

LOVE AND SCORN—A BALLAD.

A maiden stands at her father's gate, At her father's gate in the evening gloom. All earth is fair, and everywhere The roses are in bloom. A knight rides up on a milk-white steed, A milk-white steed, his lance at rest. Careless his song, as he rides along Sparkles his golden crest. Admiring his glance as he gallantly stoops, Stoops to speak to the lady fair, But cold was she as a maid can be, Even when no one is there! The knight he smiled and he rode away, Rode away to a maid more sweet. Was the lady right?—ah! never a knight Again did the lady meet!

—Ernest S. Holmes.

A Modern Martyrdom

It was a summer's day strayed into late October. The whistle of the two big mills in Whitefields had blown the after-dinner recall but half an hour ago. The sunshine that flooded the little sitting-room of the rectory was still of a midday potency to excuse the shirtsleeves of stout, massive Seth Miller, the mason and builder, and his constant mopping of his flushed face and bald head as he sat in conference with the slender, pale young priest of the parish, Father Morris, as the Irish portion of his flock and Protestant Whitefields called him. The two were alone in the room, and Father Morris was struggling to compress into uniformity and symmetry a fat sheaf of bank bills he had just counted over twice under the eyes of his companion, the second time before the latter had declined to enumerate them himself.

"It is a good job done," Father Morris said, as he slipped elastic bands about the finally tidied bundle and slid it across the table to the overheated giant, "and I hope it's done for the next fifty years. In that case Holy Souls' parish needn't judge the twenty-one hundred dollars its new cemetery has cost, though I know the people find fault that it was planned on so large a scale, and I all know that it's been a long pull and a hard pull to raise the money. Thankful to give it to you at last, well, and I cannot say how grateful both my predecessor, Father Nugent, and I have felt for your patience in waiting for your payment. I hope you haven't been too patient, for you know you could have had a few hundred on account almost any time you had wished them."

"Yes, yes, I knew that. Father Nugent told me that at the start, but from the first I'd kind of settled in my mind that I'd do without this money if I could and have it at the end in a lump. You see, I knew 'twas safe to wait, and I've been earning other money straight along, because Father Nugent and you've let me take my time over the job and put my men and teams on it between calls of other jobs that had to be justified. I guess the accommodatin' ain't been all on my side. And now I expect it would seem pretty mysterious to anybody that just knows me in public so to say and that I must have earned a good deal of money in my time, and that I'm a very plain man without expensive habits, to be told that this sum that I'm going to take straight to the bank is the very first I could ever deposit calculatin' to have it stay, and not forecasting any occasion to draw upon it either for my family or my business. Sixty-five's rather old to be puttin' away the first nest egg of savin's, but I don't know as I could do much better, set me back forty years. It cost a good deal to settle my father's estate and keep the old homestead, and I've had eight children to rear and see 't they should have the schoolin' and some advantages I missed and have always hankered after. I can't give them fortunes, but they're good children, not a black sheep among them, and except my blind daughter they're all doin' well for themselves."

"You've given them better than me," Father Morris answered, smiling. "According to what I've heard, you're trained your children to be a blessing in any community. As for your old homestead, it's a fine place of the town for its size and flowers."

"I've taken a heap of commiseration at it," Mr. Miller said. "I declare sometimes that I'd give my last dollar for a new shrub from Japan, but she wouldn't allow anybody else to say it. Her figurin' it out to one of these days that father never had a vacation, nor took a trip anywhere unless 'twas on business; that he wasn't much of a hand for politics and that she was thankful to get somethin' outside of his work

to take such an interest in. Well! Well!" rising slowly, "I'm only hinderin' you, and I must be getting down to the bank. I hope your church folk'll get reconciled to the size of their cemetery. 'Twon't be any too big, give it time enough! Good-day, Father Morris."

"Good afternoon," Father Morris answered, and then, his eye catching the packet of bills held uncovered in the contractor's hand: "Why, surely, Mr. Miller, you're not going to carry your money like that? Wait a moment and I'll find a wrapper for it," and, springing up, the priest turned toward his desk near the window.

"No, no; never mind, father," Mr. Miller interposed, hastily, "it's all right. There! I'll fold it in this newspaper and slip it into my coat. At this time o' day I shan't meet anybody between here and the bank, and if I do, nobody'd guess Seth Miller's got his savin's of a life time slung over his arm!" And with another friendly "Good-day!" he was out of the room, and presently Father Morris saw him walking down the narrow boardwalk to the street, going circumspectly, with characteristic care not to bruise a flower or tendril from the borders of gay annuals that overflowed in masses upon the walk.

