The Century illustrated monthly magazine
New York, Scribner & Co.; The Century Co

https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278

Public Domain
http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd

We have determined this work to be in the public domain, meaning that it is not subject to copyright. Users are free to copy, use, and redistribute the work in part or in whole. It is possible that current copyright holders, heirs or the estate of the authors of individual portions of the work, such as illustrations or photographs, assert copyrights over these portions. Depending on the nature of subsequent use that is made, additional rights may need to be obtained independently of anything we can address.

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd

PETER, THE PARSON.

In November, 1850, a little mining settlement stood forlornly on the shore of Lake Superior. A log dock ran out into the dark water; a roughly-built furnace threw a glare against the dark sky; several stamping mills kept up their monotonous tramping day and night; and evil-minded saloons beset the steps on all sides. Back into the pine forest ran the white sand road leading to the mine, and on the right were clustered the houses, which were scarcely better than shanties, although adorned with sidling porches and sham-windowed fronts. Winter begins early in these high latitudes. Navigation was still open, for a scow with patched sails was coming slowly up the bay, but the air was cold, and the light snow of the preceding night clung unmelted on the north side of the trees. The pine forest had been burned away to make room for the village; blackened stumps rose everywhere in the weedy streets, and, on the outskirts of the clearing, grew into tall skeletons, bleached white without, but black and charred within—a desolate framing for a desolate picture. Everything was bare, jagged and unfinished; each poor house showed hasty makeshifts—no doors latched, no windows fitted. Pigs were the principal pedestrians. At four o'clock this cold November afternoon, the saloons, with their pine fires and red curtains, were by far the most cheerful spots in the landscape, and their ruddy invitations to perdition were not counterbalanced by a single opposing gleam, until the Reverend Herman Peters prepared his chapel for vespers.

Herman Warriner Peters was a slender little man, whose blue eyes, fair hair and unbearded face misled the observer into the idea of extreme youth. There was a boyishness in his air, or, rather, lack of air, and a nervous timidity in his manner, which stamped him as a person of no importance—one of those men who, not of sufficient consequence to be disliked, are simply ignored by a well-bred world, which pardons anything rather than insignificance. And if ignored by a well-bred world, what by an ill-bred? Society at Algonquin was worse than ill-bred, inasmuch as it had never been bred at all. Like all mining settlements, it esteemed physical strength the highest good, and next to that an undaunted demeanor and flowing vocabulary, designated admiringly as "powerful sassy." Accordingly it made unlimited fun of the Reverend Herman Warriner Peters, and derived much enjoyment from calling him "Peter," pretending to think it was his real name, and solemnly persisting in the mistake in spite of all the painstaking corrections of the unsuspecting little man.

The Reverend Herman wrapped himself in his thin old cloak and twisted a comforter around his little throat, as the clock warned him of the hour. He was not leaving much comfort behind him; the room was dreary and bare, without carpet, fire, or easy chair. A cot-bed, which sagged hopelessly, a wash-bowl set on a dry-goods box, flanked by a piece of bar-soap and a crash towel, a few pegs on the cracked wall, one wooden chair and his own little trunk completed the furniture. The Reverend Herman boarded with Mrs. Malone, and ate her streaked biscuit and fried meat without complaint. The woman could rise to yeast and a gridiron when the surveyors visited Algonquin, or when the directors of the iron company came up in the summer; but the streaked biscuit and fried steak were "good enough for the little parson, bless him!"

There were some things in the room, however, other than furniture, namely, a shelf full of religious books, a large and appalling picture of the crucifixion, and a cross six feet in height, roughly made of pine saplings, and fixed to the floor in a wooden block. There was also a small colored picture, with the words "Santa Margarita" inscribed beneath. The picture stood on a bracket fashioned of shingles, and below it hung a poor little vase filled with the last colored leaves.

"Ye only want the Howly Vargin now, to be all right, yer riverence," said Mrs. Malone, who was, in name at least, a Roman Catholic.

"All honor and affection are, no doubt, due to the Holy Mary," answered the Reverend Herman, nervously; "but the Anglican Church does not—at present—allow her claim to—to adoration." And he sighed.

"Why don't yer jest come right out now, and be a rale Catholic," said Mrs. Malone, with a touch of sympathy. "You're next door

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

to it, and it's aisy to see yer ain't happy in yer mind. If yer was a rale praste, now, with the coat and all, 'stead of being a make-believe, the boys 'ud respect yer more, and wouldn't notice yer soize so much. Or yer might go back to the cities (for I don't deny they do loike a big fist up here), and loikely enough yer could find aisy work there that 'ud suit yer."

"I like hard work, Mrs. Malone," said the little parson.

"But you're not fit for it, sir. You'll niver get on here if yer stay till judgment day. Why, yer aint got ten people, all told, belongin' to yer chapel, and you're here a year already!"

The Reverend Herman sighed again, but made no answer. He sighed now as he left his cold room and stepped out into the cold street. The wind blew as he made his way along between the stumps, carefully going round the pigs, who had selected the best places for their siestas. He held down his comforter with one bare hand; the other clutched the end of a row of books, which filled his thin arm from the shoulder down. He limped as he walked. An ankle had been cruelly injured some months previously; the wound had healed, but he was left permanently and awkwardly lame. At the time, the dastardly injury had roused a deep bitterness in the parson's heart, for grace and activity had been his one poor little bodily gift, his one small pride. The activity had returned, not the grace. But he had learned to limp bravely along, and the bitterness had passed away.

