

AN UMBRELLA AND AN ALIBI

Arthur Harrison would have said that the whole trouble was caused by the insouciant allowance granted him by his father. The elder Harrison would have said, if he had ever known anything about it (which, thank goodness, he didn't), that it was all of a piece with what he knew of the young man, and that the allowance would have been ample in his time. Arthur's sister Jane would have said that Ethel Greame was the loveliest of created beings and that it was no wonder Arthur lost his head. And all of them would have been more or less right, particularly Jane.

It began with Arthur's escorting Ethel to town on a rainy Saturday morning and then forgetting his umbrella in the train. He ran back for it, of course, while Ethel waited in the ferryhouse, and equally of course the train had pulled out from the station. He had but half a dollar in his pocket and this formed the basis of the temptation, when he collided with a large, vulgar man who was trying to light the stump of a cigar and who swore at Arthur vigorously. The actual temptation took the form of an umbrella which was resting against a post just back of the large, vulgar man; and which Arthur attached, almost without thought, as he hurried from the vicinity. It did occur to him, however, that politeness is never wasted!

The umbrella was uncompromisingly cotton, much faded in streaks, and anything but beautiful; on the other hand, it was roomy, and "handsome is as handsome does." In the possession of its rightful owner or of one who had acquired it in a conventional manner (let us say by purchase) its peculiarities would have been overshadowed by its evident virtues, but in this particular instance related they were embarrassing. It had a great, curved handle, which one might grasp with both fists, and this was joined to a mast as large as a man's middle finger. It was so enormous in spread that one could hardly believe it was ever made for sale, some giant, perhaps, needing an umbrella and seeing it exposed as an advertisement, might have been attracted by its magnificent proportions and, in a momentary lapse of sanity, become its possessor. Taking it all in all, and the ease with which its owner might recognize it, even at a distance, Arthur was inclined to be sorry that he had not risked the rain rather than the possible consequences of discovery. However, it was too late for any regrets; the die was cast and the downpour when they left the ferryboat gave him no recourse but to raise the "gamp" and trust to luck.

When they were seated in the "elevated" Ethel, who had not got a good look at the umbrella before, burst out laughing. "Where on earth did you get that funny thing?" "I—I borrowed it," stammered Arthur, and then, happening to look toward the other end of the car, he saw the man against whom he had bumped in the ferryhouse!

His worst fears were justified! To what horrible experience gentle, light-bred Ethel must now be exposed? And he, Arthur Harrison, who would gladly go through fire (and water) for her, the cause of it all! If only they were wrong and the wretched affair could be kept out of sight until they were able to escape!

"I don't blame you for hiding it," said Ethel. "Who did you borrow it from?" "Oh, a man I know. I—I can't remember his name just now." "Didn't he want it himself? I'm sure if I owned an umbrella like that I shouldn't carry it unless I wanted it very much."

"A—yes; I mean no," gibbered the miserable youth, unable to drag his gaze from the other end of the car. "Well, Arthur, I think you are behaving very queerly this morning. Don't you feel well?" "Not very." And he told the truth that time.

"Oh, you poor fellow. You ought to be in bed instead of going around in the rain with me. Now you must get right off at the next stop and see a doctor. The rain has stopped and you'll not be likely to get wet, so I'll keep the umbrella in case it should start up again. But, Arthur, she cooed, nestling toward him a little, "suppose I should have to raise it and the wind should come up and blow me away. Wouldn't that be horrible? Because, you see, you'd have to advertise for me. How much reward would you offer?"

"Great heavens!" he groaned at the mere thought of leaving her in the same car with that man. And he could not take the umbrella after she had said that she wanted it, nor would he— But he was in the hands of fate.

"Here's your station," she exclaimed while he was still in the maelstrom of the thought, and before he knew it he was at the door, with Ethel pushing him from behind and the guard calling: "Step lively, please!" The next moment found

him on the platform alone, with a vision of Ethel smiling out of the car window, holding up the umbrella in one little gloved hand and waving the other at him as the train moved away. For a long hour he walked the streets, suspecting that every one whom he met watched him, and that the policemen eyes him with particular attention. When he reached the office, however, the clerks and office boy were so busy that even his imagination could not find anything peculiar in their manner, and he had partly recovered his balance when his sister Jane came to go with him to the home of Ethel's aunt, Mrs. Rollins, where they were all to eat lunch. Their journey uptown and the distraction of Jane's chatter also helped to change the current of his thoughts, and he was fairly master of himself when he reached their destination. What, then, must have been the youth's sensations when, as soon as Jane's hat and jacket were removed, Ethel exclaimed:

