoes, which were in a sorry condition. When I looked up it was because an ominous silence had fallen on the air. I turned round to see the farmer, his face growing red and stormy, looking full at my Roman collar.

"Are you a Romish parson?" he rather shouted, than said, to me.

"I am a Catholic priest, if that is what you mean," I said, pleasantly. "What of it?"

"What of it?" he echoed. "Don't you know we are solid, hard-shelled Baptists? No infernal Papist has ever darkened our door before! Do you think I'll have a Popish priest at my table?"

And he thumped his fist on the table till the dishes rang.

I determined I would be pleasant. "Well now, Sir," I said, "it is too bad we were caught in that rain—too bad our machine stuck in the mud. Why, I was just thanking Providence for this unexpected hospitality, and silently invoking blessings on this fine household. Is there any reason why I should be so displeasing to you? I have never done you any harm."

"Root, branch, and fibre, my family and I hate Papists. It's born in us, and in my ancestors! I never was so near to a Popish priest in my life, and

no Papist parson will ever sit down in my house at the same table with me!" he shouted.

The family stood aghast. My friend looked at me quite troubled. I saw that the poor man was struggling with the traditions of hospitality and the bigotry of a false religion.

"Well," I said, "there is nothing for us to do but go into the storm. May we stay in the barn till daylight? I give you my word we are peaceable men." I said, smiling, and I moved towards the door.

"Oh, dad!" said the young girl, "what are you thinking about?"

"Hold on, father," said the eldest boy. "You wouldn't let the dogs out a night like this."

My friend now spoke.

"Sir," he said, "my name is Mr. X—. I am a banker in the town of D—. This reverend gentleman is a friend of mine. If I don't mistake, I have seen you in the bank. Are you not Amos Wilton, and don't you remember seeing me before? Do I, or does my friend look like a man to deserve such language?"

The farmer, on hearing these names, showed his discomfiture at once. With a muttered apology, he pointed out places at the table, and called to his wife to serve the dinner. Nothing more was said. I determined not to lose my good nature, and when we began the meal I started to talk on the topics of the day, addressing myself to the boys, to the girl, and at last, in the most pleasant manner, to Amos himself.

Finally, under the influence of the good dinner, the warmth, and light he thawed, and although apparently ashamed of himself, joined in the conversation which my friend and I kept going. At the end of the meal he rose up like a man, and apologised awkwardly.

"See here, strangers, you musn't mind a man in a temper. I own I had no right to talk as I did. I hope you won't bear me any ill will. It's in the blood of the Wiltons to be down on the Catholics, and I ain't an exception."

Turning to my friend, he continued: "Yes, Sir, I have money in your bank, and I'm right sure you wouldn't be companion to a man, even if he is a Catholic parson, who had a bad reputation. So I take back what I've said, and my sons and I will go out to that automobile, and see what we can do for you."

Of course, my friend and I assured him we had paid no attention to his remarks. They were natural, considering the surprise, and we thanked him for the fine supper. I took out a "green-back," and would have offered it to him, only he shouted to me to put it back in my pocket.

He was only a victim of bigotry—not his fault, and his heart was as sound as a nut.

We got our coats, and hats, and all five went to the door. The rain had stopped, and the moon was shining. With the strong arms of the three men, and our own, we got the tree to one side, and pried up the "machine." After it was on harder ground we found there was no damage done. Soon we started off. The farmer shook hands heartily with us, as did his sons, and as we sped along you may be sure we could talk of nothing else but our adventure. We reached home late at night, but safely. The days passed on, the good bishop came, and administered Confirmation. The great occasion was over, and things settled down into their usual routine. I remembered the storm and the farmer for a long time, but at last the memory of it all faded away.

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Two years passed by, and I was in the next town, assisting the pastor at the Forty Hours. When it was over I said good-bye, and was going down the steps of the rectory into the street. Just then, a slender, pretty young girl, dressed with taste, came up to me with a smiling face.

"Are you not Father So-and-So?"

"Why, yes," I replied. "I think you have the advantage of me. I do not remember ever having seen you before. What is your name?"

"My name is Rachael Wilton," she said.

Still I was not able to place her. "How do you