

The Cross-Backs

The arrival of a bride and groom at Morrisville was an event of no little importance...

Morrisville consisted of one main street, beginning with the pretentious two-story town hall...

The town was like a thousand others, scattered all over the face of this broad land...

The young people selected a cottage on Madison avenue, and there set up their Lates and Penates...

"Wouldn't mother laugh," she would say to herself, "at this little box of a house?"

Every evening when Ned came home Edith had some dull experiences...

"Lonely? Oh, no, I never have time to be lonely. My neighbors are so kind, and not the least ceremonious..."

"I hope," said Ned, with a look of mock anxiety, "they do not indulge in the pernicious habit of borrowing books..."

"My dear," she began in a patronizing tone, "you must have seen what a deep and friendly interest we have taken in you..."

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"This is not—er—exactly an invitation. That is to say—ahem—we were appointed a committee to investigate a certain matter—to find out if a certain report which is going around—is true."

"Not that any one believed it, I beg to assure you, Mrs. Howard," said Miss Snow, in a soothing tone.

"Investigate—report?" gasped Edith, looking from one to the other of her guests, a crimson flush mantling her cheeks...

"Quite so," murmured Miss Snow, with a look of relief.

"I can't imagine what you mean, Mrs. Treadwell. I never heard of anything so funny. Cross-back—what is that? Some kind of a bird—cross-bill, cross-beak, or, oh?"

"Of course we knew it was not true—but it has been noticed that you have not attended church since you came here, and some one started the silly rumor that you belonged to those cross—"

"Mrs. Treadwell means Papists, my dear," interjected Mrs. Flashley.

"Romanists," murmured Miss Snow.

"Oh," gasped Edith, beginning to comprehend.

"But Mrs. Treadwell waved her hand deprecatingly. "Don't say anything, my dear, until I have finished. Of course it may be that you have been connected in some way with these people—they are very numerous, they tell me, in some parts of our country—indeed, in the past few years they have been coming into this State in large numbers; but we have never had any nice people in Morrisville who professed such doctrines, and we could not endure the thought of such a thing in our club. So we decided to ask you if you had been connected with cross-backs—I mean Papists—in the past, say nothing about it now, but seek membership in one of our respectable Protestant churches, and be one with us. We all admire you so much and wish very much to have you with us."

"Edith had found it difficult to listen in silence to this harangue. She was quite indignant, but at the same time her sense of humor was roused and she was sorely tempted to laugh. feeling, however, that she had her dignity to maintain and her faith to vindicate, she quickly decided what policy to pursue. Curbing her feelings, she asked innocently, in a timid voice:

"And if I do as you advise, will you—"

"Certainly, we will elect you unanimously a member of our euechre club, and I assure you no one will be so popular in the whole town. You will be invited to everything that takes place; I mean, of course, everything among our refined and exclusive circles. To speak in figurative language, you and your husband will ride on the crest of the wave."

"Edith was conscious of a most undignified twitching of her risible muscles, but she managed to maintain a stolid gravity. Taking out a small well-worn volume from the bookcase nearby, she turned a few leaves, and said:

"This is a very serious matter. Perhaps you may call it one of my superstitions, but it is a habit of mine to see how my best friend would advise. Here is one thing that he says: 'For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' And just before that he had said: 'If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'"

"A painful silence fell upon the little group, broken after a slight pause by Edith, who continued: 'Ladies, it is well that we should understand one another. Yes, I am a Roman Catholic, and my faith is to me the dearest thing in life. It is strange you can imagine for a moment that I desire to conceal it. I would rather be a ragged beggar and keep my faith than be the richest woman in the world without it. I would hardly care to barter my soul for a membership in your euechre club.'"

"Then, fearing that Mrs. Treadwell was about to deliver another harangue, Edith rose, saying: 'I thank you very much, ladies, for your kindness and candor, and I am glad that the euechre club was the means of making us better acquainted.'"

"While she spoke, they were taking their leave, fully conscious that they were being dismissed, and yet unable to find anything offensive in her affable manner as she led them to the front door and smilingly bade them adieu."

"Not a word was spoken by either of the trio until they had gone quite a distance, when Mrs. Flashley remarked: 'My! what airs she put on. You'd think she was somebody in particular instead of the wife of a poor young bookkeeper. I suppose they are so poor they can hardly keep body and soul together.'"

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"The house is beautifully furnished," "Yes, but very economically, and the handsome lamps and bric-a-brac are all wedding presents, you may depend upon it. He's as poor as Job's turkey."

"She certainly got the best of us," said Miss Snow.

"But, you know, the devil himself can quote Scripture," rejoined the squire's wife, sharply.

"Well," said Miss Snow, decidedly, "I am very sorry I made such a fool of myself. I think she is just perfectly lovely, and a lady to the manner born, that's easily seen."

"That evening Edith and Ned had a hearty laugh over the occurrence of the morning, and she said: 'I was awfully angry. I am glad I did not say anything dreadful. I felt like it.'"