"Oh, Arthur! I had the worst experience you ever heard of with that umbrella. In the first place, it was sprinkling when I got down to the street, and I tried to raise it, but the wretched thing wouldn't budge. Then, while I was struggling with it, a horrible, coarse, fat man came up and said: 'I'll trouble you to let me look at that umbrella.' He was as disagreeable as he could be, and actually behaved as if he thought I had stolen his umbrella. I was quivering with rage, so I turned my back on him and answered as calmly as I could: 'Certainly not.' Of course, he couldn't persist after that, so he only answered: 'Well, I wish you joy of it,' and walked away. But Jane, you must see the funny old thing."

Ethel ran into the hall and soon returned with the cause of all the trouble, and even while the two girls were trying to open it by main strength, laughing at the same time at Arthur for ever having borrowed such an article, Mrs. Rollins came in and the Harrisons were introduced to her. Of course, she noticed the umbrella at once.

"Well, Ethel, your uncle is the most provoking man that ever lived! After solemnly promising me that he would not put his head out of doors without it, he went down town and left his umbrella at home. Really, he can't be trusted at all, he's becoming so absent-minded."

The three young people stared, open-mouthed. "And isn't it a queer one?" Mrs. Rollins continued. "Time and again I've given him silk umbrellas with all sorts of beautiful handles, but he refuses to use them because, he says, they put a premium on dishonesty, and no sane person would ever think of taking this."

"But it isn't uncle's!" screamed Ethel. "Not your uncle's? Why, I should know it for at least fifteen years."

"Then it's the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of," gasped Ethel. "Arthur borrowed it of a friend this very morning in the railway station, and so you see," she ended, triumphantly, "it can't be uncle's."

Arthur, unable to articulate, nodded some sort of confirmation, and Mrs. Rollins sank into a chair. "Of course, I'll believe you, but will some one please tell me how that umbrella could be in two places at the same time?" she inquired.

"Why, aunt, there it is, you see. That's an impossibility, and so it can't belong to uncle."

Things really seemed to be clearing up for Master Arthur, and he began to take heart. Of course, the umbrella couldn't be Mr. Rollins'. The idea was perfectly absurd. Nevertheless he held his tongue.

"My child, do you know what your uncle's initials are?" asked Mrs. Rollins in a faint voice. "Why 'H. R.' of course; for 'Henry Rollins'."

"Very well; now look on the under part of the handle. Inside the curve, you know."

Ethel did so, looked up in a startled way, handed the umbrella to Arthur and then incontinently dropped onto a hassock, repeating, half hysterically: "They're there! They're there!"

Rollins, with uplifted hand. "Pray be careful, because you know when you're excited you sometimes say things. If you'll be calm, we'll get to the bottom of this."

"Careful! Excited! Calm! I declare, Molly, I believe you've gone crazy. Why shouldn't I be calm? All I want to know is, what in the name of—"

"Please, Henry, wait a moment and let me ask you a question," pleaded Mrs. Rollins. "All right; but first hadn't you better observe the properties? I'm afraid that two of these young people have the advantage of me."

"They were presented to their host, who, after dutifully kissing his niece, seated himself and said: 'Now bring on your questions.' Mrs. Rollins spoke. 'Henry, did you or did you not take your umbrella down town, as you promised this morning?'"

"I did. Hear me swear." "Well," she ejaculated, ignoring his levity and looking from one to another. "Now," said Mr. Rollins, as no one else seemed inclined to continue the interrogation, "perhaps I may be permitted to ask what the trouble is, and also how that old tent of mine found its way home? I know it is the best umbrella ever built, but I never thought that it could walk. Don't all speak at once."

"Why, uncle, it's the simplest thing in the world," explained Ethel. "Arthur left his own umbrella in the train this morning, and while we were waiting for a ferryboat on the other side of the river he borrowed this umbrella of a friend. Didn't you, Arthur?"

"Y-y-yes," gulped the wretched creature, who couldn't have uttered another sound to save himself from the halter.

"Ah—I see. Very simple, indeed," commented Ethel's uncle, looking sharply at Arthur, who felt the perspiration beading on his forehead. "Was this friend of yours a rather stout, red-faced individual?"

"Rather," was the faint response. "His name doesn't happen to be Gayley, does it? Jack Gayley?" "N-n-o. I don't think it does."

