

THE CATHOLIC RECORD.

AN ORIGINAL GIRL.

By Christine Faber.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Miss Ashton's prediction about Mr. Herrick was fulfilled, though not with quite the promptness she had anticipated, for it was not till the second morning after the incident of the blow that he presented himself on her platform, being there confronted by Sarah who had just arrived and who was awaiting the attention of Miss Ashton.

"Ab, Sarah!" said Herrick, with great urbanity, "how do you do?" "I am very well, Mr. Herrick," replied Sarah with a solemnity of tone and face befitting the announcement of a great calamity; and then the Principal having saluted Herrick turned to Sarah. Sarah produced a note:

"It's from Miss Burrum, mem."

Herrick picked up his ears, and drew his chair forward:

"Miss Burrum didn't say as I was to wait for an answer, mem, but maybe I'd better."

That speech was an artifice of Sarah's to protract her stay in order to learn something that might gratify her curiosity; but Miss Ashton was reading the note.

"No answer is required," she said, and then she turned to Herrick:

Sarah got up from her chair very slowly, adjusting her shawl still more slowly, and even taking time to feel in her pocket for her handkerchief; in that way she overheard Herrick's opening remark, and perhaps that gentleman was not averse to her open eavesdropping, for without pretending to see her he began immediately and with his voice raised a little and his tones very emphatic:

"I have come in reference to the outrage which has been put upon my daughter by Miss Burrum's Charge." Miss Ashton turned and looked at Sarah, repeating:

"There is no answer." And Sarah replying, "Yes, mem, I understand," was fain to take her way out.

"An outrage, Miss Ashton, that certainly calls for some signal punishment."

"That outrage," Mr. Herrick, repeated the Principal in tones just as emphatic, "has been reported to Miss Burrum, and here is her answer," placing the open note before him.

Miss Ashton,

"I have received your communication about my Charge; in order to subject her no longer to contamination from the offspring of those with whom dishonesty is paramount, and hypocrisy the chief end of life, I withdraw her from the Public School of Rentonville at once and forever."

"BEDIJA BURRUM."

Herrick's complexion became a trifle more sallow.

"This, I think, is actionable," he said, "and with your permission, Miss Ashton, I shall make a copy of this extraordinary epistle; the original, of course, you will put on file."

The Principal bowed.

Of course Sarah reported to her mistress all that she had heard, and to Sarah's surprise Miss Burrum laughed; she laughed at the strange coincidence which brought Herrick and her note to Miss Ashton at the same time, and she hoped with all her heart that Miss Ashton would let Herrick read the note.

Rachel had been informed at breakfast of the change there was to be henceforth in her life; she was not altogether pleased with the idea of having a teacher in the house, and she regretted, not that she had begun, being obliged to give them up. She knew, too, that she should miss the school life, but there was no appeal from Miss Burrum's flinty decision, and she went into the library after breakfast to try to forget in reading, both regret and foreboding.

The Herricks gave it out that Rachel Minturn had to leave the school for what she had done; otherwise Mr. Herrick would have had her dismissed, and with this salute to her much injured pride, Alida once more held her head doubled haughtily assumption.

The address in the city to which Herrick went the next day was a bureau for teachers; when he returned to Rentonville he was accompanied by a small, spare man with an English complexion and very English looking whiskers.

"Mr. Percival Gasket," his letter of introduction from the bureau named him, a gentleman who had taken delight in two terms in a Young Ladies' Seminary in New England, which position he had resigned only because Mr. Gasket objected to being a resident tutor. When interrogated by Miss Burrum, Mr. Gasket professed himself abundantly competent and instantly ready to enter upon his duties as instructor of Miss Burrum's Charge; the course for the present to comprise the elementary studies with a preparatory course for the higher mathematics. Miss Burrum decided to accept and install him at once; the library was to be the schoolroom, and thither, when she led Mr. Gasket, she found Rachel.

"Your teacher, Mr. Gasket," said Miss Burrum to her astonished Charge, who had not expected so speedy and sudden an induction to her new life, and while she stood looking with some embarrassment at the little man, she was thinking in a confused way of the nautical nomenclature his name suggested; a nomenclature she had learned so well from Hardman; but that very fact found favor with her. To her over-imaginative mind it seemed to connect this stranger with Tom, and by the time Miss Burrum had said:

"And this is your pupil, my Charge Miss Minturn." Rachel found herself smiling a little.

