

*Christopher
Never Went
to Church*

by her attendance at church and other forms of worship.

Worship of an unseen deity did not appeal to Christopher. Perhaps for that reason he never was seen in church. Nor did he ever accompany his wife anywhere in public. On the other hand, he never was known to enter the tavern or even to darken the doorway of a neighbour's house. He had keen, social tendencies, but he confined every social act to the village street and his own fireside, where Mrs. Drake enacted the rôle of feminine inferiority.

Inferior in Christopher's mind Mrs. Drake was, because she had come from Cornwall. Her genealogy also was the cause of his contemptuous attitude towards her. He nicknamed her "Cornwall", and on all important occasions, such as threshings, logging bees or apple-picking time, it was Cornwall this and Cornwall that, with as sardonic a flavour as anyone could produce. But she bore up under it all with marvellous resignation, thanking the Lord every Thursday night at prayer-meeting for His great mercy and setting an example to any who on slighter provocation might groan or complain or appear to be ungrateful.

Gratefulness was Mrs. Drake's conspicuous virtue. She was so grateful it was hard for her not to keep on talking about it. She had many things to be thankful for, even if she were ailing at times and had a constant pain in her side. For the Lord was good. But the pain continued.

"One of these days," said the doctor to Christopher, "she will just topple over."

He was right.

Christopher followed her remains to the graveyard one cold winter's day, and the occasion was the nearest he had ever come to appearing with her in public.

At the graveside he joined with gusto in the singing of "Come, Ye Disconsolate", and then he lowered himself into the grave, took a screw driver and screwed the lid of the rough-box tight into place, then took a spade and helped in the ghastly practice of throwing the loose earth back into the hole. Having thus committed his better half to earth, he returned, let us write not joyfully, to his widowed fireside.

And what a fireside, compared with the box stove of every other house in the neighbourhood! It was constructed of stone cut roughly and large enough to receive a stick of cordwood. The mantelpiece was decorated with an old musket, a powder horn, a mug or two, and several churchwarden pipes. For Christopher smoked inordinately, morning, noon and night. And he took great pains in the preparation of his

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