

**THE CURATE'S SWEETHEART**

"A young woman with a pleasing face, who rarely smiles, and seems to shun observation, and an old lady, who comes out very little and always veiled."

That was the description given to the Rev. Charles Grosvenor of the new occupants of the little cottage which lay so close to his vicarage that he could see the smoke from the chimney over the tops of the trees that skirted his lawn.

The Rev. Charles Grosvenor had been away from the scene of his labors at Chumleigh for a month. Chumleigh was countryfied enough and healthy enough, but he had been ordered sea air and had taken the trip, leaving his vicarage to the care of a temporary shepherd.

The Rev. Charles Grosvenor was a young man, and Chumleigh was his first living. He was quite new enough to his work to take interest in it, and he was on intimate terms with all his parishioners.

Directly he heard of the new arrivals in the village, he, of course, determined to call upon them, but he thought he would just inquire what sort of people they were.

The result was the above description—a description vague enough in all conscience, and yet sufficient at once to invest the heroine of it with a slight halo of romance.

The Rev. Charles Grosvenor had not so long left college life to bury himself among the pumpkins but that he could duly appreciate the piquancy which a little mystery lends to our ordinary humdrum existence.

Knowing that the young lady shunned observation his curiosity was at once aroused, and he looked forward to his first meeting with her with more than ordinary eagerness. As to the old lady—well, he was a young bachelor, remember, and however deeply old ladies may veil themselves, or however mysterious they may be, they can not expect to command much attention when there is a younger lady in the case.

The curate called at Laburnam cottage the day after the return from the seaside. He found the Smiths very quiet and unassuming people. Mrs. Smith said very little and sighed a good deal, and Miss Smith, though a fluent and agreeable speaker, as he could judge from the little she said, spoke only in answer to his questions, and kept her eyes fixed on the ground, the whole time he was talking to her.

"Something queer about these people," said the Rev. Charles Grosvenor to himself. "I wonder what it is. I must draw them out."

His notion of drawing them out was to engage their services in his parish work. The old lady sighed and consented. The young one colored, cast down her eyes, and said that she was not fit for such work. Not religious enough, she meant.

The Rev. Charles Grosvenor was much distressed to hear that Miss Smith was not religious. Here, at least, was a task congenial to his soul. He was quite willing to convert farm laborers and to reform market gardeners, but when a delicate looking young lady, with an agreeable manner, offered herself, he could not refrain from looking forward to the prospect of higher and nobler work.

He talked seriously to Miss Smith, and Miss Smith listened seriously—so seriously that the curate was taken by surprise. He was almost alarmed at the terrible earnestness with which the girl spoke of religious questions, asked for spiritual consolation, and argued with him on the dread subject of the sinner's fate hereafter. The earnestness and the vehemence of his parishioner, however, only increased his interest in her.

Now, when Miss Smith called herself a miserable sinner, the Rev. Charles Grosvenor thoroughly believed that she was one. He accepted her confession in the same sense that he would have accepted it from the patron of his living, or his mother, or any of his lady parishioners. We are all miserable sinners, and being enjoined to say so, a clergyman can not for the sake of being complimentary, refuse to believe a young lady when she affirms that she is no exception to the rule.

But as to attaching any really serious import to the confession of Miss Smith, that never occurred to him for a moment. He soothed her, offered her such consolation as he could, thought she was a most pious and interesting girl, and fell madly in love with her.

From the moment he made the discovery his conduct to her altered. He tempted her to talk less about herself and to be cheerful. He didn't want the girl he was in love with to be too persistently a miserable sinner. She was so charming and so nice that he felt she might very well keep that in the background a little.

A white tie and a clerical coat do not alter a man's nature; and when a man falls madly in love with a woman, he likes to imagine her as near perfection as possible.

Miss Smith's manner changed also. She discovered the parson's secret before it was many days old. She was still pleased to see him, but she avoided all reference to her sins.

Once he questioned her about her past life. For a moment she went deadly pale, then the color rushed to her cheeks, and she stammered out a remark which turned the conversation.

Miss Smith saw that the Rev. Charles Grosvenor was at her mercy. It was only a question of time when he would make the avowal. Should she encourage him, or discourage his secret, and stop it while there was yet time?

In her difficulty she laid the case before her mother and asked her advice.

The old lady was frightened out of her wits. She dare not think about such a thing, she said. Of course it would be the making of her if she could marry a clergyman; but how could it be done? He would have to know the history of her life first, and then—

"And then he wouldn't have me," answered the girl passionately.

"Of course not, my dear," said Mrs. Smith, "at least I should think not."

"Shall I tell him? Shall I confess all the next time he comes?"

Again Mrs. Smith is frightened. She does not like to think what the result of that confession will be. They've managed at last to find a spot where they can live quietly and unknown. Why must all the miserable story be brought up again?

Miss Smith, failing to get any practical advice from her mother, thinks the matter over quietly by herself, and by the time she sees her admirer again she has settled on her course of action.