"At 12 o'clock," continued the lady, "you will accompany Miss Minturn to lunch."

Then Miss Burrum went through the folding-doors into the adjoining apartment, leaving the door slightly open

and both teacher and pupil felt she went no farther.

At lunch, Sarah's eyes opened very wide when she saw the stranger, and when she heard Miss Burrum address him, she took up the name as Casket, and Casket she continued to call him. She speedily discovered the object of his punctilious visit, and very soon thereafter through her indefatigable gossip it was pretty well known throughout Rentonville that Miss Burrum's Charge had a private tutor. All the more did Herrick and his daughter give it out that Miss Burrum was obliged to remove her Charge from the Public School.

With the advent of Mr. Gasket Miss Burrum's own attitude toward her Charge seemed to change. She spoke to her more frequently at meals, particularly during dinner, asking various questions about the instruction of the day, though Rachel well knew that Miss Burrum had been in the adjoining room all the time that she and Mr. Gasket were in the library. She also began to have Rachel accompany her for a drive every afternoon immediately after the tutor's departure, and as Hardman drove them, the girl enjoyed the outing all the more; even though she could not speak to him and he in turn did not seem to look at her, it was something of a consolation to be so near him.

The route of the drive was always the same; a route that went out of the fashionable course in order to pass Herrick's store, and Hardman smiled to himself when he found never an order to change the route; and Herrick wondered when he noted the punctual regularity with which Miss Burrum's elegant equipage passed his store. It never failed except when the weather was exceedingly stormy, or, as Herrick grimly soliloquized, when it was the first of the month.

Other residents in Rentonville were beginning to remark the frequency and the regularity of Miss Burrum's drives with her Charge, among them Miss Geddings and Miss Fairfax. It almost seemed, as young Geddings slyly hinted, as if the two young ladies made it a matter of duty to be within seeing distance every afternoon when the Burrum equipage passed; however, that it was a declaration of mutual inclination they prolonged their walk to the fashionable driveway instead of going directly home when they came from the high school in the city.

Both young women had been enthusiastic in their praise of Miss Burrum's Charge for what she had done to Alida Herrick, and both had been equally skeptical as to the reasons that Herrick assigned for her sudden taking from school.

"I think for one," said Rose, "that Miss Burrum's strong common sense has come to the rescue—she has discovered, even if she will not admit the fact, the sterling qualities of her Charge, and she is going to safeguard the same by having her taught at home."

"Or," put in her brother, "Miss Burrum was so angry at having herself placed in a such a manner before her Charge, that she is not going to risk a repetition."

But Rose and Harriet smiled their utter incredulity of his view of the case; to their minds Miss Burrum had proved herself entirely too independent, and too defiant to care for any one's opinion.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Herrick's political power and his financial success seemed to keep equal pace. His enterprise on the island succeeded beyond his most secret hopes, and his astuteness in politics convinced even his sneering opponents of his ability in that particular.

Gradually, by means known alone to himself and his trusted henchmen, he won for his following many even of the Reform Party, and the political situation of New Urtown was fast becoming that of a ring rule with Herrick as the head and brains of the ring. Proposed new streets, adopted with startling rapidity by the whole Board of Supervisors, were all made by Herrick, and the bonds for the same flooding the Township were all negotiated through Herrick. So great was his reputation becoming for investing money to advantage, that even old, miserly, hard-souled Rhoit came to him one day with a proposal to take from a bank every cent of his money, \$20,000, and give it to Herrick to invest for him in New Urtown Sewer Improvement Bonds, which paid 3 per cent, more than the bank, and Herrick, after a pretense of not being at eager for the money, accepted the proposal.