It was but little more than a half hour later when Father Morris was roused from work at his desk by the sound of heavy running along the quiet road, the violent bursting open of the rectory gate and the crash of its closing, flung from the impatient hand of some one plunging reckless footed up the walk. The contractor back again! and such a figure of mazed haste that the priest himself went hurriedly to the door to let him in. Miller did not speak, but strode forward into the sitting room, glanced swiftly about it, then dropped, spent, upon a seat. The priest looked at him and went into his dining-room, whence he quickly returned with a glass of water. "You are not built for racing in such heat as this, Mr. Miller," he said, as the latter drank from the glass.

"No," Miller said, briefly; then, after a minute, "That's better I didn't run very far. My money, Father Morris. You haven't found it here? When I got to the bank and I unfolded my coat and opened the newspaper, the bundle of bills was gone! I hadn't met a creature between this and the bank nor seen a livin' soul anywhere except old Dan Powers, asleep in his hammock, so I made sure that if I came straight back on my tracks I'd find the bundle on the sidewalk, where it had worked out of the paper and coat with the motion as I walked and dropped, but not a sign of it! I didn't meet anybody as I came back and old Dan is still asleep, so I hoped the packet had slipped out here before I got out of the house and that it would be the first thing my eyes would light on, in this room, and it floored me when I saw that it wasn't here and that you knew nothing about it."

"I sat down at my desk when you left," Father Morris said, "and only rose from it to let you in, and no one else has been in the room. You must have overlooked the package along the road somewhere. How could it really disappear in such a short time, when apparently you have been the only person stirring? There are only four houses the whole distance, one of them empty now, and nobody's at home at this hour except the mothers of the families, the babies and old Dan, who but just hobbles about with a crutch, and he was asleep, you say. If you've got your breath, I'll go back with you and we'll search the ground thoroughly."

Miller rose at once, and they passed out of the house, the priest throwing wide open the outer door so that every inch of the small hall could be scrutinized at a glance.

"Let us begin right here at the steps," he said; "you take one side of the walk and I'll take the other, and we'll hunt these flower-beds carefully." They reached the gate—nothing—and turned down the walk the contractor had gone, the one on the opposite side of the road from the four houses. The houses were well separated from each other by orchards and bits of garden ground. Not a depression, not a gully, not a tuft of grass, not a patch of weeds, not a bush at either hand of the uncarred for walk that escaped keen inquiry; but no bundle of bank bills, a little fortune in country reckonin' was forthcoming. In the first two houses they came to the solitary woman in each had been too busy to take any note of the road. The third was vacant, having been sold within the month for debt. It had belonged to Dennis Powers, old Dan's drinking, disreputable oldest son, and was built with the money of the young fellow's wife. The wife, happily for herself, died at the birth of her first child, a toddler between two and three years. They found him fast asleep in the hammock at the next house, old Dan's. The grandfather, too, old from disease and decrepitude rather than years, was there smoking his pipe in a chair alongside. The old man had seen no one going by in the road, but "shure a procession

might have went, for he'd tuk more than his forty winks trying to read the paper in the hammock just after dinner."

Searching every foot of the way the two men reached the entrance of the bank building, and the earth might have opened and swallowed the bundle of notes for all 'trace they could find. They talked with sympathizing bank officials, old, warm friends of Miller's, and it was at the suggestion of one of these that the contractor had the constable called, and, reinforced by him, the two retraced what was becoming, for Miller, at any rate, a "mam-traveled road," seeking the lost packet over a preposterous width of area till the quest ended fruitlessly and in utter perplexity at the sitting-room of the rectory. The constable examined this latter carefully, asking only "Is everything here exactly as it was when Mr. Miller left the first time, Father Morris?"

"Precisely," returned Father Morris, "except that now my desk is open."

"I was sorry you asked that question of Father Morris," Mr. Miller said to the constable as they walked back to the main street. "The money's gone through my fool trick of carrying it as I did, but Father Morris knows no more where it went than I do. He went to get me a proper envelope, but I wouldn't have it."

"Well, I hope he's all right, but you know there's some folks'll think this business might have easily an ugly look for him," the constable replied.

"I suppose so, but they needn't advance any such theory to me," Miller said, with some emphasis. "I'm no detective, but if there's a better man in this town than that young fellow, I'm as much out as I ever was in my life."