"Well, it isn't of much importance, as Ethel says; it's simple enough. You see, my dear," said Mr. Rollins, addressing his wife, "I took it with me, as I promised, when I left the house. Then who should suddenly arrive in town but Jack Gayley, and when he came to my office he borrowed my umbrella to take with him on his errands; unfortunately, however, he came back without it, so it seems that he and Mr. Harrison must have been in the same neighborhood. But we may as well let Gayley finish the story himself, because he's upstairs now getting ready for luncheon."

At which ominous words Mr. Rollins went into the hall and called: "Jack! Oh, Jack! The prodigal has returned! The umbrella is here. Didn't I tell you I couldn't lose it if I tried?"

Heavy steps were heard in the passage above, and the culprit saw exposure staring him in the face. He was not perspiring now! Oh no; he was as cold as ice, and he shivered as he contemplated the future. To be branded as a thief and never again to be trusted by any one. They would not arrest him, but that would be out of regard for his family. Yet they would certainly turn him out of the house, and in his mind's eye he could see the scornful look on the face of Mr. Gayley (that vulgar brute who had insulted him in the ferryhouse); he could see the pain and shame with which Jane would regard him, her only brother, as Mr. Rollins silently held the door open and motioned to him to go! And Ethel! But he dared not think of Ethel, and at this stage of his thoughts Mr. Gayley entered the room. With the courage of despair he stared at the newcomer.

It was not the man! He was, to be sure, stout and red-faced, but he was not vulgar, and instead of a wicked scowl his face was wreathed in a cherubic smile.

"Well, Jack," exclaimed Mr. Rollins, meeting his friend at the door, "we have to thank Mr. Harrison (indicating Arthur with a wave of the hand) for helping my umbrella home. But you didn't tell me that you went across the river and loaned it to some one there."

"Because I didn't go across the river, and I wasn't conscious of loaning it to any one. Somebody borrowed it, if I may use that expression, without asking my permission, and it's evident that the old fellow would have a long story to tell if he could only talk. Oh, human nature! Human nature!"

Every one then dropped the subject by common consent and the conversation became general, except for Ethel, who was much preoccupied and glanced occasionally at Arthur with a very grave face. Presently a servant announced luncheon, and Mr. Rollins offered to show Arthur his way to the bathroom, with which offer the young man grasped at with evident relief. When the host had pointed out the towels he turned to go, but suddenly stopped and, facing his guest with a whimsical smile, remarked:

DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH

General Intercession for March Named and Blessed by His Holiness Pope Leo XIII.

Devotion to the holy patriarch whom God from eternity elected to be the Spouse of Mary and the foster-father of His Incarnate Son, is of comparatively recent growth in the Church. In the early ages her attention was centred on Christ Himself, His Godhead, His Manhood, and the mystery of their union in one Divine Person. These great dogmas she had to uphold against the attacks of heresy and set in full light before the eyes of the faithful. Later she was preoccupied with Mary's prerogative, her virginity and divine motherhood, that all might recognize their truth and splendor. It was only in the sixteenth century that devotion to St. Joseph began to spread.

St. Teresa was its apostle and the great Suarez its enlightened theologian. The heroic women who came over the ocean from France to instruct the untutored children of the Canadian forests, carried with them the sacred torch and let its light shine in all their paths.

At Montreal Melle. Mance founded the Hotel Dieu Hospital and established therein the Hospitalers of St. Joseph, who have to-day many branches in different dioceses of Canada. Numerous societies, sodalities, associations of men as well as women, churches and institutions, books and periodicals, here and the world over, bear witness to the deep impression this devotion has wrought in the lives of the faithful. Of the week they have marked out one day, Wednesday, and of the year one month, March, for special practices in honor of the holy patriarch. It remained for the Popes to crown the manifestation of piety, and after bestowing manifold indulgences, Pius IX. solemnly placed the whole Church under Saint Joseph's care, instituting a special feast, that of his Patronage, for the 3rd Sunday after Easter. This feast our own Leo XIII. has raised to a festival of the first rank.

It is the Spirit of God dwelling in His Church who inspires her movements and guides her action. He keeps her ever young and hale to meet the wants of times and breast the storms she must encounter in her passage through the ages. In this modern age she sees her children beset with great perils, from a deluge of errors, from the false glare of a material civilization and the paganism in life and morals which is the outcome; and she looks up to Joseph, the faithful servant, whom God placed over His house. To whom could she more safely entrust her children than to him whom God had especially chosen as the protector of His earthly family?