Yet Herrick was not happy; with all his success he had failed to attract to him the desirable people of Rentonville; he had failed even to compel their recognition; he was still smarting under the refusal of the Ontonah Club to make him a member, and he felt sore over the fact that such families as the Geddings and Fairfaxes had withdrawn their patronage from him, not that he cared for the financial loss involved—his success in other lines of business had placed him above all dependence upon his store—he only retained the store as a blind, that the public might still consider it as the chief means of his revenue—but it was the fact of the withdrawal of those families in the withdrawal of their custom. He knew that every member of those families, female as well as male, was a staunch adherent of the Reform Party; he had irritating evidence in the weekly meetings which the Reform Party still continued to hold and at which the ladies were most approving and prominent listeners.

Herrick took what small comfort he might in the thought that some of his opponents, notably Miss Burrum, would be financially hurt by approaching streets, and other improvements on the line of their property. But all that was too small a revenge—he craved Miss Burrum's magnificent place in order to make of it that which would and would drive the exclusive and aristocratic Ontonah Club from its quarters. He had little hope that any assessment on Miss Burrum's property would make

her sell, and thus far all the derogatory rumors he had caused to be put in circulation about her seemed to have little effect. So far as he could hear there was no more disposition on her part to sell her place now, than there had been when Renton's agents approached her. But when the matter and amount of the various assessments was finally decided upon, he determined once more to board Miss Burrum. That lady received him in the room which opened from the library where her Charge had just been given the lessons of the day with Mr. Gasket. Herrick heard the sound of the voices even after the folding-door was closed.

"I have come, Miss Burrum," he began at once, without waiting to be asked to seat himself, or offering to do so, "to learn if you have any desire to sell your property; if you have, I think I can guarantee a purchaser who will give a price sufficient to leave a handsome profit on your original investment."

Miss Burrum had remained standing almost against the door she had just closed as if for the purpose of ascertaining what might be overheard from the next room, but at Herrick's question she took a step forward, and looked at him with a glare in her eyes that made him feel somewhat uncomfortably of the instant Katharine Pearson.

"No! Mr. Herrick, I do not wish to sell my property; no sum than any purchaser could offer would buy it."

Herrick seemed uneasy; he retreated a step, and worked the fingers of one hand nervously, then, as if he had quite recovered himself, he advanced again and said slowly:

"Miss Burrum, if I have come to you as a friend, your property here will be heavily assessed in a short time; before the fact of such assessment becomes known you had better accept the offer of a purchaser which I am prepared to make you."

"Assessments!" repeated Miss Burrum, in a tone of slight surprise, and she asked, "what of this?"

"Mr. Herrick, it is good enough, what of his guard, "be good enough, Mr. Herrick, tell me for what purpose my property is to be assessed."

Again the storekeeper fidgeted; working his fingers and brushing the seat hair from his forehead, before he answered:

"Remember, Miss Burrum, it is in all friendliness I come to you now, to save you from great pecuniary loss if you will take my advice."

"The purpose of the assessments," she interrupted in softer tones than she had yet used, and which again wailing her visitor of his guard, "I am waiting to hear those, Mr. Herrick." And Herrick launched at once into what at the beginning of the visit he had almost said up his mind not to tell.

"The road in front of your grounds here is to be widened; that will necessitate the taking of several feet of your land; of course you will be paid for it, and as it will be so heavily assessed for the improvement on that same land that you will lose far more than you will gain."

"Ah!" said Miss Burrum quietly.

"But that is not all," went on Mr. Herrick, suddenly hopeful that he was winning her, "it has also been decided to cut a street through your land here, it joins the Ontonah Club property. That of course will take several feet, and as in the other instance I have just mentioned, while you will be compensated, your assessment will be so high that you will be a heavy financial loser."

"Ah!" said Miss Burrum again, as quietly as before, then in very soft tones she asked:

"Is my property the only one to be assessed in this manner?"

"Oh, no, no; there are several others; the Ontonah Club will lose as much ground as you will for the cutting through of that street."

"And these measures have all been taken by the newly elected Board of Supervisors?" Her voice was still soft and more indicative of surprise than of other feeling.

Herrick, feeling somewhat that the ground which he thought he had gained was slipping from him.

"A Board I believe, Mr. Herrick, of which you, Mr. Herrick, are the head and front?"

He smiled a great, bland smile that seemed to take in even his expansive chin.