The news of Seth Miller's loss was all over Whitefields before sunset, and for many days was the subject of hot discussion wherever a knot of people gathered. To have lost even fifty dollars would have been an event in the country village, where everybody knew everybody else by sight, name or repute, if not personally, and where serious crime and criminals were unheard of, but for a sum like that which vanished from Miller's slack guardianship to disappear, leaving no faintest clue, Whitefields was lost over the puzzle. And it was not strange that in a New England village, even in the earliest talks over the mystery, there should be some darkly that the Catholic priest could clear it up if he would, for in the circumstances where could the package have been dropped, to evade almost instantaneous search, save in the house? Had Father Nugent been the priest involved, his years of life and labor in Whitefields would have shielded him from suspicion in many minds, but who knew anything reassuring about his lately installed successor? From evil hint to open remark, "Guess the new priest up there knows pretty well where Miller's money is!" was not long, and as weeks, months passed, and the problem was still unsolved, the sinister impression spread, deepened, and Father Morris was practically boycotted by Protestant Whitefields. He was omitted from every meeting and function wherein his predecessor had been invited to take part; not a social courtesy was extended him. Most of the people with whom he came in business contact made the contact brief and treated him with cool or scant ceremony, the ruler sort, indeed, with rank incivility. One sweet drop there was, in his bitter cup—Seth Miller could never be brought to admit a doubt of his innocence and never let slip an occasion to show him respect or do him a kindness. As for his parishioners, while they indignantly resented the Protestant belief in his guilt and the obliquity with which he was treated, Father Morris was too recent a comer amongst them for ties of familiar affection to bind priest and people together, and he was so shy with youth and the terrible cloud upon him that their faith in and sympathy for him were necessarily wane.

Late in the following spring old Dan Powers sickened in a grip epidemic. He weathered the first attack, but a relapse found him so weak that the doctor advised him to set his affairs in order.

"Bring the priest," was his first injunction when the doctor had gone, "and bring him to wastin'!"—a pious haste as surprising as comforting to his wife and daughter, for old Dan had ever been of those ready to brag and fight for their religion than to practice it, though he had never given any flagrant scandal. Father Morris returned with the envoy, and the family were banished from the room. Old Dan before he began the confession of his sins had something to say to Father Morris. His breath was short and there were many pauses. There was evidently a matter of weighty nature on his mind, concerning which he wanted some advice. His strength was hardly sufficient to bear him through the ordeal. He began his story in a hesitating fashion, but it

was not long before the weakness of the sickness overcame him.

Father Morris waited. He looked at the sick man; the blood seemed ready to burst through the wrinkled old face, writhing with some terrible emotion.

"At last, 'No more to-day, father; I can't," old Dan said faintly, and when the priest would have urged him to finish his story if possible, he turned himself silently and obstinately to the wall.

"He was obliged to stop," Father Morris said to the anxious, waiting women he summoned. "Send for me again the moment he will let you or if he takes a turn for the worse."

Two days passed and the messenger was sent again. Could Father Morris come directly? The sick man had had a bad night and was in a hurry for him. Father Morris went at once, but when the moment came to resume the interrupted conversation the haste seemed over and there was a long silence.

"Begin where you left off," the priest said, gently.

"It's no use, father," Dan burst out; "I can never tell you. I must have another priest—any priest but you."

"You are too sick to wait," Father Morris answered. "Put me or any man out of your thoughts."

"Lord help me, I'm a lost man entirely!" he old man groaned. "It was me, father, that got Mr. Miller's money," Father Morris neither moved nor spoke. "It was this way, father. I was mindin' the baby—Dennis' little Hugh—the afternoon the money was lost. I fell asleep in the hammock, and when I woke up he'd slipped out of the yard into the road. He came back when I called with a parcel hugged up in his arm. I tuk it away from him, thinking 'twas some advertising book, and sent him in to granny; but when I saw 'twas bank notes, and a power of 'em, I fell back in hammock wake and all in a cowlid sweat. The notes were old, so I knew they were good, and I hid 'em to see what I'd do with 'em. I mis-doubted something when you came with Mr. Miller, and when we heard that night that he'd lost money, I knew I'd got it, though I did not get a chance to count it till next day, for I didn't want the women to know anything about it."

"And why did you not restore it to its owner at once?" the priest asked.

"You know perfectly well that you were committing a mortal sin in keeping it, and that your soul would be damned if you died before giving it back."

"Yes, father, but 'twas an awful temptation! Here was I past work, my old bones murdered wid earning this place and trying to put by a bit for the time when we'd need it—the women and me—everything going out, nothing coming in, and little Hugh to be reared, for his father's good. And nobody would ever think of that baby findin' it, and him too young to know what it was or to remember two minutes that he'd had it."

"Do you mean to tell me that you've used any of that money?" demanded Father Morris, sharply.

"No, father, that I haven't. The bundle's just the same as when I got it."

"And you are sorry that you ever concealed it?"

"That I am. I've had no ind of trouble about it."

