

Poetry.

YOU'D BETTER ASK ME.

"Oh, 'tis time I should talk to your mother, Sweet Mary," says I; "Oh, don't talk to my mother," says Mary. Beginning to cry; "For my mother says men are deceivers, And never, I know, will consent, She says girls in a hurry who marry At leisure repent."

"Then, suppose I would talk to your father, Sweet Mary," says I; "Oh, don't talk to my father," says Mary. Beginning to cry; "For my father, he loves me so dearly, He'll never consent I should go— If you talk to my father," says Mary, "He'll surely say, 'No.'"

"Then how shall I get you, my jewel? Sweet Mary," says I; "If your father and mother's so cruel, Most surely I'll die!" "Oh, never say die, dear," says Mary; "A way now I have yet, I see; Since my parents are both so contrary— You'd better ask me."

LEVER.

THE CURATE'S DISCOVERY.

"Never mind, Frank; it is as good as I can expect. To some people it might be lonely, but to me—well I am used to be tolerably lonely."

"What, with a whole schoolful of us fellows?" asked his companion. The young curate smiled as he replied.

"Ah, Frank, it is not always in number one finds companionship. I have been often for a while in a crowd. Then, with a cheerful air, he continued, "You know I am a great bookworm, and I'll have plenty of time for reading; and the curious old church, almost like a fortress, the quaint village, and the old graveyard are all worthy of study."

"Ah, yes," replied his companion, dolefully. "Meditations among the tombs might be good for some of us who want so being, but for you, who are so clever, and so good enough already, it is perfect suicide; and then, how you can exist on a paltry forty pounds is a puzzle to me."

The curate laughed quietly. "You are a good fellow, Frank. You have always had an unlimited supply from home, and think the sum small; but consider the difference in us."

"Yes," cried his friend, impulsively. "I do consider the difference.— You are the best and cleverest tutor we ever had, and without a soul to aid you. You have worked up to your M. A., while I—I am a good-for-nothing, got plucked twice, and I don't see why—"

"Why— you, the son of Sir Ernest Hawkesley," interrupted his companion—"I, almost nameless, and not even knowing my family, should be satisfied with what would be starvation to you."

"It's not that," replied the boy; "but I think it's hardly fair, that the good-for-nothing should have plenty, while the clever, like you, are too often wanting."

"You only want to be poor and self-dependent, like me, Frank," replied the curate, "to develop your genius. You know I have often told you so. For me, I have done nothing yet; but I hope to do something when I am buried as curate of Sleepymuir."

"It's a shame to give you such a paltry curacy, cried the boy, eagerly. "I should be a bishop, Frank," said his friend, good naturedly, as he held out his hand, while the train steamed up to the platform. "Good-bye, and God bless you."

Frank wrung his friend's hand, and his "good-bye" was scarcely audible. The next moment the train had moved out of the station, and the curate of Sleepymuir was journeying to his new home, while Frank turned away with just the suspicion of a tear in his blue eyes.

Mr. Smith had been English master for years in one of the leading schools in the metropolis. The boys all respected him, and many of them loved him, simply because of his honesty, and truthfulness. He showed no favor nor favor. The son of a baronet would hear his faults as readily as the son of the humblest clerk who would scrape together sufficient money to educate his boy. He was never known to punish unjustly or to gratify his temper. Thus each boy acknowledged the justice of his tutor, and impositions were honestly performed as a matter of honor.

At length the poor tutor managed to take his M. A., and soon after he was ordained and appointed to the parish of Sleepymuir, to the sorrow of the boys and the regret of the principle, who well knew he might seek long before he could find such a tutor again.

Mr. Smith the ex-tutor, was, in fact, almost nobody. When a child only three years old he was left in a waste country school by a man who

called himself his uncle; and who said liberally for him year after year. Suddenly his relative died or disappeared, and the child, then a boy of thirteen, left unprovided for. But the old schoolmaster was childless, and had taken a fancy to George Smith, so that between him and the old housekeeper, who had acted a part of mother to the pretty child from the first day of his arrival, it was decided that George Smith should remain as if he were the schoolmaster's son.

So years flew on. The boy soon began to assist in the school, and more than repaid his generous friends. The old housekeeper died, and his master in a year or two afterwards went to his long home, leaving George heir of only what he might make by the sale of the school-belongings, or the option of continuing his master. But the boy was determined to become a church minister, and he disposed of the good will etc., of the school for a trifle—it being in an out-of-the-way locality—and applied for a tutorship in a school near London, his object being to attend the university examinations at the same time. He attained his ambition; and at the age of twenty-three we find him bidding good-bye to one of the pupils, and starting for a new life, as a curate on forty pounds a year.

Without recommendation or influence it was rather a wonder that he got a curacy at all in those times, when patronage did so much; but there were few applications—perhaps only his own—and the vicar seldom even visited with parish. After Mr. Smith had journeyed as far as the train would take him, he had to hire a fly, and got himself driven to the next town. Here he left his modest portmanteau to be sent on by a carrier, and set out to walk to the village of Sleepymuir.

The walk was long and lonely, but the curate felt braced up by the pure air and scents and sounds which long spent city people relish so keenly. It was autumn—the melancholy season when the dead leaves flutter around our heads like the ghosts of departed pleasures, and whisper to us that, like these, we too, must fade away. But our curate had no such feelings; he had never known any pleasures to regret them. His two friends, the old housekeeper and the schoolmaster, had both departed peacefully at a good old age, and he believed them to be happy. He considered life and death only words unmeaningly applied, for life to him was a constant striving after the unknown, a constant longing to attain the perfect knowledge which so many seek for but can never attain here. And this man believed that only in death so called, would come the perfect life he longed for, because then would come his perfect knowledge. He had no ties. He was dreamy, poetical, religious, in the fullest and truest sense of the word; and he desired, with his whole soul, to do good, to live for others, to forget self, like his great Master; and in this spirit he was approaching the village of Sleepymuir and his fate.