She meets him in the fields that lead to the church.

It is a bright summer morning, and they pause by a stile to look at the yellow and red of the far stretching fields.

The Rev. Charles Grosvenor commences by talking about nature, and gradually comes down to talking about himself—his aims and prospects in life. Little by little the conversation slides into the groove he wished, and in five minutes his hand and fortune have been laid at the feet of the lady listener.

He hadn't meant to be so abrupt; he had meant to keep his secret a little longer, but it had slipped out accidentally among the poetry and domestic details, and he was very glad it was over.

Miss Smith was of course very much surprised. The curate had caught her hand as his accents grew more impassioned. She allowed him to retain it till he had finished, then drew it gently away.

"Mr. Grosvenor," she said quietly, "I will answer you fairly and frankly. Before you made me such an offer you should have ascertained to whom you were speaking."

"What do you mean?"

"You do not know who or what I am."

"I know that you are an angel."

Miss Smith's lips curled slightly, but her voice trembled as she answered:

"As you have gone so far it is only right you should know something about me. My name is not Smith. That is a false name."

"A false name!" the parson gasped. "Dear me! why do you want a false name?"

"Listen and I will tell you. Did you ever hear of a terrible crime for which two men and two women were condemned? It was called a 'mystery' at first. But when the facts came to light it was called a 'murder.' One man starved his wife to death, and the other people helped him. He wanted to marry a younger woman, and this younger woman was one of the accused."

"I remember the case," stammered the curate. "It was very awful; but I don't see what you've got to do with it."

The perspiration stood on his brow and he began to mop it with his pocket handkerchief. He half expected to hear that Miss Smith was a relative of one of the criminals.

"You remember," continued the girl, speaking rapidly now and without emotion, "that all four were condemned to death, but the young girl was at the last moment granted a free pardon and allowed to return to the world and to her friends."

"Yes," gasped the clergyman, "I remember; but what has all this business to do with you?"

"This," answered the lady whom he had just made an offer of marriage: "I was the girl that allowed the murdered woman's husband to love me; I was the girl for whose sake the murder was committed; I was the girl who was condemned to be hanged by the neck and then granted a free pardon! I am—"

She stopped. The Rev. Charles Grosvenor had reeled back against the stile and closed his eyes.

"Excuse me," he muttered, "a little faintness, that's all."

He pulled himself together, stammered a little, coughed, and for a minute seemed at a loss what to say.

She broke the silence first.

"I have told you now the secret of my life. I am here with my mother, and here wish to remain—unknown, forgotten by the world. We are bound to live under an assumed name. We should be hooted and stoned if it were known who we really are. Will you keep my secret?"

"Certainly," stammered the curate; "and I trust—"

"That I shall keep yours. Rest assured of that, Mr. Grosvenor. I will forget that anything has happened this morning beyond the ordinary interchanges of courtesies between clergyman and parishioner."

She smiled and bowed and passed on. He walked back slowly to the church, muttering to himself, "What an escape—what a thought!"

The Rev. Charles Grosvenor is still the curate of Chumleigh, and Miss Smith and her mother still live at Laburnam cottage. The parishioners, however, notice that the visits of the clergyman to the cottage are few and far between, and that when he calls he is generally accompanied by one or other of his lady visitors.

And old Dame Turvey, who knows everything about everybody and is a great authority on village matters, assures every one that she can't make it out at all, for she was quite sure the parson was sweet in that quarter and she quite expected that Miss Smith would have presided at the parsonage tea table.

"Something must have happened very unexpected to break it all off," concludes the worthy dame, "for it was all altered like in a minute."

Dame Turvey is right for once. What happened was very unexpected, and it made such an impression on the Rev. Charles Grosvenor that he will remember it to the end of his life.

Tommy—Can we play at keeping a store in here, mamma? Mamma (who has a headache)—Certainly, but you must be very, very quiet. Tommy—Well, we'll pretend we don't advertise.—[Art in Advertising.]

"I say, Bill, wot makes you go 'round with that there barrel over yer 'ed?"

"I've got ter do it. The gals foller me, so I've obliged ter disguise myself."—[Judge.]

**SCIENTIFIC AND USEFUL.**

The latest discovery for dyspepsia is that pineapple juice is an active and powerful antiseptic.

Much as has been accomplished in the way of electrical inventions, the chances are that only the outer edge of the measureless field has as yet been touched.—[Inventive Age.]

Sir Morell Mackenzie objects to large hospitals on the ground that the added virulence of germs from the bodies of many patients is as dangerous as that of those emanating from dead bodies.

A machine, said to be a marvel of lightness and ingenuity, has recently been built in Australia for experiments in flying through the air. It is propelled by an engine fed with compressed air.

It has recently been shown that the bad effects of fog were felt most by tropical plants which, in a state of nature, were exposed to the sunlight. Plants which grew under the shade of forest trees did not suffer so much. Soft, tender plants and aquatic vegetation seemed to come off worst.