"You are pleased to do me too much honor, Miss Burrum; I am only a member of the Board of Supervisors, and having in my capacity of such membership obtained information which it might be beneficial to you to know, I came to impart it."

"Thank you, Mr. Herrick," her voice was no longer soft, and Herrick's big, bland smile, that had remained after he had ceased speaking, instantly departed.

"The news you have so kindly," with an emphasis on the word that made him silently grate his teeth, "come to impart, has been of no benefit to me other than to make me know more surely your character. I shall fight in the courts, the taking of any of my property."

"As you choose, Miss Burrum,"—Herrick had recovered his blandness and he was smiling again,—but I would advise you to pause before you go to court; sometimes a court-room is the means of bringing to light much that one might desire to remain hidden. Good morning!"

He went out so quickly that he stumbled over Sarah, who had been on her knees with her ear to the key-hole, and the noise of his stumble, it was almost a complete fall, with the half-suppressed scream of Sarah and the exclamation of Herrick, brought Miss Burrum into the hall. But the storekeeper was striding to the door without looking behind him and Sarah was leaning against the balustrade of the stair rubbing her shoulder.

"Oh, mem," she said, when Herrick had let himself out, "I was going through the hall a-minidn' of my own business when Mr. Herrick came out that sudden that he pitched into me, mem; indeed, mem, I think me shoulder is broke."

Whatever Miss Burrum thought of Sarah's action she did not say, she only looked at her, and then she went

back to the room she had left, shutting the door behind her. Herrick's last words were ringing in her ears.

"Sometimes a court-room is the means of bringing to light much that one might desire to remain hidden."

"But he knows nothing," she said to herself, "and nothing can bring that to light; nothing."

Sarah had gone to the kitchen in a very uneasy and wondering frame of mind. Her wonder arose from what she had overheard through the keyhole, and her uneasiness because she knew that Herrick had detected her eavesdropping, and that she was wickedly naughty. She was not quite so naughty about what her mistress thought; her mistress had not actually caught her in the act of listening, she was hopeful her somewhat inconsistent explanation, had been accepted. She was bursting with the desire to tell Hardman and Mrs. McElvain what she had accidentally overheard, but she was afraid either of them, and especially Hardman, might divine how she had overheard, and so she simply kept her pretense of having been hurt by her collision with Herrick, in which Mrs. McElvain advised the strongest kind of mustard plaster for Sarah's shoulder before Sarah should retire.

Before the hour of retiring, however, Sarah found it absolutely necessary to visit the Geddings' cook.

"And what do you think, Maria?" she burst out the moment she entered the Geddings' kitchen, and assured her self that Maria was alone, "I heard that Miss Burrum's property is to have a street cut through it right next to the 'Notmah Club, and the street is to take part of the Club's property too—spoil in such beautiful places, and Miss Burrum and the Club will have to pay money beside just because their property is taken. Now isn't that a bargain's shame, even if Miss Burrum has ways that's past finding out?"

"Where did you hear all that?" asked Maria, stopping short with the chair she was bringing to the fire for Sarah. Sarah waved the chair back.

"I couldn't think of sittin', Maria, it's almost 9 o'clock, and as you knows, I always go to Miss Rachel's room about that hour; but I'll tell you just how I know what I'm tellin' you; old Herrick himself told it to Miss Burrum, and I just chanced to be in the way of overhearin' it, and I heard him tell her she'd better sell her property."

"And will she sell?" asked Maria with a kind of breathless eagerness.

"Sell?" repeated Sarah, "never while she draws a living breath. I heard her tell the same old Herrick no money could buy her place."

"Well, well, say Maria with many solemn shakes of the head, "isn't it all very queer, Sarah?"

"It's that queer, Maria, that I can't understand about Miss Burrum at all. Here she is a-takin' that Charge of hers out ridin' every afternoon, and havin' her in the parlor every Sunday evening, besides payin' Mr. Casket to come to teach her, and all the time actin' as if there was no relationship between them; at least, she never gives out no relationship. And sometimes, Maria, when I was in the night, I just think I can see Miss Burrum's jewels, that she has in the safe deposit vault in the city—I told you how I seen them once; such jewels—banin' and beautiful like serpents' eyes—all pearls and diamonds, and she a-wearin' imitation ones."