Lights shone comfortably from the Pine-Cone Saloon as he passed.

"Hallo! Here's Peter the Parson," sang out a miner, standing at the door; and forth streamed all the loungers to look at him.

"Say, Peter, come in and have a drop to warm yer," said one.

"Look at his poor little ribs, will yer?" said another, as his cloak blew out like a sail.

"Let him alone! He's going to have his preaching all to himself, as usual," said a third. "Them books is all the congregation *he* can get, poor little chap!"

The parson's sensitive ears heard every word. He quickened his steps, and, with his usual nervous awkwardness, stumbled and fell, dropping all the books, amid the jeering applause of the bystanders. Silently he rose and began collecting his load, the wind every now and then blowing his cloak over his head as he stooped, and his difficulties increased by the occasional gift of a potato full in the breast, and a flood of witty commentaries from the laughing group at the saloon door. As he picked up the last volume and turned away, a missile, deftly aimed, took off his hat, and sent it over a fence into a neighboring field. The parson hesitated, but as a small boy had already given chase, not to bring it back, but to send it further away, he abandoned the hat,—his only one,—and walked on among the stumps bare-headed, his thin hair blown about by the raw wind, and his blue eyes reddened with cold and grief.

The Episcopal Church of St. John and St. James was a rough little building, with recess-chancel, ill-set Gothic windows, and a half-finished tower. It owed its existence to the zeal of a director's wife, who herself embroidered its altar-cloth and book-marks, and sent thither the artificial flowers and candles which she dared not suggest at home; the poor Indians, at least, should not be deprived of them! The director's wife died, but left by will a pittance of two hundred dollars per annum towards the rector's salary. In her fancy she saw Algonquin, a thriving town, whose inhabitants believed in the Anglican succession, and sent their children to Sunday-school. In reality, Algonquin remained a lawless mining settlement, whose inhabitants believed in nothing, and whose children hardly knew what Sunday meant, unless it was more whisky than usual. The two hundred dollars and the chapel, however, remained fixed facts, and the Eastern directors, therefore, ordered a picturesque church to be delineated on their circulars, and themselves constituted a non-resident vestry. One or two young missionaries had already tried the field, failed, and gone away, but the present incumbent, who had equally tried and equally failed, remained.

On this occasion he unlocked the door and entered the little sanctuary. It was cold and dark, but he made no fire, for there was neither stove nor hearth. Lighting two candles,—one for the congregation and one for himself,—he distributed the books among the benches and the chancel, and dusted carefully the little altar, with its faded embroideries and flowers. Then he retired into the shed which served as a vestry-room, and in a few minutes issued forth, clad in his robes of office, and knelt at the chancel rail. There was no bell to summon the congregation, and no congre-

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

gation to summon; but still he began in his clear voice, "Dearly beloved brethren," and continued on unwavering through the confession, the absolution, and the psalms, leaving a silence for the corresponding responses, and devoutly beginning the first lesson. In the midst of "Zephaniah" there was a slight noise at the door and a step sounded over the rough floor. The solitary reader did not raise his eyes, and, the lesson over, he bravely lifted up his mild tenor in the chant, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most Highest." A girl's voice took up the air; the mild tenor dropped into its own part, and the two continued the service in a duet, spoken and sung, to its close. Then the minister retired, with his candle, to the shed, and, hanging up his surplice, patiently waited, pacing to and fro in the cold. Patiently waited; and for what? For the going away of the only friend he had in Algonquin.

The congregation lingered; its shawl must be refastened; indeed, it must be entirely refolded. Its hat must be retied, and the ribbons carefully smoothed. Still there was no sound from the vestry-room. It collected all the prayer-books, and piled them near the candle, making a separate journey for each little volume. Still no one. At last, with lingering step and backward glance, slowly it departed and carried its disappointed face homeward. Then Peter the Parson issued forth, lifted the careful pile of books with tender hand, and extinguishing the lights, went out bareheaded into the darkness. The vesper service of St. John and St. James was over.

After a hot, unwholesome supper the minister returned to his room and tried to read; but the candle flickered, the cold seemed to blur the book, and he found himself gazing at the words without taking in their sense. Then he began to read aloud, slowly walking up and down, and carrying the candle to light the page; but through all the learned sentences there still crept to the surface the miserable consciousness of bodily cold. "And mental, too, Heaven help me!" he thought. "But I cannot afford a fire at this season, and, indeed, it ought not to be necessary. This delicacy must be subdued; I will go out and walk." Putting on his cloak and comforter (O deceitful name!) he remembered that he had no hat. Would his slender store of money allow a new one? Unlocking his trunk, he drew out a thin purse hidden away among his few carefully folded clothes,—the poor trunk was but half full,—and counted its contents. The sum was pitifully small, and it must yet last many weeks. But a hat was necessary, whereas a fire was a mere luxury. "I must harden myself," thought the little parson sternly, as he caught himself shuddering with the cold; "this evil tendency to self-indulgence must and shall be crushed."

