A Belated Honeymoon.

By Eleanor H. Porter, in Catholic Universe.

The haze of a warm September day hung low over the house, the garden, and the dusty-white road. On the side veranda a gray-haired, erect little figure sat knitting. After a time the needles began to move more and more slowly until at last they lay idle in the motionless, withered fingers.

"Well, well, Abby, takin' a nap?" demanded a thin-chested, wiry old man coming around the corner of the house and seating himself on the veranda steps.

The little old woman gave a guilty start and began knitting vigorously.

"Dear me, no, Hezekiah. I was thinkin'." She hesitated a moment and then added, a little feverishly: "It—it's ever so much cooler here than up to the fair grounds ain't it, Hezekiah?"

The old man threw a sharp look at her face.

"Hm-m, yes," he said. "Mebbe it is."

From far down the road came the clang of a bell. As by common consent the old man and his wife got to their feet and hurried to the front of the house where they could best see the trolley car as it rounded a curve and crossed the road at right angles.

"Goes slick, don't it?" murmured the man.

There was no answer. The woman's eyes were hungrily devouring the last glimpse of paint and polish.

"An' we hain't been on 'em 'tall yet, have we, Abby?" he continued.

"Well, ye see, I—I hain't had time, Hezekiah," she rejoined, apologetically.

"Humph!" muttered the old man as they turned and walked back to their seats.

For a time neither spoke, then Hezekiah Warden cleared his throat determinedly and faced his wife.

"Look a' here, Abby," he began, "I'm agoin' ter say somethin' that has been 'most tumblin' off'n the end of my tongue fur more'n a year. Jenny and Frank are good an' kind an' they mean well, but they think 'cause our hair's white an' our feet ain't quite so lively as they once was, that we're jest good as buried already, an' that we don't need anything more excitin' than a nap in the sun. Now, Abby, didn't ye want to go to that fair with the folks terday? Didn't ye?"

A swift flush came to the woman's cheek.

"Why, Hezekiah, it's ever so much cooler here an'—" she paused helplessly.

"Humph!" retorted the man, "I thought as much. It's always 'nice an' cool' here in summer an' 'nice an' warm' here in winter when Jennie goes somewheres that you want ter go an' don't take ye. An' when 'tain't that, you say you 'hadn't had time,' I know ye! You'd talk any way to hide their selfishness. Look a-hear, Abby, did ye ever ride in them 'lectric cars? I mean anywheres?"

She shook her head.

"Well, I hain't neither, an' by ginger, I'm agoin' to!"

"Oh, Hezekiah, Hezekiah, don't—swear!"

"I tell ye, Abby, I will swear. It's a swearin' matter. Ever since I heard of 'em I wanted ter try 'em. An' here they are now 'most ter my own door an' I hain't even been in 'em once. Look a-here, Abby, jest because we're 'most eighty ain't no sign we've lost int'rest in things. I'm spry as a cricket, an' so be you, yet Frank an' Jennie expect us ter stay cooped up here as if we was old—really old, ninety or a hundred, ye know—an' 'tain't fair. Why, we will be old one of these days!"

"I know it, Hezekiah."

"We couldn't go much when we was younger," he resumed. "Even our weddin' trip was chopped right off short 'fore it even began."

A tender light came into the dim old eyes opposite.

"I know, dear, an' what plans we had!" cried Abigail. "Boston, an' Bunker Hill, an' Faneuil Hall."

The old man squared his shoulders and threw back his head.

"Abby, look a-hear! Do ye remember that money I been savin' off an' on when I could git a dollar here an' there that was extra? Well, there's as much as ten of 'em now, an' I'm agoin' ter spent 'em—all of 'em, mebbe. I'm a-goin' ter ride in them 'lectric cars, an' so be you. Look, Abby, the folks are goin' again ter-morrer ter the fair, ain't they?"

Abigail nodded mutely. Her eyes were beginning to shine.