"When the treasures of God were unfolded on earth, Safe keeping was found for them both in thy worth."

THE CHILD.

The first treasure which the Father committed to Joseph's safe keeping was one of infinite price, His only begotten Son, whose blood was to be the world's ransom. What must have been the sterling worth of the man deserving of such confidence! And how faithful did he not prove to his trust! The Father became indebted to him for His own Son, and the world owed to him its Redeemer, when, rising at night in obedience to the word of the angel he took the Child and fled to far-off Egypt. In the mystic body of His Church, Christ is living over again the thirty-three years of His mortal life. The nineteenth century was a battle for the Child, and it is raging still—Herod seeking to destroy the life of faith in the hearts of God's children. A State, jealous and cruel, would take hold of the children, thrust them into schools in which the name of God and the Saviour could not be read or mentioned, nor His image nor that of His mother or saints be exposed, nor His maxims nor commandments taught. A voice in Rama is heard, Rachel bewailing her children—a voice plaintive yet clear, now lamenting, now pleading, now protesting against the wrong and the oppression, in schools and academies, in orphanages and reformatories, in the world's centres of education.

To whom will the desolate mother of souls fly for aid, if not to him who saved the life of God's own Child and guided Him afterward in His ways. She places all, but especially children, under Joseph's protection by a solemn consecration which, every year, her liturgies will renew. For has her appeal been in vain. Nor may we not attribute to Joseph's patronage that, the world over, side by side with godless schools, the Church has been able, most frequently out of her poverty, to establish her system of separate and parochial schools, her institutions for learning in all grades, consecrated by religion, its outward symbols and interior

spirit. Now, only parents who care naught for the souls of their children, or who have gone over to serve the king of this world, will place their children to be educated in secular schools. True, Catholic education may occasion some sacrifice; but parents will learn from the example of Joseph the importance of the issue and the blessings such sacrifices will bring upon their families and enterprises.

THE VIRGIN AND MOTHER.

The second treasure which the Father entrusted to Joseph's keeping was the Virgin Immaculate, the spotless mother of His Eternal Son. Who can tell the worth of the man equal to such a trust? Such was his fidelity, that Holy Scripture styles him the just man, true to his God, to his God, to his neighbor, to her whom he took as his spouse. With what devotion did he not labor for her support, shield her honor, protect her and the Divine Child in their trials and persecutions!

One of the results of our material civilization has been the premature loosening of family ties, and too frequently, the breaking up of homes. The pursuit of gain and zest in its enjoyment hurry forth even maidens at the most critical period of their lives, when in need of the protection of the paternal roof and a mother's vigilance, into all the busy thoroughfares of men, amid the snares and temptations of a world plunged in sin; as hands in factories, as clerks in shops and warehouses, as professional assistants in offices and hospitals, in hotels; some compelled as if by a cruel necessity to provide for themselves and those dependent on them, others drawn by the fascinating charm of worldly excitement and display, or weary with the dull monotony of home life and its duties. The following occurrence has just been given to the press by a priest of Philadelphia:

"On the occasion of my present visit I have come upon an experience which has something especially significant in my eyes, as I am sure it will have in the estimation of your readers also. The Dominican Sisters have an institution on Fourth street, near Spruce, for the housing and protection of working girls. Last night, eight young girls, the children of good Catholic parents, arriving in this city from Brooklyn, having been assured by the firm, whose branch establishment is here, that they secure the employment they could not get at home. Recommended to a certain house, by a chance woman acquaintance, they found to their dismay indications that led them to distrust the surroundings, and leaving this house at 9 o'clock at night, rather than remain in any danger, they sought anxiously for some fitting shelter. Directed to the institution on Fourth street, they begged the good Sisters not to refuse them a refuge, and though the home was crowded, temporary accommodation was afforded them after great effort, since they absolutely refused to quit the institution that night. These eight young women in a strange city, exposed to danger and with all their inexperience, thus found with great difficulty a providential protection and safe home surroundings, calculated to make us think most seriously of those others, situated like them, who have not had this sense of duty nor the courage to follow it when they did have it."

What anxiety the Church feels today for this choice portion of her flock, for the treasure of the unblemished faith and unsullied purity of her young women, the pity of the future mother of her children! To whose safekeeping will she entrust them, in all the dangers of their innocence, if not to his in whom the Virgin of Virgins found a faithful guide and faithful protector?