He went down towards the dock where stood the one store of Algonquin—stealing along in the darkness to hide his uncovered condition. Buying a hat, the poorest one there, from the Jew proprietor, he lingered a moment near the stove to warm his chilled hands. Mr. Marx, rendered good-natured by the bold cheat he had perpetrated, affably began a conversation.

"Sorry to see yer still limp bad. But it aint so hard as it would be if yer was a larger man. Yer see there aint much of yer to limp; that's one comfort. Hope business is good at yer chapel, and that Mrs. Malone gives yer enough to eat; yer don't look like it, though. The winter has sot in early, and times is hard." And did the parson know that "Brother Saul has come in from the mine, and is a-holding forth in the school-house this very minit?"

No; the parson did not know it. But he put on his new hat, whose moth-holes had been skillfully blackened over with ink, and turned towards the door.

"It's nothing to me, of course," continued Mr. Marx, with a liberal wave of his dirty hand; "all your religions are alike to me, I'm free to say. But I wonder yer and Saul don't work together, parson. Yer might do a heap of good if yer was to pull at the same oar, now."

The words echoed in the parson's ears as he walked down to the beach, the only promenade in Algonquin free from stumps. Could he do a "heap of good," by working with that ignorant, coarse, roaring brother, whose blatant pride, dirty shirt, and irreverent familiarity with all things sacred were alike distasteful, nay, horrible to his sensitive mind. Pondering, he paced the narrow strip of sand under the low bluff; but all his efforts did not suffice to quicken or warm his chilled blood. Nevertheless he expanded his sunken chest and drew in long breaths of the cold night air, and beat his little hands vigorously together, and ran to and fro. "Aha!" he said to himself, "this is glorious exercise." And then he went home, colder

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

than ever; it was his way thus to make a reality of what ought to be.

Passing through one of the so-called streets, he saw a ruddy glow in front of the school-house; it was a pine-knot fire whose flaring summons had not been unheeded. The parson stopped a moment and warmed himself, glancing meanwhile furtively within where Brother Saul was holding forth in clarion tones to a crowded congregation; his words reached the listener's ear, and verified the old proverb. "There's brimstone and a fiery furnace for them as doubts the truth, I tell you. Prayin' out of a book — and flowers — and candles—and night-gownds 'stead of decent coats—for it's night-gownds they look like though they may call them surpluses," (applause from the miners,) — "won't do no good. Sech nonsense will never save souls. You've jest got to fall down on your knees and pray hard—hard—with groaning and roaring of the spirit—until you're as weak as a rag. Nothing else will do; nothing,—nothing."

The parson hurried away, shrinking (though unseen) from the rough finger pointed at him. Before he was out of hearing, a hymn sounded forth on the night breeze—one of those nondescript songs that belong to the border, a favorite with the Algonquin miners because of a swinging chorus wherein they roared out their wish to "die a-shouting," in company with all the kings and prophets of Israel, each one fraternally mentioned by name.

Reaching his room, the parson hung up his cloak and hat, and sat down quietly with folded hands. Clad in dressing gown and slippers, in an easy chair, before a bright fire, a reverie, thus, is the natural ending for a young man's day. But here the chair was hard and straight-backed, there was no fire, and the candle burned with a feeble, blue flame; the small figure in its limp black clothes, with its little gaitered feet pressed close together on the cold floor as if for warmth, its clasped hands, its pale face and blue eyes fixed on the blank expanse of the plastered wall, was pathetic in its patient discomfort. After a while a tear fell on the clasped hands and startled their coldness with its warmth. The parson brushed the token of weakness hastily away, and rising, threw himself at the foot of the large wooden cross with his arms clasping its base. In silence for many moments he lay thus prostrate; then, extinguishing the candle, he sought his poor couch. But later in the night, when all Algonquin slept, a crash of something falling was heard in the dark room followed by the sound of a scourge mercilessly used, and murmured Latin prayers, the old cries of penitence that rose during night-vigils from the monasteries of the Middle Ages. And why not English words? Was there not something of affectation in the use of these medieval phrases? Maybe so; but at least there was nothing affected in the stripes made by the scourge. The next morning all was as usual in the little room save that the picture of Santa Margarita was torn in twain, and the bracket and vase shattered to fragments on the floor below.

At dawn the parson rose, and after a conscientious bath in the tub of icy water brought in by his own hands the previous evening, he started out with his load of prayer-books, his face looking haggard and blue in the cold morning light. Again he entered the chapel, and having arranged the books and dusted the altar, he attired himself in his robes and began the service at half-past six precisely. "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same," he read, and in truth the sun was just rising. As the evening prayer was "vespers," so this was "matins" in the parson's mind. He had his "vestments" too, of various ritualistic styles, and washed them himself, ironing them out afterwards with fear and difficulty in Mrs. Malone's disorderly kitchen, poor little man! No hand turned the latch, no step came across the floor this morning; the parson had the service all to himself, and, as it was Friday, he went through the Litany, omitting nothing, and closing with a hymn. Then, gathering up his books, he went home to breakfast.

"How peaked yer do look, sir," exclaimed ruddy Mrs. Malone, as she handed him a cup of muddy coffee. "What, no steak? Do, now; for I aint got nothin' else. Well, if yer won't——but there's nothin' but the biscuit, then. Why, even Father O'Brien himself 'lows meat for the sickly, Friday or no Friday."