"Well," resumed Hezekiah, "when they go we'll be settin' in the sun where they say we'd oughter be. But we ain't agoin' ter stay there, Abby. We're goin' down the road an' git on them 'lectric cars, an'" when we git ter the Junction we're goin' ter take the steam cars fur Boston. What if 'tis thirty miles! I calc'late we're equal to 'em. We'll have one good time, an we won't come in until the evenin'. We'll see Faneuil Hall an' Bunker Hill, an' you shall buy a new cap, an' ride in the subway. If there's a preachin' service we'll go ter that. They have 'em sometimes weekdays, ye know."

"Oh, Hezekiah, we—couldn't!" gasped the little old woman.

"Pooh! 'Course we could. Listen!" And Hezekiah proceeded to unfold his plans more in detail.

It was very early the next morning when the household awoke. By 7 o'clock a two-seated carryall was drawn up to the side door, and by quarter past the carryall, bearing Jenny, Frank and the boys and the lunch baskets, rumbled out of the yard and onto the highway.

"Now, been quiet an' don't get heated, mother," cautioned Jennie, looking back at the little gray-haired woman standing all alone on the side veranda.

"Find a good cool spot to smoke your pipe in, father," called Frank, as an old man appeared in the doorway.

There followed a shout, a clatter, and a cloud of dust—then silence. Fifteen minutes later, hand in hand, a little old man and a little old woman walked down the white road together.

To most of the passengers on the trolley car that day the trip was merely a necessary means to an end. To the old couple on the front seat it was something to be remembered and lived over all their lives. Even at the Junction the spell of unreality was so potent that the man forgot things so trivial as tickets, and marched into the car with head erect and eyes fixed straight ahead.

It was after Hezekiah had taken out a roll of bills—all ones—to pay the fares to the conductor that a young man in a tall hat sauntered down the aisle and dropped into the seat in front.

"Going to Boston, I take it," said the young man, genially.

"Yes, sir," replied Hezekiah, no less genially, "Ye guessed right the first time."

Abigail lifted a cautious hand to her hair and bonnet. So handsome and well dressed a man would notice the slightest thing awry, she thought.

"Hm-m," smiled the stranger. "I was so successful that time, suppose I try my luck again. You don't go every day, I fancy, en?"

"Sugar! How'd he know that, now?" chuckled Hezekiah, turning to his wife in open glee. "So we don't, stranger, so we don't," he added, turning back to the man. "Ye hit plumb right."

"Hm-m! great place. Boston," observed the stranger. "I'm glad you are going. I think you'll enjoy it."

The two wrinkled old faces before him fairly beamed.

"I thank ye, sir," said Hezekiah, heartily. "I call that mighty kind of ye, specially as there are them that thinks we are too old ter be enj'yin' of anythin'."

"Old, of course you're not too old! Why, you're just in the prime to enjoy things," cried the handsome man, and in the sunshine of his dazzling smile the hearts of the little old man and woman quite melted within them.

"Thank ye, sir, thank ye, sir," nodded Abigail, while Hezekiah offered his hand.

"Shake, stranger, shake! An' I ain't too old, an' I'm goin' ter prove it. I've got money, sir, heaps of it, an' I'm goin' to spend it—mebbe I'll spend it all. We're going ter see Bunker Hill and Faneuil Hall, an' we're goin' to ride in the subway. Now, don't tell me we don't know how ter enj'y ourselves!"

It was a very simple matter after that. On the one hand were infinite tact and skill; on the other, innocence, ignorance, and an overwhelming gratitude for this sympathetic companionship. Long before Boston was reached Mr. and Mrs. Warden and "Mr. Livingstone" were on the best of terms, and when they separated at the foot of the car steps, to the old man and woman it seemed that half their joy and all their courage went with the smiling man who lifted his hat in farewell before being lost to sight in the crowd.

"There, Abby, we're here!" announced Hezekiah with an exultation that was a little forced. "Gory! There must be somethin' goin' on ter-day," he added, as he followed the long line of people down the narrow passage between the cars.

There was no reply. Abigail's cheeks were pink and her bonnet strings untied. Her eyes, wide open and frightened, were fixed on the swaying, bobbing crowds ahead. In the great waiting-room she caught her husband's arms.

"Hezekiah, we can't, we mustn't ter-day," she whispered. "There's such a crowd. Let's go home and come when it's quieter."