"And you will return it at once to its owner?"

"I can't, father, don't ask me! Think of the disgrace to my family wid my name and thief in everybody's mouth!"

"The money can be returned without your name or any detail, but back it must go, and by your own will, or there is no hope for you."

"Oh, it's hard, father, mortal hard! I'd give it up, but there's reasons I can't. I haven't told you all; I'm too weak to talk any more. You'll have to go away now, father, and I'll send for you as my strength comes back a little."

That force of mind or body should ever animate again that exhausted figure seemed hopeless. "Pray that our Lord will give him a little more time," Father Morris enjoined the women, and slipping into the church on his way home he spent a long hour there in supplication for a soul in peril. He was roused a little after midnight that night by the third summons.

"As quick as you can, father," the messenger said. "He's calling you, and he's going fast."

In his burning anxiety to annihilate the distance, not to be too late for that passing soul, Father Morris ran all the way. When he reached Powers' house it was lighted up and filled with relatives and village friends.

"'Tis the third time the old man's sent for his clergy," he overheard one man murmur to another in the group lingering just outside the door. "Sure he's making a terrible pious end at last!"

The sick man had his eyes fixed on the door, all the life in him seeming to be in their gaze.

"Lock the door, father," he said,

without waste of a word in greeting, "and hang something over the key-hole. Hang something over the window, too. Dennis is here spying about. Dennis knows about the money," he went on, as Father Morris sat down at the bedside. "He was here the day Hugh found it and was looking out of the window when I tuk it from the child, though he never mistrusted anything till he heard Mr. Miller's money was in such a bundle. Since then he's threatened everything if I didn't share it with him, says he should have it by all rights because Hugh found it but I couldn't somehow break into Mr. Miller's money, and just in these few months Dennis has made me draw nine hundred dollars from the fifteen hundred I had in the bank—all I had in the world except the place here—to keep him quiet. I know 'twas my own fault he got the hold on me, and I'm kilt wid rememberin' how I've let him rob his old mother and his sister. 'Twas thinking how they'd manage without money, and the child to provide for, and fear of Dennis that kept me quiet and hanging on to the package, and may the Lord forgive me my sins! You'll send the money back, father—I've no one to trust wid it—and secret, for the sake of them that's innocent. It's in the cupboard, the third shelf from the top, under some papers. This is the key to the cupboard," feebly drawing a bunch of keys from beneath the bedcovers. "Quick, now, father, and then I can make my confession and be forgiven and die in peace."

Needless to exhort Father Morris to haste—a glance at his penitent was enough—and carefully separating the indicated key from the bunch, he speedily had it in the ward and the door open, but his heart sank as he saw the crammed curiosity shop exposed. "The third shelf," right, and "under some papers," but what papers?" he moaned to himself as he felt here and there among the old day books, almanacs and bundles of yellow bills and papers and nowhere came upon the package sought, his heart bursting with the anguish of delay. Then with the same anguish, the sick man rose to a sitting posture: "Take me over there, father," he pleaded; "shure I weigh nothing now, and I'll get it at once."

Was there any other? "But I'm afraid you can't bear it," Father Morris said, coming back to the bed.

"I'll bear it," the old man said. "What does it matter now? Lift me up!"

Cold with the horror of the thing the young priest gathered the dead-weight of helplessness in his arms, bore it to the cupboard and held it there through an age that old Dan himself fumbled in vain amongst the shelf's collection. "Ah!" he breathed at last, with feeble triumph, "I remember, 'twas in this I put it," drawing out an old bill-book, "now tak' me back."

Father Morris felt the collapse of the old man's last spurt of energy as he staggered with him to the bed, but life, understanding the vivid beseeching shone still in the eyes that that looked at him from the pillow, and not till the priestly hand was lifted in blessing and the full confession made and the absolution uttered to its last words did their light fade, and the faint "Jesus, mercy!" escape with the last sobbing breaths.

Whitefields was stirred with another great sensation when Mr. Miller's money, in its original package, was returned to him by express, with no hint of its experiences—just a type-written slip accompanying it, "From a repentant man." Old discussions of the mystery were waged anew, but any true elucidation of it was as remote as at first. Nor did the cloud of suspicion lift from Father Morris. Not much reference was made to him, but the mostly unexpressed opinion was New England's own implacability: "Twas a mercy, of course, that he repented stealing the money, but to steal it in the first place." And just as sternly as before he was ignored on all possible occasions.

Once Father Morris appealed to his Bishop to station him elsewhere, explaining the situation. "You think some other cross would be easier to carry?" his chief asked.

The young man reddened "Perhaps that, a little," he said; "but might not it be better for the parish in Whitefields that its priest should be unsuspected of felony?"