"I am not sickly, Mrs. Malone," replied the little parson with dignity.

A young man with the figure of an athlete sat at the lower end of the table, tearing the tough steak voraciously with his strong teeth, chewing audibly, and drink-

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ing with a gulping noise. He paused as the parson spoke, and regarded him with wonder, not unmixed with contempt.

"You aint sickly?" he repeated. "Well, if you aint, then I'd like to know who is, that's all."

"Now, you jest eat your breakfast, Steve, and let the parson alone," interposed Mrs. Malone. "Sorry to see that little picture all tore, sir," she continued, turning the conversation in her blundering good-nature. "It was a moighty pretty picture, and looked uncommonly like Rosie Ray."

"It was a copy of an Italian painting, Mrs. Malone," the parson hastened to reply; "Santa Margarita."

"Oh, I dare say; but it looked iver so much like Rosie for all that."

A deep flush had crossed the parson's pale face. The athlete saw it, and muttered to himself angrily, casting surly sidelong glances up the table, and breathing hard; the previous evening he had happened to pass the Chapel of Saint John and Saint James as its congregation of one was going in the door.

After two hours spent in study, the parson went out to visit the poor and sick of the parish; all were poor, and one was sick, the child of an Englishwoman, a miner's wife. The mother, with a memory of her English training, dusted a chair for the minister, and dropped a courtesy, as he seated himself by the little bed; but she seemed embarrassed, and talked volubly of anything and everything save the child. The parson listened to the unbroken stream of words while he stroked the boy's soft cheek, and held the wasted little hand in his. At length he took a small bottle from his pocket, and looked around for a spoon; it was a pure and delicate cordial which he had often given to the sick child to sustain its waning strength.

"Oh, if you please, sir,—indeed, I don't feel sure that it does Harry any good. Thank you for offering it so free—but—but, if you'd just as lieve—I—I'd rather not, sir, if you please, sir."

The parson looked up in astonishment; the costly cordial had robbed him of many a fire.

"Why don't you tell the minister the truth," called out a voice from the inner room, the harsh voice of the husband. "Why don't you say right out that Brother Saul was here last night, and prayed over the child, and give it some of his own medicine, and telled you not to touch the parson's stuff; he said it was pizen, he did."

The parson rose, cut to the heart. He had shared his few dimes with this woman, and had hoped much from her on account of her early church-training. On Sunday she had been one of the few who came to the chapel, and when, during the summer, she was smitten with fever, he had read over her the prayers from "the Visitation of the Sick;" he had baptized this child now fading away, and had loved the little fellow tenderly, taking pleasure in fashioning toys for his baby hands, and saving for him the few cakes of Mrs. Malone's table.

"I didn't mean to have Saul—I didn't indeed, sir," said the mother, putting her apron to her eyes. "But Harry he was so bad last night, and the neighbors sort o' persuaded me into it. Brother Saul does pray so powerful strong, sir, that it seems as though it must do some good some way; and he's a very comfortable talker too, there's no denying that. Still I didn't mean it, sir; and I hope you'll forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive," replied the parson gently; and, leaving his accustomed coin on the table, he went away.

Wandering at random through the pine forest, unable to overcome the dull depression at his heart, he came suddenly upon a large bull-dog; the creature, one of the ugliest of its kind, eyed him quietly, with a slow wrinkling of the sullen upper lip.

The parson visibly trembled.

"'Fraid, are ye?" called out a voice, and the athlete of the breakfast-table showed himself.

"Call off your dog, please, Mr. Long."

"He aint doin' nothin', parson. But you're at liberty to kick him, if you like," said the man, laughing as the dog snuffed stealthily around the parson's gaiters. The parson shifted his position; the dog followed. He stepped aside; so did the dog. He turned and walked away with a determined effort at self-control; the dog went closely behind, brushing his ankles with his ugly muzzle. He hurried; so did the dog. At last, overcome with the nervous physical timidity which belonged to his constitution, he broke into a run, and fled as if for life, hearing the dog close behind and gaining with every step. The jeering laugh of the athlete followed him through the pine tree aisles, but he heeded it not, and when at last he spied a log-house on one side he took refuge within like a hunt-

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ed hare, breathless and trembling. An old woman smoking a pipe was its only occupant. "What's the matter?" she said. "Oh, the dog?" And, taking a stick of wood, she drove the animal from the door, and sent him fleeing back to his master. The parson sat down by the hearth to recover his composure.

"Why, you're most frightened to death, aint yer?" said the old woman, as she brushed against him to make up the fire. "You're all of a tremble. I wouldn't stray so far from home if I was you, child."

Her vision was imperfect, and she took the small, cowering figure for a boy.

The minister went home.