Wives, too, and mothers have their hours of trial and disappointment, perhaps, of abandonment and persecution. The only remedy a pagan civilization can offer them is the divorce court. But God's Church points out one to whom they can go for advice and comfort, to whom they can confide the secret that is corroding their bosom. Was not Joseph Mary's solec in that sea of sorrow which, after Simeon's prophecy, ever drenched her soul? Go to Joseph, desolate wives and afflicted mothers; beware of any rash step; do what he will tell you.

THE WORKINGMAN.

The life and example of our glorious patriarch are a precious treasure especially to the sons of toil, that largest class of men who by their industry and honest labor must provide for the homes depending on them. Joseph, though ranked among the highest of the Saints of God, was not a priest. He struggled for a livelihood and provided for his family by the labor of his hands. The virtues which adorned his humble state and shed a lustre under his modest roof, are those which ought to sanctify the life of the Catholic workman—faith, industry, honesty, fidelity to every duty. Joseph is proclaimed by God Himself, in the sacred page, a just man, and justice is the meeting point of all virtues.

The Church to-day is particularly solicitous for her working classes. Leo XIII. has received the appellation of the workingman's Pope. He first called attention to the trials and wrongs which confronted the workingman as a result of the conditions of our material progress. He knew what the soulless corporations and latter-day trusts had in store for the workingman, unless he took steps to defend himself and family

from their rapacious greed. He encouraged the sons of toil to combine in associations and unions for the defense of their legitimate rights, and he gave such associations his blessing. He took care, however, to point out the dangers, and laid down rules by which they might be avoided. Oath-bound societies, and those founded on principles of socialism and naturalism, which seek to overthrow the order of society, to banish revealed religion, to discard the Ten Commandments, are to be carefully avoided. Catholic workmen should be on their guard against designing leaders and demagogues who preach revolt against lawful authority and insinuate suspicion and distrust of ecclesiastical superiors. The only safeguard of the Catholic workman in our day, in the flood of errors from press and platform, is, Pope Leo says, docility to the voice of the pastors of God's Church. The same "pillar and ground of truth" to-day breathes the sweeping current of socialism and naturalism, that in the sixteenth century stood out against the errors of the so-called Reformation. In all times safety can be found only upon the Rock of Peter, the one only Rock of all the ages.

By copying the example set him in the life of Joseph and imploring his aid, the Catholic workman will avoid the dangers, and practice the virtues of his state. He will win a rich blessing from Heaven upon his works and upon his family, and advance in the only path to true prosperity.

The whole Christian family, therefore, in these our days has a special claim on the glorious patronage of St. Joseph. Let all go to Joseph, especially during the month of March, and do what he will tell them, imitate the strong Christian virtues of which he set the example to every rank and condition. Let this be the particular object of our prayers for the coming month—J. J. Connelly, S. J., in The Canadian Messenger.

"TIS WELL TO KNOW A GOOD THING," said Mrs. Surface to Mrs. Know-well, when they met in the street. "Why, where have you been for a week back?" "Oh, just down to the store for a bottle of Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil," and Mrs. Surface, who hates pins, walked on. But she remembered, and when she contracted a weak back there was another customer for Electric Oil.

THE VIRGIN AND MOTHER. The second treasure which the Father entrusted to Joseph's keeping was the Virgin Immaculate, the spotless mother of His Eternal Son. Who can tell the worth of the man equal to such a trust? Such was his fidelity, that Holy Scripture styles him the just man, true to his God, to his God, to his neighbor, to her whom he took as his spouse. With what devotion did he not labor for her support, shield her honor, protect her and the Divine Child in their trials and persecutions!



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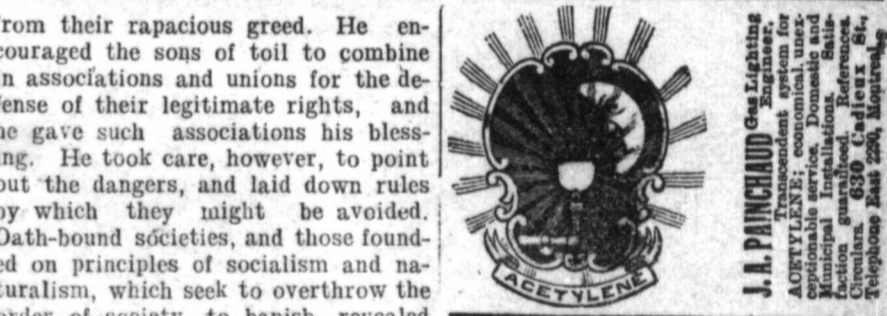
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