

OUR CURATE,

AND

How He Missed Being Married.

HE WAS A SHYEST—the most painfully modest man I ever knew and he often times suffered in consequence most cruelly. He was the one who went most out of his way to avoid hurting people's feelings, and for the sake of delicacy; and, as it usually happens, he was treading on people's mental toes continually. When he first came among us and was furnishing his cottage, and getting introduced to his future parishioners, I remember calling with him (on our way to the market town) on a man who had a club foot. It was not long before poor Flush, who was not aware of this, and was very near sighted, observed with a smile that our host seemed to take excellent care to keep himself out of the dirt among the lanes.

"What a sensible boot that is of yours. Mr. Layman; why it's treble soled!"

And before he had recovered himself from the flame of blushes into which he burst on the discovery of this mistake he informed Mrs. Layman and her four daughters that the object of our expedition into the town was to procure him (Peony Flush) a pair of comfortable drawers, meaning thereby a chest, I suppose, but sending the whole company into shrieks of laughter, and sufficing himself from top to toe with beautiful rose color. This sort of things, he confessed to me, annoys him for months afterward, oppressing him like sins; and I could not forbear remarking:

"Why Flush, how will you ever have the face to propose to the future Mrs. P. F.?"

He rose-colored in such a manner at this, that I said:—

"Come, Peony, tell us all about it at once, do," which, accordingly, after a little pressing, he did.

I was once, he began, engaged to be married, I believe; how I went so far as that is a marvel to me still, but an incident of so frightful a character took place as to put the matter entirely out of the question. I was a young under-graduate, spending the summer with a reading party at the Irish lakes, when I met with—with Lucy, and got, in short, to be accepted. She was residing with her mother in the same hotel in Killarney as ourselves and we all met every day. We boated on the lake together, and fished and sang and read. We landed on the wooded islands in the soft summer evenings, to take our tea in gypsy fashion, and to sketch; but she and I mostly whispered—not about love, as I remember, but of the weather and the rubric—only it seemed so sweet to sink our voices and speak low and soft.

Once in a party over the moors, while I was leading her pony over some boggy ground, I caught her hand by mistake, instead of the bridle, and she did not snatch it away. I was in the heyday and prime of life, my friend, and that youth of the spirit which no power can evermore renew. I knew what she felt and what would please her as soon as the feeling and the wish themselves were born. Our thought—my thought at least—"leapt out with thought to wed, ere thought could wed with speech."

She took a fancy to a huge mastiff dog belonging to a fisherman; and I bought it for her at once, although it was "terribly savage," and except for Lucy's liking it, not either good or beautiful. Its name also—the only one it would answer to, and sometimes it would not answer to that—was Towser, not a name for a lady's pet, after all, and scarcely a gentleman's. There was a little secluded field hedged in by a coppice, which sloped into the lake, about a mile from the hotel; and there Lucy agreed (for the first time) to meet me alone. I was to be there before breakfast, at eight o'clock in the morning and you may be sure that I was there at six—with Towser. Perhaps I was never happier than at that particular time. The universal nature seemed in harmony with my feelings. The sun shone out bright and clear, so that the fresh morning breeze could scarcely cool the pleasant throbbing of my blood. But the blue rippling waves of the lake looked irrepressibly tempting, and I could not resist a swim. Just a plunge in and out again, thought I: for though I had plenty of time to spare I determined to be dressed and ready for the interview an hour at least before the appointed time. Lucy might, like myself, be a little earlier; and at all events, with such an awful consequence in possible apprehension, I could not run a shadow of a risk.

"Mind my clothes, mind them," said I

to Towser,—who took his seat thereon at once, sagaciously enough—for I had heard of such things as clothes being stolen from unconscious dippers then, with results not to be thought of; and in I went. I remember the delight of that bath with them even to this day; the glow the freshness, the luxurious softness of every particular wave, just as the last view which his eyes rested on is painted on the memory of one who has been stricken blind, or the last heard melody is treasured in that of a man stunned by a fall; it was my last perfect pleasure, and succeeded by a shock that I shall never, I think, quite get over. When I had bathed as long as I judged to be prudent, I landed, and advanced toward the spot where my garments and Towser lay. As I did so every individual hair upon his head seemed to bristle with fury, his eyes kindled like coals of fire; he gave me notice by a low, determined growl that he would spring on me and tear me into fragments if I approached near; it was evident that he did not recognize me in the least without my clothes.