After dinner, which he did not eat, as the greasy dishes offended his palate, he shut himself up in his room to prepare his sermon for the coming Sunday. It made no difference whether there would be any one to hear it or not, the sermon was always carefully written, and carefully delivered, albeit short, according to the ritualistic usage, which esteems the service all, the sermon nothing. His theme on this occasion was "The General Councils of the Church," and the sermon, an admirable production of its kind, would have been esteemed, no doubt, in English Oxford, or in the General Theological Seminary of New York City. He wrote earnestly and ardently, deriving a keen enjoyment from the work; the mechanical part also was exquisitely finished, the clear sentences standing out like the work of a sculptor, Then came vespers; and the congregation this time was composed of two, or, rather, three persons; the girl, the owner of the dog, and the dog himself. The man entered during service with a noisy step, managing to throw over a bench, coughing, humming, and talking to his dog; half of the congregation was evidently determined upon mischief. But the other half rose with the air of a little queen, crossed the intervening space with an open prayer-book, gave it to the man, and, seating herself near by, fairly awed him into good behavior. Rose Ray was beautiful; and the lion lay at her feet. As for the dog, with a wave of her hand she ordered him out, and the beast humbly withdrew. It was noticeable that the parson's voice gained strength as the dog disappeared.

"I aint going to stand by and see it, Rosie," said the man, as, the service over, he followed the girl into the street. "That puny little chap!"

"He cares nothing for me," answered the girl quickly.

"He shan't have a chance to care, if I know myself. You're free to say 'no' to me, Rosie, but you aint free to say yes' to him. A regular coward! That's what he is. Why, he ran away from my dog this very afternoon—ran like he was scared to death!"

"You set the dog on him, Steve."

"Well, what if I did? He needn't have run; any other man would have sent the beast flying."

"Now, Steve, do promise me that you won't tease him any more," said the girl, laying her hand upon the man's arm as he walked by her side. His face softened.

"If he had any spirit he'd be ashamed to have a girl beggin' for him not to be teased. But never mind that; I'll let him alone fast enough, Rosie, if you will too."

"If I will," repeated the girl, drawing back, as he drew closer to her side; "what can you mean?"

"Oh, come now! You know very well you're always after him—a-goin' to his chapel where no one else goes hardly—a-listenin' to his preachin'—and a-havin' your picture hung up in his room."

It was a random shaft, sent carelessly, more to finish the sentence with a strong point than from any real belief in the athlete's mind.

"What!"

"Leastways so Mrs. Malone said. I took breakfast there this morning."

The girl was thrown off her guard, her whole face flushed with joy, she could not for the moment hide her agitation. "My picture!" she murmured, and clasped her hands. The light from the Pine-Cone crossed her face, and revealed the whole secret; Steven Long saw it, and fell into a rage. After all, then, she did love the puny parson!

"Let him look out for himself, that's all," he muttered with a fierce gesture, as he turned towards the saloon door. (He felt a sudden thirst for vengeance, and for whisky). "I'll be even with him, and I won't be long about it neither. You'll never have the little parson alive, Rose Ray! He'll be found missin' some fine mornin', and nobody will be to blame but you either." He disappeared, and the girl stood watching the spot where his dark, angry face had been. After a time she went slowly homeward, troubled at heart; there was neither law nor order at Algon-

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

quin, and not without good cause did she fear.

The next morning, as the parson was coming from his solitary matin-service through thick-falling snow, this girl met him, slipped a note into his hand, and disappeared like a vision. The parson went homeward, carrying the folded paper under his cloak pressed close to his heart; "I am only keeping it dry," he murmured to himself. This was the note:

"RESPECTED SIR:

"I must see you, you air in danger. Please come to the Grotter this afternoon at three and I remain yours respectful,

"ROSE RAY."

The Reverend Herman Warriner Peters read these words over and over; then he went to breakfast, but ate nothing, and, coming back to his room, he remained the whole morning motionless in his chair. At first the red flamed in his cheek, but gradually it faded, and gave place to a pinched pallor; he bowed his head upon his hands, communed with his own heart, and was still. As the dinner-bell rang he knelt down on the cold hearth, made a little funeral pyre of the note torn into fragments, watched it slowly consume, and then, carefully collecting the ashes, he laid them at the base of the large cross.

At two o'clock he set out for the Grotto, a cave two miles from the village along the shore, used by the fishermen as a camp during the summer. The snow had continued falling, and now lay deep on the even ground; the pines were loaded with it, and everything was white save the waters of the bay, heaving sullenly, dark and leaden, as though they knew the icy fetters were nearly ready for them. The parson walked rapidly along in his awkward, halting gait; overshoes he had none, and his cloak was but a sorry substitute for the blankets and skins worn by the miners. But he did not feel cold when he opened the door of the little cabin which had been built out in front of the cave, and found himself face to face with the beautiful girl who had summoned him there. She had lighted a fire of pine knots on the hearth, and set the fishermen's rough furniture in order; she had cushioned a chair-back with her shawl and heated a flat stone for a foot-warmer.

"Take this seat, sir," she said, leading him thither.

The parson sank into the chair and placed his old, soaked gaiters on the warm stone; but he said not one word.

"I thought perhaps you'd be tired after your long walk, sir," continued the girl, "and so I took the liberty of bringing something with me." As she spoke she drew into view a basket, and took from it delicate bread, chicken, cakes, preserved strawberries and a little tin coffee-pot which, set on the coals, straightway emitted a delicious fragrance; nothing was forgotten—cream, sugar, nor even snowy napkins.

The parson spoke not a word.

But the girl talked for both, as with flushed cheeks and starry eyes she prepared the tempting meal, using many pretty arts and graceful motions, using in short every power she possessed to charm the silent guest. The table was spread, the viands arranged, the coffee poured into the cup; but still the parson spoke not, and his blue eyes were almost stern as he glanced at the tempting array. He touched nothing.