Maria gave several more shakes of her head to testify how deeply she sympathized with the speaker. And then Sarah, looking at the clock, declared that she must go, she hardly waited to say good night; in her haste to get away, but fate delayed her, for not a half-dozen rods from the Geddings' house she ran against Herrick.

"Ah, Sarah!" he said, "this is not the first time we have met to-day."

Sarah was too breathless and too uncomfortable surprised to reply; her only comfort being that she had lessened Herrick's eyes, which as she happened to be near a street lamp she saw quite plainly. Herrick continued, but he lowered his voice to a significant whisper:

"Perhaps Miss Burrum did not suspect that you were listening at the key-hole, Sarah; and I am not going to tell her, nor by word of mouth, nor by a little note which I might have written if I had not met you; but tell me, Sarah, what you heard through that keyhole?"

Sarah was crying:

"Oh, Mr. Herrick, you wouldn't hurt a poor woman—" He interrupted her with a slight show of impatience:

"Haven't I told you I shan't say anything about you, but you must tell me all that you heard through that keyhole."

Sarah tremblingly and tearfully told him.

"Umph!" he said, adding, "You have not been in my store since the election, Sarah."

"No," she answered, with her apron to her eyes.

"Because they are all against me in your house?" he asked. She nodded without removing her apron.

"Well, Sarah, don't you stay away from my store on that account; you drop in whenever you can, and let me know any item of news you can pick up about Miss Burrum, through keyholes or in any other way, and I'll do nothing to harm you. You are a good woman, Sarah; now that teacher that Miss Burrum has for her Charge—"

"Mr. Casket," put in Sarah.

"Mr. Casket," repeated Herrick, smiling at the grim association called up by Sarah's pronunciation of the name. "This Mr. Casket, on what terms is he at the house—I mean does Miss Burrum talk to him much, and where did she get him?"

"He came from the city—Jeem brought him, and he comes every mornin' at 9 o'clock and stays till 2, except Saturdays and Sundays; and he has lunch with Miss Burrum and Miss Rachel, and Miss Burrum just talks to him a little at table, and he and Miss Rachel has their lessons in the library, and Miss Burrum stays all the time in the next room with the door open a little between them, just so she can hear I suppose."

"Thank you, Sarah, as I said before

you are a good woman, and don't you have any fear of my hurtin' you? but I think you had better not tell anybody what you heard through that keyhole. Good night!" And he strode away, the same big, bland smile on his face that he had during his interview with Miss Burrum.

"Oh, Lord!" gasped Sarah as she saw him stride away, "and I've told Maria all about it."

Thoughts of returning to Maria to caution her to secrecy flitted through her mind, but that she might be wanted at home, prevented, so she hurried on, determined to run over the next evening with her warning to Maria.

The next evening, however, proved too late, for hardly had Sarah left on Geddings' kitchen when Maria was on her way to tell Miss Geddings that Sarah had brought her news.

Miss Geddings lost little time in telling her brother, and before noon of the next day Herrick himself got rumors of Sarah's mutterings against such high-handed proceedings by the newly elected Board of Supervisors. He smiled, hardly knowing whether to think the identity of the writer flashed upon him from Miss Burrum herself, or from her gossiping servant. In either case it shortly the news of all the intended assessments would be published; and very shortly, such news was promulgated, and loud and exceedingly wrathful murmurs were heard on all sides. But Herrick smiled the more; thus far his power was too great to be hurt by any immediate action of the taxpayers of the township.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

One morning in Mr. Herrick's constantly increasing mail there was a letter with a London postmark. The postmark of the envelope was very small and utterly unfamiliar. He tore it open, and turning to the last of eight closely-written pages of note paper, he found the signature, "Kitty Huby."

For a moment he was puzzled, having absolutely forgotten that he had ever known anybody of the name, then the identity of the writer flashed upon him. He uttered an exclamation of disgust; to his mind, Mrs. Huby's letter could have no other motive than a feminine desire for Rentonville news.