"But, Abby, we—here, let's set down," Hezekiah finished helplessly.

Near one of the outer doors Mr. Livingstone—better known to his friends and the police as "Slick Bill"—smiled behind his hand. Not since he had left them had Mr. and Mrs. Hezekiah Warden been out of his sight.

"What's up, Bill? Need assistance?" demanded a voice at his elbow.

"Jim, by all that's lucky!" cried Livingstone, turning to greet a dapper little man in gray. "Sure I need you! It's a peach, though I doubt if we get much but fun out of it, but there'll be enough of that to make up. Oh, he's got money—'heaps of it,' he says," laughed Livingstone, "and I saw a roll of bills myself. But I advise you not to count too much on that, though it'll be easy enough to get what there is, all right. As for the fun, look over by that post near the parcel window."

"Great Scott! Where'd you pick em?" chuckled the younger man.

"Never mind," returned the other with a shrug. "Meet me at Clyde's in half an hour. We'll be there, never fear."

Over by the parcel room an old man looked about him with anxious eyes.

"But, Abby, don't ye see?" he urged. "We've come so far, seems as though we oughter do the rest all right. Now, you jest set here an' let me go an' find out how ter git there. We'll try fur Bunker Hill first, 'cause we want ter see the monurmunt sure."

He rose to his feet only to be pulled back by his wife.

"Hezekiah Warden!" she almost sobbed. "If ye dare ter stir ten feet away from me I'll never forgive ye as long as I live. We'd never find each other ag'in"

"Well, well, Abby," soothed the man with grim humor, "if we never found each other ag'in, I don't see as 'twould make much difference whether ye furgived me or not!"

For another long minute they silently watched the crowd. Then Hezekiah squared his shoulders.

"Come, come, Abby," he said, "this ain't no way ter do. Only think how we wanted ter git here, an' now we're here an' don't dare ter stir. There ain't any less folks than there was—growin' worse, if anythin'—but I'm gettin' used ter 'em now, an' I'm goin' ter make a break. Come, what would Mr. Livingstone say if he could see us now? Where'd he think our boastin' was about our bein' able ter enj'y ourselves? Come!" And once more he rose to his feet.

This time he was not held back. The little woman at his side adjusted her bonnet, tilted up her chin, and in her turn rose to her feet.

"Sure enough!" she quavered bravely. "Come, Hezekiah, we'll ask the way ter Bunker Hill." And, holding fast to her husband's coat sleeve, she tripped across the floor to one of the outer doors.

On the sidewalk Mr. and Mrs. Hezekiah Warden came once more to a halt. Before them swept an endless stream of cars, carriages and people. Above thundered the elevated railway cars.

"Oh-h," shuddered Abigail and tightened her grasp on her husband's coat.

It was some minutes before Hezekiah's dry tongue and lips could frame his question and then his words were so low-spoken and indistinct that the first two men he asked did not hear. The third man frowned and pointed to a policeman. The fourth snapped: "Take the elevated for Charlestown or the trolley cars either"; all of which served but to puzzle Hezekiah the more.

Little by little the dazed old man and his wife fell back before the jostling crowds. They were quite against the side of the building when Livingstone spoke to them.

"Well, well! if here aren't my friends again!" he exclaimed cordially.

There was something of the fierceness of the drowning man in the way Hezekiah took hold of that hand.

"Mr. Livin'stone!" he cried; then he recollected himself. "We was jest goin' ter Bunker Hill," he said jauntily.

"Yes," smiled Livingstone. "But your luncheon—aren't you hungry? Come with me; I was just going to get mine."

"But you—I—" Hezekiah paused and looked doubtingly at his wife.

"Indeed, my dear Mrs. Warden, you'll say 'Yes,' I know," urged Livingstone suavely. "Only think how good a nice cup of tea would taste now."

"I know, but—" She glanced at her husband.

"Nonsense! Of course you'll come," insisted Livingstone, laying a gently compelling hand on the arm of each.

Fifteen minutes later Hezekiah stood looking about him with wondering eyes.

"Well, well, Abby, ain't this slick?" he cried.