"Tow, Tow, Tow," said I pleasantly, "good Tow, you remember me;" but the brute, like the friend we have known in a better day, and appealed to when in different apparel, only shook his head in a menacing manner and showed his teeth the more.

"Towser, be quiet sir: how dare you—Tow Towser—here he nearly had a bit of my calf off—you nasty brutal dog; go away, sir—go; ain't you ashamed of yourself."

Drops of foam issued from the teeth of the ferocious monster as he stood up, tall erect, at the reproving words, but he manifested no signs of remorse or sorrow. My situation became serious in the extreme; what if he chose to sit there on my personal apparel until—until—?

At this idea, too terrible to be concluded, a profuse perspiration broke out all over me. Presently, feeling a little cold I went back into the lake again to consider what was to be done, and revolving the fell design of enticing Towser into the water and drowning him. Abuse and flattery being equally thrown away upon him, I tried stones; heaved at him with all force the largest pebbles I could select, the majority of which he avoided by leaping aside, and those which struck him rendered him so furious that I believe he would have killed and eaten me if he could, but still he would not venture into the water after me. At last the time was drawing on apace for the appointed interview which I had once looked forward to with such delight and expectation. I was faint in agony of shame and rage, to hide myself in a dry ditch where I could see without being seen and there I covered myself over like a babe in the woods, with leaves. Presently my Lucy came down, a trifle more carefully dressed than usual, and looking all grace and modesty; the dog began to howl as she drew near; she saw him and she saw my clothes, and the notion that I was drowned, I could see in her expressive countenance flashed upon her at once; for one instant she looked as though about to faint, and the next she sped off again to the hotel with the speed of a deer.

Gracious Heaven! I determined upon rescuing a portion of my garments, at least or perishing in the attempt, and rushed out of the thicket for that purpose; but my courage failed me as I neared the savage animal, and I found myself in some confused and palpitating manner, back in my dry ditch again, with the sensation of loss of blood, and pain; my retreat had not been effected—probably because there was nothing to cover it—without considerable loss, as the beast had bitten me severely.

I protested that, from that moment, frightful as my position was, it did not move me so much as the reflection of the honors that would be showered on that vile creature. I knew that he would be considered by Lucy and the rest as a sort of dog of Montargis, and affectionate and sagacious creature, watching patiently at his appointed post for the beloved master that would never return again.

Presently they all came back. Lucy and her mother, and all the maid-servants from the inn, besides my fellow students and fishermen with drag-nets, and a medical man with blankets and the brandy! As I expected, neither the women's cries nor the men's labor in vain distressed me half so much as the patting and caressing of Towser; if she could have only known, when she dropped those tears upon his cruel nose, that there was a considerable quantity of human flesh—my flesh, at that moment lying in his stomach in an undigested state, I

could not repress a groan of horror and indignation.

"Hush, hush," said Lucy, and there was a silence through which I could distinctly hear Towser licking his chops. I was desperate by this time, and hallooed out to friend Sanford:

"Sanford, and nobody else," to come into the copse with a blanket.

I remember nothing more distinctly. Immediately peals of laughter, now smothered, now breaking irrepressibly forth; expressions of thankfulness, of affection, of sympathy, beginning—but never finished—burst in upon, as it were, by floods of merriments, and the barking, the eternal barking of that execrable dog. I left Killarney that same evening; Lucy, and the mother of Lucy and my fellow students, and the abominable Towser; I left them for good and all; and this was how my engagement was broken off, and why there is no Mrs. Peony Flush, concluded the curate, who had turned from rose color to a deep carnation, and from red to almost black, during the recital.

Nicely Caught.