"Though why she should have deferred gratifying her desire till more than three years had elapsed, Herrick did not stop to question; he turned back to the beginning of the letter, reading in an indifferent, almost contemptuous manner:

"Dear Mr. Herrick,—I suppose I am the last person in the world you would expect a letter from, and you certainly were the last person I ever expected to write to; but I think I have something to write about that will interest you, as it interests me."

"Here, in London, where we have been living for the last year, we, or rather I, for Mr. Huby never goes out to society, have made the acquaintance of a middle-aged—perhaps I ought to say elderly, because he really has hair on his face, of a white turn, in that way very much of a white turn, and his face is as wrinkled as mine. Herrick's eyes were distended, "Gasket" was only a letter removed from the name which Sarah gave of the tutor of Miss Burrum's Charge.

"And Mr. Gasket," went on the letter, "when he learned in the course of our conversation that I was from America, said he once had a very interesting acquaintance with a young American, and then he stopped short and sighed, and I ventured in my sympathy to ask if this interesting acquaintance was a lady. You see, Mr. Herrick, I was justified in asking such a question because Mr. Gasket is an unmarried man, but he kind of bridled up and replied that it was a gentleman, a young sea-captain, by the name of Minturn. You may be sure then that I bridled up, and cried, "Minturn! Why there was the strangest kind of a mystery named Minturn in the shape of a little girl, the eldest of an eccentric old maid named Gasket, in the very place I came from, Rentonville." And I launched forth and told him everything I had ever heard about Miss Burrum. You know, Mr. Herrick, I owe that same Miss Burrum a grudge for the way she treated Mr. Huby and me when we called upon her in relation to some public business, well, I told Mr. Gasket how nobody was reading where her charge came from and how she treated her Charge, and everything any of the Rentonville folk said about her. And what do you think occurred then, Mr. Herrick? Why, Mr. Gasket got right up from the sofa where we were both sitting, and walked up and down the room without saying a word, and when he got through pacing the room like a fanatic, he said he'd have to go. And go he did, as calmly as though there had not been a pretty big stir to his feelings."

"Now, that is not all, Mr. Herrick, though I thought it was a good deal of a coincidence, for a few days after, Mr. Gasket came to me with a letter which he said was from a cousin of his; he sat still while he was reading, I just had to fidget and fidget, for what do you think? This cousin of his, Mr. Gasket also, is the tutor of Rachel Minturn, Miss Burrum's Charge. And the way Mr. Gasket—I mean the cousin—described Miss Burrum and Miss Minturn, and the library where they have the lessons, and the way Miss Burrum remains the next room all the time they're having the lessons, just as if she was afraid they'd have any contraband conversation, as Mr. Gasket, I should have told you, Mr. Percival Gasket, says, nearly made me scream. And I repeated a good deal of what I had said before, and Mr. Gasket, Tudor Gasket, listened in a very troubled way, and I made up my mind, Mr. Herrick, that he was connected with Miss Burrum, or Miss Minturn in some manner. He said to me after a little:

"I thought you would be interested, Mrs. Huby, so I brought the letter and read it to you. Of course, it is just a coincidence that I should have known someone of the name of Minturn, and

that my impetuous cousin should be employed to give lessons to some one of that name."

"I said to myself, Mr. Herrick, 'A very curious coincidence indeed,' but I made no such remark to him; it might have frightened him from giving me any confidence, and I really have great hope of winning his entire confidence in time. He seems to have a preference for our house; I suppose because I have a sympathetic way that always did win lonely bachelors."

"I'll write to you again just as soon as I get any more news."

Herrick flung the letter aside; "There is nothing in that," he said to himself, "there are probably hundreds of Minturns in the world besides Miss Burrum's Charge, still, the emotion shown by that Englishman, as Mrs. Huby writes, would seem to indicate something; but no; women always exaggerate those things; the Mr. Gasket she writes of might be pining the room to get some relief from her garrulous tongue without offending her," and Herrick began to tear the letter in order to fling the scraps into the waste basket, when a second thought stopped him; instead of doing any more destruction to the letter, he took a large morocco case from his breast pocket and opening it, placed Mrs. Huby's letter with sundry other papers.