His wife did not reply. The mirrors, the lights, the gleaming silver and glass filled her with a delight too great for words. She was vaguely conscious of her husband, of Mr. Livingstone, and of a smooth-shaven little man in gray, who was presented as "Mr. Harding." Then she found herself seated at that wonderful table, while beside her chair stood an awesome being who laid a printed card before her. With a little ecstatic sigh she gave Hezekiah her customary signal for the blessing and bowed her head:

"There!" exulted Livingstone aloud. "Here we—" he stopped short. From his left came a deep-toned, reverent voice, invoking the divine blessing upon the place, the food, and the new friends who were so kind to strangers in a strange land.

"By Jove!" muttered Livingstone, under his breath, as his eyes met those of him across the table. The waiter coughed and turned his back. Then, the blessing concluded, Hezekiah raised his head and smiled.

"Well, well, Abby, why don't you say somethin'?" he asked, breaking the silence. "Ye ain't said a word. Mr. Livin'stone'll be thinkin' ye don't like it."

Mrs. Warden drew a long breath of delight.

"I can't say anything, Hezekiah," she faltered. "It's all so beautiful."

Livingstone waited until the dazed old eyes had become in a measure accustomed to the surroundings, then he turned a smiling face on Hezekiah.

"And now, my friend, what do you propose to do after luncheon?" he asked.

"Well, we calc'late ter take in Bunker Hill an' Faneuil Hall, sure," returned the old man with a confidence that told of new courage imbibed with his tea. "Then we thought mebbe we'd ride in the subway an' hear one of the big preachers if they happened ter be holdin' meetin's anywheres this week. Mebbe you can tell us, eh?"

Across the table the man called Harding choked over his food and Livingstone frowned.

"Well," began Livingstone slowly. "I think," interrupted Harding, taking a newspaper from his pocket, "I think there are services there," he finished gravely, pointing to the glaring advertisement of a ten-cent show, as he handed the paper across to Livingstone.

"But what time do the exercises begin?" demanded Hezekiah in a troubled voice. "Ye see, there's Bunker Hill an'—sugar! Abbey, ain't that pretty?" he broke off delightedly. Before him stood a slender glass into which the waiter was pouring something red and sparkling.

The old lady opposite grew white, then pink.

"Of course that ain't wine, Mr. Livingstone?" she asked anxiously.

"Give yourself no uneasiness, my dear Mrs. Warden," interposed Harding. "It's lemonade—pink lemonade."

"Oh," she returned with a relieved sigh. "I beg your pardon, I'm sure. You wouldn't have it, 'course no more'n I would. But, ye see, bein' pledged so, I didn't want ter make a mistake."

There was an awkward silence, then Harding raised his glass.

"Here's to your health, Mrs. Warden!" he cried, gaily. "May your trip—"

"Wait!" she interrupted excitedly, her old eyes alight and her cheeks flushed, "Let me tell ye first what this trip is ter us, then ye'll have a right ter wish us good luck."

Harding lowered his glass and turned upon her a gravely attentive face.

"'Most fifty years ago we was married, Hezekiah an' me," she began softly. "We'd saved, both of us, an' we'd planned a honeymoon trip. We was comin' ter Boston. They didn't have any 'lectric cars then nor any steam cars only half way. But we was comin' an' we was plannin' on Bunker Hill an' Faneuil Hall, an' I don't know what all."

The little lady paused for breath and Harding stirred uneasily in his chair. Livingstone did not move. His eyes were fixed on a mirror across the room. Over at the sideboard the waiter vigorously wiped a bottle.

"Well, we was married," continued the tremulous voice, "an' not half an hour later mother fell down the cellar stairs an' broke her hip. Of course that stopped things right short. I took off my weddin' gown an' put on my old red caliker an' went ter work. Hezekiah came right there an' run the farm an' I nursed mother an' did the work. 'Twas more'n a year 'fore she was 'round, an' after that, what with the babies an' all, there didn't never seem a chance when Hezekiah an' me could take this trip.

"If we went anywhere we couldn't seem ter manage ter go together, an' we never stayed fur no sight-seein'. Late years my Jenny and her husband seemed ter think we didn't need nothin' but naps an' knittin' an' somehow we got so we jest couldn't stand it. We wanted ter go somewhere an' see somethin', so."