"That I must determine with such wisdom as is given to me," the Bishop replied, and Father Morris reddened more deeply still. "There! there!" the Bishop added, putting a kind hand on the priest's shoulder, "I do not in the least believe you would really throw away such a chance for one of the little martyrdoms we're reduced to nowadays."

The years wore on, ten, twelve of them, and still Father Morris was stationed in Whitefields, though with the coming of new industries and workpeople into the village and its near vicinity his parish and labors were so grown that there were rumors of a curate to come to his aid. He had not ceased to feel his ostracism by his Protestant neighbors. He

bore it, at all events, with cheerful serenity, and in his own parish he had accomplished that difficult feat of winning in great and equal degree the love and loyalty of all classes of parishioners. He had spent himself in their service without stint, and so self-denying was his life, so fervent his faith and real that his people beloved him far on the road toward saintliness. One persistent, malignant enemy he had—Dennis Powers, who divorced by what agency Mr. Miller's money had escaped his near grasp. Dennis could not let his real grievance be suspected, but he never lost an opportunity to relate to a newcomer the story of the money's loss and return and the Protestant conviction as to its thief, he opposed the silliest of fronts to the priest's advances, sneered at what he did and said, led off the weaklings of the flock into turbulence or wickedness when he could and was in all ways a leading worker of evil in the parish. He still made his mother's home his headquarters, much against her will; but in the interval of his drunken bouts he worked more than he had been obliged to do in his father's lifetime, helping for miles about in the rough, heavy labor that was his forte. So it did not surprise Father Morris when stopped, one day that he was driving seven or eight miles from Whitefields, by an excited Irishman with the news that a well that was being dug at a house nearby in the fields caved in, to find that the victim at the bottom was Dennis Powers.

"He was begging for a priest a while ago, for there's no chance for him, poor fellow! But no priest could get near him now. We lowered Tim Doran part way a while ago, and they could hear one another, but the sand's sifted some since then and ye can't trust it."

"Can I drive over there?" Father Morris asked.

"Yes, sir, turning in the bar way yonder."

"Jump in, then, and take the reins."

A dozen or more men were gathered around the well's mouth, paralyzed by the calamity. "Is he living still?" Father Morris asked as he sprang from the carriage.

"He was, sir, when I came up, ten minutes ago, but the sand's closed down some."

"Is there any hope that he can be got out alive?"

"None, sir, that I can see. The sand moves from such a wide space round that we'll have to rig up some boxing before we dare strike down a shovel. He knows he's got to die."

"He was asking for a priest?"

"Yes, sir, and he spoke of you, sir."

"Can you lower me down to the point where you were?"

"Indeed, sir, you can't go. The sand shifts if you breathe, almost. You'd be going to your death for certain."

"It is my duty to go if I can, and I'll be as careful as I can. Help me to get into the bucket. Keep your hand on the rope. Stop when I pull on it; at the second pull, draw 'me up. Ready!"

They lowered him with anxious care, agony in their hearts. At last there came a pull, then they waited—waited so long that they knew Dennis must be living and that the two were speaking to each other. Would they never stop? And yet the pause was but five minutes before the second pull trembled along the rope.

"Easy, easy!" Exhorted Tim as the windlass began to turn; but it had scarcely made a revolution when "My God!" he cried as the whole earth about the well seemed to break at once and be slipping away beneath them.

"Jump for your lives, boys!" and it was by a miracle that the two at the windlass escaped being swept away into the pit.

How the alarm flew, how the whole aroused vicinity toiled at rescue need not be told, for it was all in vain. Father Morris had lived his life and done his work. He and his long-time enemy and final costly penitent had a common funeral—the greatest funeral, the most sorrowful yet joyous, triumphant funeral ever known in Whitefields. The Bishop himself came to take part in the offices, and priests from near and far crowded the sanctuary. The three Protestant clergymen of Whitefields were in a front pew, and scarcely a prominent lay dignitary was missing from the seats reserved for them. Not even half the Catholics could get into the church, and they, with the Protestant villagers, thronged the cemetery not too large for this time. No one there will ever forget the emotion when the two hearses drove slowly in; the Bishop, the double line of priests and the invited guests marching at the head of the long procession following after.

The entire village joined to erect the monument to Father Maurice de Luyster that is the pride and place of pilgrimage of Holy Souls' Cemetery. A beautiful figure of the pedestal one reads that the memorial is the tribute of Whitefields; on the other are briefly recited the important facts of his life and the story of his heroic death, and below: "Greater love hath no man than this."

The boycott is broken, the martyrdom gloriously ended.—Catholic World.