THE following singular story, which was current among the English residents in St. Petersburg, at the coronation of the present Emperor of Russia, has been narrated to us by a person newly arrived from that part of the continent:

In the early part of the year 1826, an English gentleman from Akmetch in the Crimea, having occasion to travel to France on business of importance, directed his course by way of Warsaw, in Poland. About an hour after his arrival in that city, he quitted the tavern in which he had been taking a refreshment, to take a walk through the streets. While sauntering in front of one of the public buildings, he met an elderly gentleman of a grave aspect and courteous demeanor. After mutual change of civilities, they got into conversation, during which, with the characteristic frankness of an Englishman, he told the stranger who he was, where from, and whither he was going. The other, in the most friendly manner, invited him to share the hospitalities of his house till such a time as he thought convenient to resume his journey—adding with a smile, that it was not improbable he might visit the Crimea himself in the course of a year, when perhaps, he might require a similar return; the invitation was accepted, and he was conducted to a splendid mansion, elegant without and commodious within.

Unbounded liberality on the part of the Pole, produced unbounded confidence on the part of the Englishman. The latter had a small box of jewels of great value, which he had carried about his person from the time of his leaving home. Feeling that mode of conveyance both hazardous and inconvenient in large town, he requested his munificent host to deposit it in a place of security till he should be ready to go away. At the expiration of three days he prepared for his departure, and in asking for his box, how he was amazed, when the old gentleman, with a countenance exhibiting the utmost surprise, replied:

"What box?"

"Why, the small box of jewels which I gave you to keep for me."

"My dear sir, you must surely be mistaken; I never really saw nor heard of such a box."

The Englishman was petrified. After recovering himself a little, he requested he should call his wife, she having been present when he received it. She came, and on being questioned, answered in exact unison with her husband—she expressed the same surprise—and benevolently endeavored to persuade her distracted guest that it was a mere hallucination. With mingled feelings of horror, astonishment, and despair, he walked out of the house and went to the tavern at which he had put up on his arrival in Warsaw. There he related his mysterious history, and learned that his iniquitous host was the richest Jew in Poland. He was advised without delay, to state the case to the grand Duke, who fortunately happened to be at that time in Warsaw.

He accordingly waited upon him, and with little ceremony was admitted to an audience. He briefly laid down his case, and Constantine "with greedy ear devoured up his discourse." Constantine expressed his astonishment—told him he knew the Jew, having had extensive money transactions with him—that he had always been respectable and of an unblemished character. "However," he added, "I will use every legitimate means to unveil the mystery." So saying, he

called on some friends who were to dine with him that day, and despatched a messenger with a note to the Jew, requesting his presence. Aaron obeyed the summons.

"Have you no recollection of having received a box of jewels, from the hand of this gentleman?" said the Duke.

"Never, my lord," was the reply.

"Strange, indeed. Are you perfectly conscious," turning to the Englishman, "that is the man you gave the box as stated?"

"Quite certain, my lord."

Then addressing himself to the Jew, "This is a very singular case, and I feel it my duty to use singular means to ascertain the truth; is your wife at home?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Then," continued Constantine, "there is a sheet of paper, and here is a pen; proceed to write a note to your wife in such terms as I shall dictate."

Aaron lifted the pen.

"Now," said the second Solomon, "commence by saying 'all is discovered! There is no resource left but to deliver up the box. I have owned the fact in the presence of the grand Duke.'"

A tremor shook the frame of the Israelite, and the pen dropped from his fingers. But instantly recovering himself, he exclaimed:

"That is impossible, my lord. That would be implicating myself."

"I give you my word and honor," said Constantine, "in presence of every one in the room, that what you write shall never be used as an instrument against you, farther than the effect it produces on your wife. If you are innocent you have nothing to fear—but if you persist in not writing it, I hold it as a proof of your guilt."

With a trembling hand the terrified Jew wrote out the note, folded it up, and as he was desired, sealed it with his own signet. Two officers were despatched with it to his house, and when Sarah glanced at its contents, she swooned and sank to the ground. The box was delivered up and restored to its owner—and the Jew suffered the punishment his villainy deserved. He was sent to Siberia.

Murder will Out.

WHEN Dr. John Donne, a distinguished poet and divine, in the reign of James I., was taking a walk through the church-yard, where the sexton was at the time digging a grave, the latter in the course of his labor threw up a skull. The doctor observing it picked it up and found a rusty, headless nail sticking in the temple of it. He withdrew it unnoticed by the sexton, and wrapping it up in his handkerchief, asked the grave digger whether he knew whose skull it was. He immediately replied, it was a man's who kept a drinking house—an honest but drunken fellow, who one night having indulged very freely, was found dead in his bed the next morning.