Aluminum bronze of 10 per cent, it is claimed, has a breaking strength of 310,000 pounds, as against 80,000 for steel; hence, when the time comes, which may not be far distant, for building bridges of aluminum or its alloy, we shall have a structure about one-third the present weight and much stronger.

A Washington physician has a somewhat novel theory of dietetics. "It is not the food which you assimilate which makes you fat," he said, "but that which you eat and fail to assimilate. Eat as many meals a day as you please, but eat little at a time, and avoid fluids, and you will reduce your weight."

It was recently maintained before the Paris Academy that shortness of sight was a defect incident to civilization or to an artificial condition of life. An examination of the eyes of wild animals shows that those captured after the age of six or eight months remain long sighted, while those captured earlier or born in captivity are near sighted.

At the last meeting of the Physical Society in England an electric lamp was exhibited which lighted itself when darkness came on and extinguished itself when daylight or another strong light was brought into the field. The lamp is worked by a selenium coil on the principle that the strength of the current varies with the intensity of light falling on the selenium.

**EDUCATIONAL.**

There are 75 American colleges for women.

There are still 96 log schoolhouses remaining in Oregon.

In the University of Maryland are 100 women dental students.

No more colored students are to be admitted to the Maryland Law School.

A year ago Harvard had 2,079 students, Columbia 1,029, and Yale 1,477.

Only four of the 39 professors of Kansas University were born in Kansas.

Boston's board of education has decided to abolish flogging in the public schools.

The Seventh Day Adventists will build a university in the Northwest, either at Walla Walla or Spokane.

The richest American college is Columbia, with an endowment of \$9,000,000. Harvard comes second, with about 7,000,000.

Women can study agriculture at Dartmouth the coming year. Those who have already learned to harrow up men's feelings will take to it naturally.

One of the significant educational tendencies of the day is the increased interest in the study of history and politics at Johns Hopkins University.

The study of cookery was introduced into the schools of New York city three years ago, and now about 1,000 girls are learning how to boil eggs, bake bread, make coffee, broil steak, and sizzle the frying pan.

Corsets, tight shoes, and all artificial and fake ideas of dress are discounted at Mr. Moody's Worthfield school, and girls are taught the higher etchies as well as practical results of physical culture.

In the New York public schools last year there were 18,642 pupils who studied German under 42 teachers, an increase of 8,000 over the number of two years before. There are now 3,874 pupils who study French in 14 public schools.

A resolution has been adopted by the Alabama legislature directing the committee on education to inquire into the propriety and expediency of admitting students of both sexes to the State institutions of learning, and also as to the expediency of a women's annex to the Agricultural and Mechanical College at Auburn.

**PERSONAL.**

Kossuth, at 88, is writing his memoirs at Turin, Italy.

Mary Ann Morse, of Natick, Mass., bequeaths \$150,000 to the town for a hospital.

Queen Victoria has five maids to assist at her toilet, viz: Three dressers and two wardrobe women.

The ex-Emperor Dom Pedro is making a Portuguese translation of the "Arabian Nights."

Rumors are current that Justice Lamar is growing weary of the Supreme Court routine, owing to failing health.

Ex-Attorney General Garland has built up a large and lucrative practice in the Supreme Court at Washington, which is now his home.

Mr. Stanley, in his lectures, never speaks of "niggers" or "negroes." He invariably classes the people as "white men" and "black men."

Madame Barrios, widow of the celebrated president of Venezuela, is now staying in Washington. Her fortune is said, on good authority, to aggregate \$6,000,000.

Jay Gould goes to bed every night at 10 o'clock, does not drink tea or coffee, eats with great regularity, and takes admirable care of his health, but the pace has told upon him, nevertheless.

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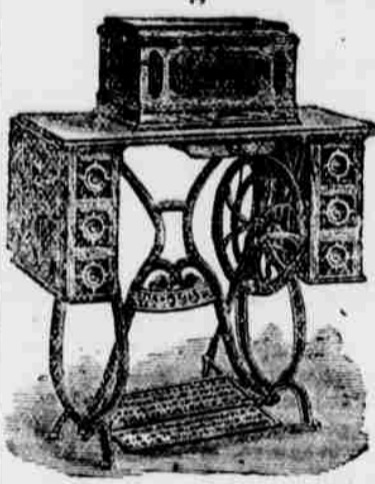
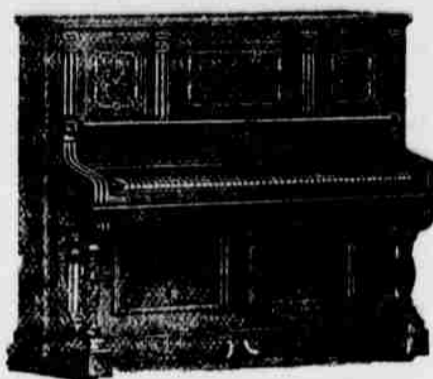
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