About twilight the curate entered the village. It was a quaint and old-world place, truly, and contained about twenty cottages, scattered about in confusion, with tiny gardens, blazing with gay-colored flowers, in front of each. He made his way to the house dignified by the name of inn; here he was to reside for the present, and the landlady was eagerly expecting him. The inn was nothing more than any of the cottages; except that it covered a little more ground, stood exactly opposite the church, and boasted a dais over the door which had been dignified with the name of "The Bishop," but resembled far more closely a prize-fighter. So, under the sign of the rubeund bishop, Mr. Smith entered and announced himself as the expected curate.

The good landlady dropped a deep curtsey, as with beaming face, she bade the weary man welcome. He was at once shown to his tiny parlor, with a still more tiny bedroom in the rear; and with another curtsey the good woman pointed out the advantage of the rooms.

"You can always see the church spire, when you set here, and from the window of your bedroom you can have a fine look at the square."

"Why, have you a squire in the parish, Mrs. Ford," he asked.

"That we have, sir," she replied. "But he's just that graceless as never he put a foot inside the church door; an' to tell the truth, his nephew is no better. To be sure, Miss Amy comes regular, poor thing. But as my Sam tells me, sir, my tongue runs away sometimes, and you're starving, sir, I'll bring you what you want in a minute. Would you take something in the shape of dinner, or—"

"Don't trouble yourself, Mrs. Ford," replied the curate, in his mild manner. "Anything convenient will do; I'm not particular."

"Then I'll see to it at once, sir," and, with another curtsey, the lady left the room.

"He's not particular," she said to herself—for this good woman was so fond of a lark that, instead of thinking like other folks, she spoke her thoughts aloud. "No; but he'll fare nothing worse of that. Mr. Renshaw, now, was that stuck-up, and that nice, that no one could please him with his eating; but he'll fare none the worse for being easy pleased."

And it seemed as if she meant it, for presently a tray appeared, laden with a plump cold chicken, golden butter, home-made bread, and tea with an aroma so delicious as to tempt one to taste it. Then the cream—real cream, no London imitation of it. Surely, if the curate were in no way particular, Mrs. Ford was going the right way to make him so.

After his meal, he was informed that old Jacob Grimm wished to see him. Jacob Grimm was the sexton and clerk of the parish in one, and a character in his way. He bowed awkwardly, looked keenly at the curate, and, on being asked, seated himself.

"I wanted to see what you would like, your reverence," he said.

"And you are quite satisfied with me?" asked the curate, with a merry twinkle of the eye.

"Why, that's what I'm a comin' to ask your reverence. There be folks here to say I'm gettin' too old an' stiff about the joints, an' there be folks as thinks they'll step in Jacob Grimm's place, but I says to myself, I'll have the first word of his reverence, an' if he's a gentleman, he'll see at a glance what Jacob is, an' he'll not let no upstart get over me. I've the best right an' title to the situation; it's been in the family for nigh five generations, an' I'm the last of the Grimms."

"I have no notion of changing any one about the church," said the curate, puzzled at the appeal. "But why should you fear this?"

"Why, sir, it's just this"—and old Jacob drew his chair close to the curate, and put on a mysterious air. "Some one 'as been a-waitin' against me to the vicar. I was told as much an' I've had a warning. Lookee, sir—the church is haunted."

"Nonsense," said the curate. "Someone has been frightening you."

"It's some one as frightened old Jacob? No, sir, none of that. The whole parish knows it. The lights has been seen in the church for three years past, and his reverence, Mr. Renshaw, the curate afore you, was that frightened he never rested till he left the parish; not but what I sayed he was no much good of a man—a long, thin, awe-struck gentleman, lookin' ever an' always just as if he had been seein' of a ghost."

Before the talkative Jacob left the curate, he had made him acquainted with the circumstances and failings of his parishioners as thoroughly as if he had lived among them all his life.

He found there was no doctor nearer than the town he had walked from, but that people were seldom ill, and so the doctor was not often required. Nor were they troubled by the residence of a "shark," as Jacob politely designated a lawyer.

(Continued in our next.)

One Cause of Poor Butter.

In giving some directions as to the treatment of milk and cream for churning, Mr. T. D. Curtis, of Utica, N. Y., says:

Half the butter in the country—and I do not know but a larger proportion—is spoiled by letting the milk stand too long before skimming, and the product is still further injured by letting the cream stand still longer before churning. Milk should be skimmed when set in a room kept at a temperature of 60°, as it begins to thicken on the bottom of the pan. If it stands longer there is a loss of quality without any compensating gain in quantity. The cream should be churned at once. The longer it stands the greater will be the loss of aroma from decomposition, and evaporation of the volatile flavoring oils. Only the slightest acidity, if any, should be permitted in the cream before it is churned. Yet it is a common thing for people to let the milk lopper before it is skimmed, and to allow the cream to stand until quite sour before churning. Nothing but bad-flavored and rapidly-decaying butter can be made of such cream. Yet I have seen cream standing with mould on it, and germs filling the cracks of the creamery. Is it any wonder that there is so much poor butter in the market?—Exchange of

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