"I thought you would have liked it all," said the girl at last, when she saw her little offerings despised. "I brought them all out myself—and I was so glad thinking you'd like them—and now—," her voice broke, and the tears flowed from her pretty, soft eyes. A great tenderness came over the parson's face.

"Do not weep," he said quickly. "See, I am eating. See, I am enjoying everything. It is all good, nay, delicious." And in his haste he partook of each dish, and lifted the coffee-cup to his lips. The girl's face grew joyous again, and the parson struggled bravely against his own enjoyment; in truth, what with the warm fire, the easy-chair, the delicate food, the fragrant coffee, and the eager, beautiful face before him, a sense of happiness came over him in long surges, and for the moment his soul drifted with the warm tide.

"You *do* like it, don't you?" said the girl with delight, as he slowly drank the fragrant coffee, his starved lips lingering over the delicious brown drops. Something in her voice jarred on the trained nerves and roused them to action again.

"Yes, I do like it—only too well," he answered; but the tone of his voice had altered. He pushed back his chair, rose, and began pacing to and fro in the shadow beyond the glow of the fire.

"Thou glutton body!" he murmured. "But thou shalt go empty for this." Then, after a pause, he said in a quiet, even tone, "You had something to tell me, Miss Ray."

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The girl's face had altered; but rallying, she told her story earnestly—of Steven Long, his fierce temper, his utter lawlessness, and his threats.

"And why should Steven Long threaten me?" said the parson. "But you need not answer," he continued in an agitated voice. "Say to Steven Long—say to him," he repeated in louder tones, "that I shall never marry. I have consecrated my life to my holy calling."

There was a long silence; the words fell with crushing weight on both listener and speaker. We do not realize even our own determinations, sometimes, until we have told them to another. The girl rallied first; for she still hoped.

"Mr. Peters," she said, taking all her courage in her hands and coming towards him, "is it wrong to marry?"

"For me—it is."

"Why?"

"Because I am a priest."

"Are you a Catholic, then?"

"I am a Catholic, although not in the sense you mean. Mine is the true Catholic faith which the Anglican Church has kept pure from the errors of Rome, and mine it is to make my life accord with the high office I hold."

"Is it part of your high office to be cold—and hungry—and wretched?"

"I am not wretched."

"You are;—now, and at all times. You are killing yourself."

"No; else I had died long, long ago."

"Well, then, of what use is your poor life as you now live it, either to yourself or any one else? Do you succeed among the miners? How many have you brought into the church?"

"Not one."

"And yourself? Have you succeeded, so far, in making yourself a saint?"

"God knows I have not," replied the parson, covering his face with his hands as the questions probed his sore, sad heart. "I have failed in my work, I have failed in myself, I am of all men most miserable!—most miserable!"

The girl sprang forward and caught his arm, her eyes full of love's pity. "You know you love me," she murmured; "why fight against it? For I—I love you!"

What did the parson do?

He fell upon his knees, but not to her, and uttered a Latin prayer, short but fervid.

"All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" he murmured, "would not be to me so much as this!" Then he rose.

"Child," he said, "you know not what you do." And, opening the door, he went away into the snowy forest. But the girl's weeping voice called after him, "Herman," "Herman." He turned; she had sunk upon the threshold. He came back and lifted her for a moment in his arms.

"Be comforted, Rosamond," he said tenderly. "It is but a fancy, you will soon forget me. You do not really love me—such a one as I," he continued, bringing forward, poor heart! his own greatest sorrow with unpitying hand. "But thank you, dear, for the gentle fancy." He stood a moment, silent; then touched her dark hair with his quivering lips and disappeared.

Sunday morning the sun rose unclouded, the snow lay deep on the ground, the first ice covered the bay; winter had come. At ten o'clock the customary service began in the Chapel of Saint John and Saint James, and the little congregation shivered, and whispered that it must really try to raise money enough for a stove. The parson did not feel the cold, although he looked almost bloodless in his white surplice. The Englishwoman was there, repentant—the sick child had not rallied under the new ministration; Mrs. Malone was there from sheer good nature, and several of the villagers and two or three miners had strolled in because they had nothing else to do, Brother Saul having returned to the mine. Rose Ray was not there. She was no saint, so she stayed at home and wept like a sinner.

The congregation, which had sat silent through the service, fell entirely asleep during the sermon on the "General Councils." Suddenly, in the midst of a sentence, there came a noise that stopped the parson and woke the sleepers. Two or three miners rushed into the chapel and spoke to the few men present. "Come out," they cried, "come out to the mine. The thief's caught at last, and who do you think it is? Saul, Brother Saul himself, the hypocrite! They tracked him to his den, and there they found the barrels, and sacks, and kegs, but the stuff he's made away with, most of it. He took it all, every crumb, and us a starving!"

"We've run in to tell the town," said another. "We've got him fast, and we're going to make a 'sample of him. Come out and see the fun."

"Yes," echoed a third, who lifted a ruf-

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

fianly face from his short squat figure, "and we'll take our own time, too. He's made us suffer, and now he shall suffer a bit, if I know myself."

The women shuddered as, with an ominous growl, all the men went out together.

"I misdoubt they'll hang him," said Mrs. Malone, shaking her head as she looked after them.