In due time the publication of the foregoing assessments was made; and a column of editorial matter lauding the advantages which must accrue from such magnificent improvements; but nobody was deceived by the fulsome approval, for everybody who did not know, divined that the paper was bought by Herrick's party. Lists of the projected improvements were posted on the fences, and in some instances were tacked even to the lamp-posts; nobody could say that ample notice was not given, and nobody could say that Rentonville would lack anything in the way of improvements after the projects should have been executed. But many of the residents did say, and say with no uncertain wrath in their tones, that most of the improvements were simply to put money into the pockets of the Supervisors and their friends, to whom they intended to award the contracts.

The members found that a part of their beautiful grounds was to be taken for an utterly unnecessary street, and that they were to be assessed therefor, were furious in their anger.

Mr. Fairfax proposed an indignation meeting of all the residents who had a similar grievance, and speedily the town was placarded with announcements that such a meeting was to be held, and in stirring language, calling upon every taxpayer to protest by his presence at that meeting against the proposed outrage. The names of Fairfax and Notner, and several other members of the Ontonah Club, were appended.

An announcement of the meeting was posted just outside of Mr. Herrick's door; he smiled when he read it, but it set him to thinking, and that same evening found him in Notner's parlor, giving his card to the solemn-looking servant.

Noter read with an amused arching of his eyebrows "Biber Herrick," and just below the name in pencil, "On very secret and important business; too secret and important to commit to writing."

"I shall see this person," Notner said to the surprise of the man in waiting, who seemed irresolute and even loath to take such an unusual message.

"It's an extreme case, Matt," the gentleman went on, laughing at his perplexity, "and I have a woman's curiosity to know what this man's business can be with me."

But there was no trace of even a smile when he confronted his visitor; he was solemn to severity. Herrick rose with perfect self-possession, and began very coolly:

"My business is in reference to the proposed assessment on the property of the Ontonah Club; there is one way by which all disturbance of the property can be avoided, and of course the assessment averted. That way is neither by indignation meetings, nor by any appeal to the courts. I have chosen to disclose this plan to you rather than to any other member of the Club, for reasons of my own. The plan is the sale of Miss Burrum's property. The purchaser desires it is willing to have the land street cut, and I have a woman's curiosity to know what this man's business can be with me."

Notner seemed to be impatient.

"If this is your secret and important business with me it is so far from being either, that it is scarcely intelligible to me."

"One moment, Mr. Notner," and Herrick bowed, "my business is not been fully stated yet. So far I have made but a preliminary explanation, and even that is not yet completed. Bear with me to the end."

Notner threw himself back in his chair and appeared to close his eyes, but Herrick knew that he was only studying him the closer.

"It will be to Miss Burrum's advantage to sell, both moneyed and otherwise; her reputation here is suffering; she is constantly incurring new dislike; and for the sake of her Charge—I am speaking now as a man and a father—she ought to change her residence. I have here in my pocket" (he put his hand on the pocket of his coat, which contained the morocco case) "a private communication from a friend in London,—" Notner gave a slight start,— "a private communication referring to Miss Burrum, and which threatens disclosures about her to the residents of Rentonville that will be very much to her discredit. Before receiving this communication I called in all friendliness upon Miss Burrum to urge upon her the advantage of selling her property,—" Notner's countenance grew so scornful that such scorn as precluded for me any further visit to her house, or any further direct communication with her. I imagine that she would heed anything coming from you; you might advise, or warn her. That is all, Mr. Notner."

Notner jumped to his feet, pulling the bell that chanced to be near his hand, and so violently that all three of the middle-aged, solemn-looking retainers rushed into the room together.

"One, or all of you," he said sternly, "show this person to the door."

Herrick neither lost his self-possession nor his smile.

"I assure you, my good men, there is no necessity of your presence here. I have not sought to harm your master."

"No, but you have sought to harm a lady's reputation. Show him to the door immediately."

Whereupon two of the attendants grabbed Herrick by the arms, and when he would stir up Mr. Notner with regard to Notner's scarce perceptible start, that he had succeeded. And whether Notner did or did not tell the other members of the Club, he was almost certain that something would be told to Miss Burrum which would have more weight than if it had come to her directly from him.

A PRIEST'S STORY.