"Had he a wife?" asked the doctor.

"Yes," was the reply.

"What character does she bear?"

"A very good one; only the neighbors were very much surprised to learn that she had been married the day after her husband was buried."

The doctor soon after called on the woman and asked her several questions as to what sickness her husband died of.—She gave him the same account he had before received, he then opened his handkerchief, and casting a searching glance on the woman, cried in an authoritative voice:

"Woman, do you know this nail?"

She was struck with horror at the unexpected demand, instantly acknowledged the fact, was brought to trial, and executed.

Wanted.

A Paris banker has devised what he considered an ingenious measure to prevent a defalcation by his cashier. He places an iron cage in front of his safe, and insists that the cashier shall be locked in it until his cash account is verified at the close of the day. He has as yet found only one man willing to accept this condition.

"You must enter the cage at 9 A. M., and you will be liberated at 4 P. M., after your account has been verified," said the banker to an applicant.

"Agreed."

"You must not leave during the day under any pretense. I keep the key in my pocket."

"All right; I'm used to confinement."

"Where have you been?"

"In the penitentiary for the last fifteen years."

Situation still open.

SUNDAY READING.

A CRY.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Sweet Guest, dear Guest, no more
I lock the low dim door,
Where long with patience sweet
Have strayed thy weary feet:
Withdrawing bolt and bar,
I see it now ajar.

It is a poor, dark place,
Unworthy of such grace,
For through its pane, dust-deep,
Only the shadows creep,
And thick have spiders spun
Nor left space for the sun.

And here no rich banquet
Betitting Thee is set;
Not even bread is mine,
I have no food, no wine,
No damask fine, no silver cup—
How, then, with me canst sup?

O! that I were but clean!
For canst Thou really mean
To come and sup wherein
Only foul guests have been—
A dusty dwelling where
All empty is and bare.

Sweet Guest, dear Guest, if thou
In such canst go, come now:
O come, I hungry wait—
Longing, repentant, late,
Withdraw each bolt and bar,
And set my door ajar.

Obedience to Parents.

Show me a boy who obeys his parents, who has respect for age, always has a friendly disposition, and who applies himself diligently to get wisdom and to do good toward others, and if he is not respected and beloved then there is no such thing as truth in the world.

Even when parents are ill-tempered and unseasonable they should be treated with respect and forbearance by their children. Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great, was a woman of ambitious disposition, and occasioned much trouble to her son. Nevertheless, when pursuing his conquests in Asia, he sent her splendid presents out of the spoils which he had taken, as tokens of his affection.—He only begged that she would not meddle with state affairs, but allow his kingdom to be managed peaceably by his governor, Antipater. When she sent a harsh reply to the request which he had made, he bore it patiently, and did not use sharp language in return.

On one occasion, when she had been unusually troublesome, Antipater sent him letters complaining of her in very sad terms. Alexander only said "Antipater does not know that one single tear of my mother is able to blot out six hundred of his epistles."

A boy was once tempted by some of his companions to pluck ripe cherries from a tree which his father had forbidden him to touch.

"You need not be afraid," said one of his companions, "for if your father should find out that you have taken them he is so kind he would not hurt you."

"That is the very reason," replied the boy, "why I would not touch them. It is true that my father would not touch me, yet, my disobedience, I know, would hurt my father, and that would be worse to me than anything else."

A boy who grows up with such principles will be a man in the best sense of the word. It shows a regard for rectitude that would render him trustworthy under every trial.

I met a little boy, the other day, hauling a big baby in a wagon. "Little boy," I asked, "what are you doing for the Lord?" He stopped and looked up, and in a moment said: "Why, I am trying to make baby happy, so she won't cry and disturb my sick mother." That indeed was a good work. I am sure it pleases Jesus. He loves to see the children helpful to each other and their parents, even though their help be ever so little.

A little Swedish girl, while walking with her father, on a starry night, absorbed in contemplation of the skies, being asked of what she was thinking, replied, "I was thinking if the wrong side of heaven is so glorious what must the right side be!"

Those who in the day of sorrow have owned God's presence in the cloud will find him also in the pillar of fire, brightening and cheering the abode as night comes on.