"Or worse," said the miner's wife.

Then the two departed, and the parson was left alone. Did he cut off the service? No. Deliberately he finished every word of the sermon, sang a hymn, and spoke the final prayer; then, after putting everything in order, he too left the little sanctuary, but he did not go homeward, he took the road to the mine.

"Don't—ee go, sir, don't!" pleaded the Englishwoman, standing in her doorway as he passed. "You won't do no good, sir."

"Maybe not," answered the parson, gently, "but at least I must try."

He entered the forest, the air was still and cold, the snow crackled under his feet, and the pine-trees stretched away in long white aisles. He looked like a pigmy as he hastened on among the forest giants, his step more languid than usual from sternest vigil and fasting.

"Thou proud, evil body, I have conquered thee!" he had said in the cold dawning. And he had; at least, the body answered not again.

The mine was several miles away, and to lighten the journey the little man sang a hymn, his voice sounding through the forest in singular melody. It was an ancient hymn that he sang, written long ago by some cowled monk, and it told in quaint language of the joys of "Paradise! Oh Paradise!" He did not feel the cold as he sang of the pearly gates.

In the late afternoon his halting feet approached the mine; as he drew near the clearing he heard a sound of many voices shouting together, followed by a single cry, and a momentary silence more fearful than the clamor. The tormentors were at work. The parson ran forward and, passing the log huts which lay between, came out upon the scene. A circle of men stood there around a stake. Fastened by a long rope, crouched the wretched prisoner, his face turned to the color of dough, his coarse features drawn apart like an animal in terror, and his hoarse voice never ceasing its piteous cry, "Have mercy, good gentlemen! Dear gentlemen, have mercy!"

At a little distance a fire of logs was burning, and from the brands scattered around it was evident that the man had served as a target for the fiery missiles; in addition he bore the marks of blows, and his clothes were torn and covered with mud as though he had been dragged roughly over the ground. The lurid light of the fire cast a glow over the faces of the miners, behind rose the Iron Mountain, dark in shadow, and on each side stretched out the ranks of the white pine-trees like ghosts assembled as silent witnesses against the cruelty of man. The parson rushed forward, broke through the circle, and threw his arms around the prisoner at the stake, protecting him with his slender body.

"If ye kill him, ye must kill me also," he cried, in a ringing voice.

On the border, the greatest crime is robbery. A thief is worse than a murderer; a life does not count so much as life's supplies. It was not for the murderer that the Lynch law was made, but for the thief. For months these Algonquin miners had suffered loss; their goods, their provisions, their clothes, and their precious whisky had been stolen, day after day, and all search had proved vain; exasperated, several times actually suffering from want, they had heaped up a great store of fury for the thief, fury increased tenfold when, caught at last, he proved to be no other than Brother Saul, the one man whom they had trusted, the one man whom they had clothed and fed before themselves, the one man from whom they had expected better things. An honest, bloodthirsty wolf in his own skin was an animal they respected; indeed, they were themselves little better. But a wolf in sheep's clothing was utterly abhorrent to their peculiar sense of honor. So they gathered around their prey, and esteemed it rightfully theirs; whisky had sharpened their enjoyment.

To this savage band, enter the little parson. "What! Are ye men?" he cried. "Shame, shame, ye murderers!"

The miners stared at the small figure that defied them, and for the moment their anger gave way before a rough sense of the ludicrous.

"Hear the little man," they cried. "Hurrah, Peter! Go ahead!"

But they soon wearied of his appeal and began to answer back.

"What are clothes or provisions to a life?" said the minister.

"Life aint worth much without 'em, par-

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

son," replied a miner. "He took all we had, and we've gone cold and hungry 'long of him, and he knowed it. And all the time we was a-giving him of the best, and a-believing his praying and his preaching."

"If he is guilty, let him be tried by the legal authorities."

"We're our own legal 'thorities, Parson."

"The country will call you to account."

"The country won't do nothing of the kind. Much the country cares for us poor miners frozen up here in the woods! Stand back, Parson. Why should you bother about Saul? You always hated him."

"Never! Never!" answered the parson earnestly.

"You did too, and he knowed it. 'Twas because he was dirty and couldn't mince his words as you do."

The parson turned to the crouching figure at his side. "Friend," he said, "if this is true,—and the heart is darkly deceitful and hides from man his own worst sins,—I humbly ask your forgiveness."

"O come! None of your gammon," said another miner impatiently. "Saul didn't care whether you liked him or not, for he knowed you was only a coward."

"'Fraid of a dog! 'Fraid of a dog!" shouted half a dozen voices, and a frozen twig struck the parson's cheek, and drew blood.

"Why, he's got blood!" said one. "I never thought he had any."

"Come, Parson," said a friendly miner, advancing from the circle, "we don't want to hurt *you*, but you might as well understand that we're the masters here."

"And if ye are the masters, then be just. Give the criminal to me; I will myself take him to the nearest judge, the nearest jail, and deliver him up."

"He'll be more likely to deliver *you* up, I reckon, Parson."

"Well, then, send a committee of your own men with me—"

"We've got other things to do besides taking long journeys over the ice to 'commodate thieves, Parson. Leave the man to us."

"And to torture? Men, men, ye would not treat a beast so!"