Mrs. Warden paused, drew a long breath, and resumed. Her voice now had a ring of triumph.

"Well, last month they got the 'lectric cars finished down our way. We hadn't been on 'em, neither of us. Jennie an' Frank didn't seem ter want us to. They said they was shaky an' noisy an' would tire us all out. But yesterday, when the folks was gone, Hezekiah an' me got ter talkin' an' thinkin' how all these years we hadn't never had that honeymoon trip, an' how by an' by we'd be old—real old, I mean, so's we couldn't take it—an' all of a sudden we said we'd take it now, right now. An' we did. We left a note fur the children, an' we're here!"

There was a long silence. Over at the sideboard the waiter still polished his bottle. Livingstone did not even turn his head. Finally Harding raised his glass.

"We'll drink to honeyman trips in general, and to this one in particular," he cried, a little constrainedly.

Mrs. Warden flushed, smiled, and reached for her glass. The pink lemonade was almost at her lips when Livingstone's arm shot out. Then came the tinkle of shattered glass and a crimson stain where the wine trailed across the damask.

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed Livingstone, while the other men lowered their glasses in surprise. "That was an awkward slip of mine. Mrs. Warden, I must have hit your arm."

"But, Bill," muttered Harding under his breath, "you don't mean—"

"But I do," corrected Livingstone quietly, looking straight into Harding's amazed eyes. "Mr. and Mrs. Warden are my guests. They are going to drive to Bunker Hill with me by and by."

When the six o'clock accommodation train pulled out of Boston that night it bore a little old man and a little old woman, gray-haired, weary but blissfully content.

"We've seen 'em all, Hezekiah, ev'ry single one of 'em." Abigail was saying. "An' wasn't Mr. Livingstone good, gettin' that carriage an' takin' us everywhere; an' it bein' open so all 'round the sides, we didn't miss seein' a single thing!"

"He was, Abbey, he was, an' he wouldn't let me pay a cent!" cried Hezekiah, taking out his roll of bills and patting it lovingly. "But, Abby, did ye notice? 'Twas kind o' queer we never got one taste of that pink lemonade. The waiter-man took it away."

The Catholic Press.

The Catholic press of a community is generally a just measure of its zeal, progress and influence. These too, are qualities seldom or never evident among Catholics where they are without unity and organization.

Thus in our day the Catholic newspaper takes the place second only to the Catholic pulpit. This fact is not due to any exigencies experienced by the Church as a teaching body, it is due to the requirements of the age in which we live.

Catholics are in every civilized country confronted with an all-powerful press, constantly endeavoring to poison the springs of their faith

To counteract the work of such a hostile agency, there is but one effective instrument.

In days when every struggle was decided by sword against sword, force usually won. But now when the greatest questions of our times are decided by pen against pen, truth showed prevail. As Catholics we cannot hold any higher ideal than that truth should predominate in the public mind. If we so guide our outlook in a review of the secular press of this country we shall receive many severe shocks. Catholicism where it is not openly attacked is oftimes misunderstood, and worse, the misinterpretations of ill-informed friends are much better than the slanders of avowed enemies.

The pulpit is not all sufficient for the proper rebuttal of attacks insidiously conveyed through the news columns of a Protestant newspaper. Neither can it effectively annul the influence of literature ingeniously "doctored" for Catholic readers.

But the Catholic press can combat every attack and expose every smooth falsehood aimed at the Church provided that Catholics only give it an opportunity, for a newspaper that is not read is no better than a sermon that has not been heard.

Catholics freely support a press that is antagonistic to their principles, beliefs and aims without grudge or murmur. They do this very often for the purpose of hurriedly glancing at a certain number of headlines.

On the other hand there are few small Catholic newspapers that do not contain more wholesome reading matter than can be found in the biggest of large dailies.

Again the Catholic paper does not cater to sensational tastes neither does it pander to requirements because it is not popular. It is in the words of a contemporary "a teacher and an exponent and a missionary." In this role it is entitled to special consideration.—Central Catholic.

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