"It was a case of righteous indignation, I think," remarked he. Then, giving the tip of her ear a little tweak, he said, with a mischievous smile: "So the little lady got on her ear, did she? I thought it looked red."

"You ridiculous boy. I thought you promised to stop talking slang."

"What was that they called us? Turtle doves or chimney swallows? What kind of a fowl was it? Oh, I remember, cross-bills."

"No, no, cross-backs. Did you ever hear of anything so perfectly horrid?"

"We'll soon have a chance to get even with them," commenced Ned, taking a couple of letters from his pocket.

of instruction on Catholic doctrine, which she said she would like to examine "prayerfully and carefully."

The great "event" which Ned had foretold proved a perfect success, and Edith had her revenge upon the squire's wife and the banker's wife by inviting them to the reception as though nothing disagreeable had occurred.

The little Ohio town developed rapidly, and the mission commenced by Father Raymond grew apace, until within a few years it found a home in a beautiful stone church on Daly's farm, a farm no longer, having been divided up into building lots, and being already an important section of the growing city.

Her admiration for Edith is still unbounded. One day they were talking about that notable visit from the euechre club committee, and Edith said:

"I always feel ashamed when I remember how angry and indignant I was. I should have remembered that you ladies were acting in good faith."

Miss Snow looked at her with a merry twinkle in her eye and said: "Yes, it was a case of invincible ignorance. But I am sure, my dear, you were not sinfully angry. If you were, you had a queer way of showing it. It must have been a case of 'Be ye angry and sin not.'"

Lest the reader be tempted to doubt the plausibility of this "over true tale," he is referred to the truth but nevertheless wise remark that "truth is stranger than fiction." The incident related was received by the writer from a near friend of the bride, whose wedding at St. Matthew's Church, Washington, D.C., was one of the most brilliant occasions of the season, a decade of years or more ago.

The recent issue of a new edition of Adelaide Proctor's poems has recalled the fact that she was a literary protégée of Charles Dickens. She contributed a number of poems to "Household Words," when Dickens was editor of that journal, under her nom de plume, and it was some time before he discovered her identity as the daughter of his old friend Barry Cornwall.

I have seen Charles Dickens referred to in a Catholic paper as a bigot, but I do not know of anything he wrote for publication that could be construed as offensive to Catholics. In one of his letters written while he was in Italy, Dickens describes a dream he had in which he thought he had become a Catholic and in another letter he made what might be considered offensive references to the religious institutions in the vicinity of where he was living.

But as a set-off against this we have his story of Barnaby Rudge which is at present running in your columns, in which is described the Lord George Gordon riots that were organized with the intention of intimidating the members of the British House of Commons, and, if possible, preventing them from passing a Catholic Relief Bill.

On the part of Catholics there is nothing more to be desired in his method of handling this theme. The rioting, and the burning and destruction of Catholic chapels and the property of Catholics generally, is vigorously condemned. This additional fact of his encouragement of a Catholic poetess should make those of that faith slow to speak ill of Charles Dickens.

Probably the most familiar of Adelaide Proctor's poems is the one set to music and sung by our grandmothers and our mothers, called the "Lost Chord." This touches a responsive note in the minds and hearts of all sorts and conditions of people and will not die.

Another poem that was written at a time when English evangelizers were calling for subscriptions to assist the mission in Ireland that was to free that country from the darkness of Roman Catholicism, has dramatic intensity and poetic fire:

"We ask not for the freedom Heaven has vouchsafed to thee, Nor bid thee share with Ireland The empire of the sea; Her children ask no shelter, Leave them the stormy sky, They ask not for thy harvests, For they know how to die; Deny them if it please thee A grave beneath the sod, But we do cry oh! England, Leave them their faith in God."

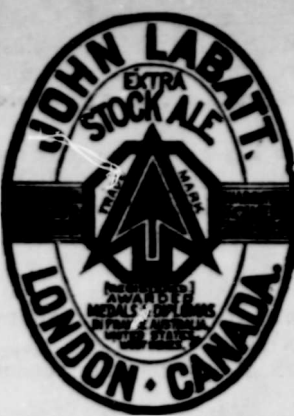
W. O. C.

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ages of the Church. It relates that St. Peter, induced to abandon Rome in a fierce persecution, met Christ bearing His cross at this place, and to the question, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" Christ answered, "I go to Rome to be crucified again." Induced by these words to return, Peter remained in Rome, where he was crucified under the rule of the Emperor Nero.

Some years ago it was reported that Sienkiewicz was falling away from the faith of his fathers, and being one evening at a gathering of ladies and gentlemen, the conversation turned upon epitaphs, the conversation propriety to the persons about whom they were written. "I wonder," said Sienkiewicz to a very brilliant lady, distinguished for her keen wit, "what epitaph would best become my tomb?" "Quo Vadis?" replied the lady at once, evidently with reference to the stories circulated about him.

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