"A beast don't steal our food and whisky," sang out a miner.

"Stand back, stand back," shouted several voices. "You're too little to fight, Parson."

"But not too little to die," answered the minister, throwing up his arms towards the sky.

For an instant his words held the men in check; they looked at each other, then at him.

"Think of yourselves," continued the minister. "Are ye without fault? If ye murder this man ye are worse than he is."

But here the minister went astray in his appeal, and ran against the views of the border.

"Worse! Worse than a sneaking thief! Worse than a praying hypocrite who robs the very men that feed him! Look here, we won't stand that! Sheer off, or take the consequences." And a burning brand struck the parson's coat, and fell on the head of the crouching figure at his side, setting fire to its hair. Instantly the parson extinguished the light flame, and drew the burly form closer within his arms, so that the two stood as one. "Not one, but both of us," he cried.

A new voice spoke next, the voice of the oldest miner, the most hardened reprobate there. "Let go that rascal, Parson. He's the fellow that lamed you last spring. He set the trap himself; I seen him a-doing it."

Involuntarily, for a moment, Herman Peters drew back; the trap set at the chapel door, the deliberate, cruel intention, the painful injury, and its life-long result, brought the angry color to his pale face. The memory was full of the old bitterness.

But Saul, feeling himself deserted, dragged his miserable body forward, and clasped the parson's knees. With desperate hands he clung, and he was not repulsed. Without a word the parson drew him closer, and again faced the crowd.

"Why, the man's a downright fool!" said the old miner. "That Saul lamed him for life, and all for nothing, and still he stands by him. The man's mad!"

"I am not mad," answered the parson, and his voice rung out clear and sweet. "But I am a minister of the great God who has said to men, 'Thou shalt do no murder.' O men! O brothers! look back into your own lives. Have ye no crimes, no sins to be forgiven? Can ye expect mercy when ye give none? Let this poor creature go, and it shall be counted unto you for goodness. Ye, too, must sometime die; and when the hour comes, as it often comes in lives like yours with sudden horror, ye will have this good deed to remember. For charity,—

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

which is mercy,—shall cover a multitude of sins."

He ceased, and there was a momentary pause. Then a stern voice answered, "facts won't alter, Parson. The man is a thief, and must be punished. Your talk may do for women-folks, not for us."

"Women-folks!" repeated the ruffian-faced man who had made the women shudder at the chapel.' "He's a sly fox, this parson! He didn't go out to meet Rosie Ray at the Grotter yesterday, oh, no!"

"Liar!" shouted a man, who had been standing in the shadow on the outskirts of crowd, taking, so far, no part in the scene. He forced himself to the front; it was Steven Long, his face dark with passion.

"No liar at all, Steve," answered the first. "I seen 'em there with my own eyes; they had things to eat and everything. Just ask the parson."

"Yes, ask the parson," echoed the others, and with the shifting humor of the border they stopped to laugh over the idea. "Ask the parson."

Steven Long stepped forward and confronted the little minister. His strong hands were clenched, his blood was on fire with jealousy. The bull-dog followed his master, and smelled around the parson's gaiters—the same poor old shoes, his only pair, now wet with melted snow. The parson glanced down apprehensively.

"'Fraid of a dog! 'Fraid of a dog!" shouted the miners again, laughing uproariously. The fun was better than they had anticipated.

"Is it true?" demanded Steven Long, in a hoarse voice. "Did you meet that girl at the Grotter yesterday?"

"I did meet Rosamond Ray at the Grotto yesterday," answered the parson; "but ——"

He never finished the sentence. A fragment of iron ore struck him on the temple. He fell, and died, his small body lying across the thief, whom he still protected, even in death.

THE murder was not avenged; Steven Long was left to go his own way. But as the thief was also allowed to depart unmolested, the principles of border justice were held to have been amply satisfied.

The miners attended the funeral in a body, and even deputed one of their number to read the Episcopal burial service over the rough pine coffin, since there was no one else to do it. They brought out the chapel prayer-books, found the places, and followed as well as they could; for "he thought a deal of them books. Don't you remember how he was always carrying 'em backward and forward, poor little chap!"

The Chapel of Saint John and Saint James was closed for the season. In the summer a new missionary arrived; he was not Ritualistic, and before the year was out he married Rosamond Ray.

ORDRONNAUX.

HARDLY had Ordronnaux married Emilia when circumstances developed in him an extraordinary—jealousy one might call it, had he had any one concerning whom to be jealous; but as it was, the passion must be as nameless as the sin against the Holy Ghost.

He had married Emilia knowing that she cared nothing for him, but knowing also that she cared for no one else, and presuming that his devotion could warm the stone to life. In fact he had not been sure that he would not rather have it so than otherwise; and perhaps he had pictured in his dreams the slow dawn of the rosiness of love across the cold marble of his statuesque wife. He had never pictured in any dream the unbearable suffering it might be if that cold marble remained always icy to his touch, irresponsive to his smile.

In the first moment that he had seen Emilia, still young himself and she far younger, he had adored her. He was calling at the country-house of a friend, when the beautiful thing coming in at the glass door, tall and slender and with her arms full of flowers, paused waiting for her com-

Generated at University of Iowa on 2023-09-19 22:47 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035131278
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd
Digitized by UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN