

islands of the Southern Archipelago, and kill their prey almost wholly by pelagic operations.

The schooners are often out of touch with civilization for many months, and occasionally there are dark tales of wild raids on the rookeries owned by the Argentine, Uruguayan and Chilean Governments, and of sealers chased by gunboats and pelted with cannon balls; and even of the seizure of an alleged poacher, as was the fate of the Nova Scotian schooner Agnes Donaline early in 1904, a Uruguayan gunboat capturing her under suspicious circumstances and her crew being thrown into prison and she confiscated. In 1904 some 24,112 seal skins were secured in Cape Horn waters, valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, which were mostly shipped direct from Port Stanley to London for sale.

It is thus apparent that this South Sea seal industry, which excites so little comment, is really more valuable than the American, Canadian, or Japanese catch in the North Pacific waters, and bids fair speedily to become worth as much as the highly vaunted Russian preserves of Kamchatka and vicinity. The United States exhibits no concern in the other branches of this fur seal industry, save that involved in the Pribyloff Islands, and her unceasing endeavors to effect a change there are due to the promptings of the lessees, who see their one-time valuable concession being steadily dissipated, while the Republic is deprived of a substantial asset.

Most curious expedients were resorted to in the endeavor to checkmate the Canadians. All the male seals on the Pribyloff Islands were branded to

distinguish the skins. Then the conveying into the United States of unbranded skins, even in the form of wearing apparel, was prohibited, and countless instances occurred wherein fur coats were taken from women who wore them as they set foot on American soil from Europe, Asia, Australia, or Canada by boat or train. Later still an act was passed forbidding Americans to engage in the sealing industry; gunboats were sent out to harass the poachers; and finally a measure was introduced in Congress authorizing the slaughter of all the herds on the Pribyloffs, excepting ten thousand males and as many females, these to be kept for purposes of reproduction, and the annual kill under lease to be forbidden, the idea being that the Canadians would

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## REDDY MAHONEY'S PENANCE

By GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE

Drawing by Ike Morgan

REDDY MAHONEY'S face was a lugubrious sight to look upon, and that countenance was made for smiles, not for woe. He dusted the pews with an inept, clumsy hand.

"You've been quarreling with your wife again," said Father MacNeil's accusing voice, from the vestry door.

"Nawthin' much, your reverence," said Reddy sulkily. What did a boy like that know about women, even if he was a priest?

The reverend father came down the aisle. He might know little about women, but he knew much about dust, and his caretaker's brush flourished with renewed energy. A thin, other worldly looking young fellow was Father MacNeil, with a pair of soft, misty, dark eyes, and a voice to wile a bird from a bush—a voice that did not seem to be made entirely for the reciting of Latin services.

"Mahoney," he began in those winning tones which Reddy had learned could convey as sound a reproof as the bishop's rasping bass,—"Reddy, your wife is a good woman. Your jealousy is a disgrace to you, and an insult to her. The whole parish is talking of it."

"How does your reverence know that same?" inquired the servant, cocking a rebellious blue eye at his superior.

The young priest suppressed a smile, and fingered the small book in his hands. "I don't mean that they all have come to me and gossiped about it," he amended. "I should not permit that; but a very worthy person who knows tells me that it is so. I shall not be able to go into the confessional for half an hour," Father MacNeil said as he turned away. "Do you bid anyone who comes to wait?"

The priest had been gone for a few moments. Mahoney was behind the one small confessional which the church contained, rubbing some brasses about a picture, when he heard a light footfall. Peering cautiously round the corner of the wardrobe like structure, he saw his wife Kate approaching. He would have gone on sullenly with his work; but the sight of

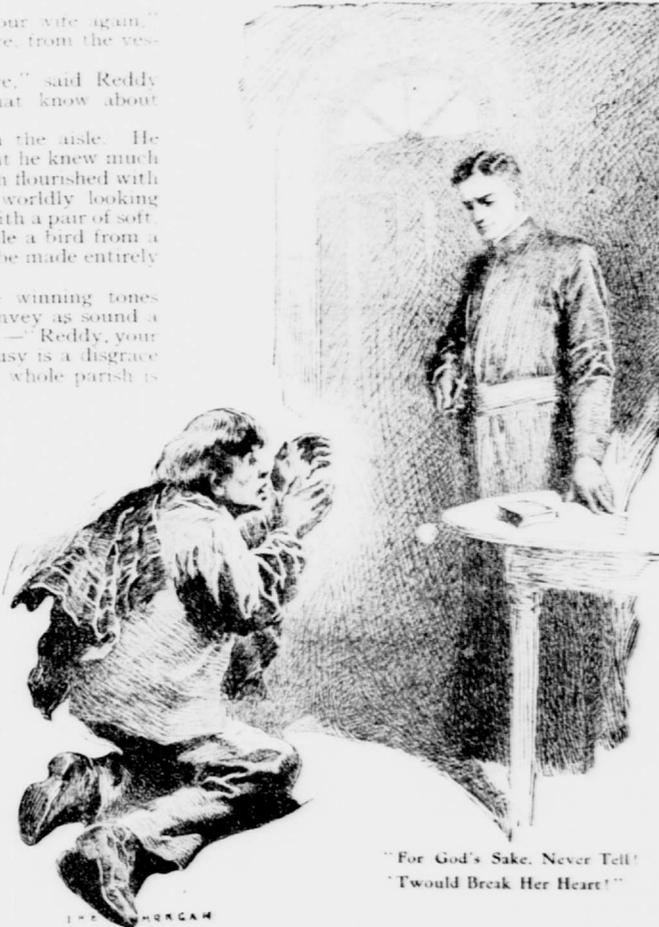
Katy's beaming face choked him with jealous rage. For what was she grinning like that? She tossed her graceful head, and set her hat in place with a gesture so familiar to the watching man that he choked again with something that was not all rage. For whom had she put on her gay clothes? Not to charm the eye of her lawful spouse,—of that Reddy was sure; for she well knew that he could not be off duty till late that night. Well, she had come to confess—perhaps she would tell the priest what it was that she had been doing which had set a barrier between her and her husband of six months.

A sudden thought came into the man's head and made him gasp. Why not? Katy was keeping secrets from him, grieving over something she refused to tell him; now pleased about Heaven knew what, in his absence, and putting on her fine clothes to dazzle—whom? Even Father MacNeil would not help him. Well, then, he, Reddy, would help himself.

The girl had stepped lightly inside the curtains of the confessional. Finding no priestly voice come out to greet her, she waited with her forehead upon the sill of the little window between the two compartments. The temptation was too strong. Here was the whole thing laid bare before him, for only the courage to ask and have the information. Reddy looked wistfully toward the vestry. There hung the cassocks; but even his jealous madness would not countenance such sacrilege. With shaking hand he snatched the dark embroidered cover from a stand that sometimes supported a few of Father MacNeil's books, pulled it over his blue denim working suit, and slipped into the priest's compartment of the confessional, ensconcing himself out of sight of the penitent.

"I'm waiting, my daughter," he murmured in a voice sufficiently unlike his own.

Katy evidently recognized that it was not the voice of Father MacNeil. "I have committed sin,"



"For God's Sake, Never Tell!  
'Twould Break Her Heart!"

she murmured, running through the opening phrases of her confession, and trying to catch a glimpse of her confessor.

For the life of him, the injured husband could not get together the questions which were to satisfy his burning, jealous curiosity. His mind was in a whirl. Suddenly he became aware that the girl had dropped her formal speech, and was addressing Father MacNeil, evidently with the belief that she had been mistaken in supposing the voice was not his.

"Oh, your reverence," she cried, in tones bubbling with joy, "I've seen the man again—and it's all right! Now, if you'll absolve me for telling my husband an untruth, and say what penance I should do for deceiving of him, why, I'll be the happiest woman in the town this night."

"Deceivin' your husband?" gasped Reddy. "Another man—what other man?"

"Yes, your reverence," Katy rippled so sweetly. "I felt my heart in my bosom like lead to deceive poor Reddy; but I couldn't tell him of the man—now could I?"

"What man, you shameless woman?" came from behind the little wicket.

"Oh, your reverence, you know, the man that says my poor Reddy took something that didn't belong to him—a ring to give to me, when I was his sweetheart. Mebbe my poor boy did that same, being tempted. But could I be the one to tell him that 'twas brought to my knowledge? I've paid the last cent on it this day, your reverence; and now Reddy need never know. The man has been comin' to the house regular to get the money; and I was that 'fraid Reddy would see him and ask questions; and twice I've had to lie to him, Father MacNeil—don't forget that. Give me a penance, I'm that happy that I need a penance to keep my feet on the earth."

The soft voice ceased. The little man crouched behind the window. Oh, how well he remembered the day! He wanted the ring for Katy that was

soon to be his wife. He hadn't quite enough to buy it. They owed him that much for fines that they had put on him, a porter in the big department store.

It was so he saved his conscience then. He took the passionately coveted bauble, was suspected and discharged; but the ring could not be found on him, and the firm refused to prosecute, because they considered a prosecution when there was not certainty of conviction, or recovery of the stolen property, a bad precedent among their other employees. And now his Katy had been paying for that ring!

"How did you get the money?" he whispered, and sobs broke his voice so that she could have known it neither for Father MacNeil's nor Reddy's.

"Sure, your reverence knows," she replied wondrously, "that I've been doing your washing and the washing of two other people. And now the black debt is paid, and Reddy and me will have what money I can make for our two selves. Reddy is a good boy, Father MacNeil, and you'll never be hard on him; because they only said he took the ring—they couldn't prove it."

"But you've got the ring on your finger," whispered the tortured Reddy.

"Oh, I think he paid for it—some way. Anyhow, 'tis I have paid for it now, and Reddy and me can be happy again. And he need never know. He need never—"

She broke off uncertainly, startled by an odd quality in the silence behind the wicket.

Ten minutes ago, Reddy Mahoney had been bursting with jealous fury. He had slunk in here to put himself, as priest, between his wife's soul and her God. The remorseless machinery of the situation had caught and held him. Though it seared his eyeballs, he must look fully upon the picture of himself which her innocent words held up before him. Crouching against the partition wall, his table cloth huddled about him, his bullet head dropped between his clenched fists, he strangled back the sobs that tore their way up from his heart.

For in his agony he clung to one shred of sanity and kindness; he must throttle this overwhelming impulse to run to Katy, beg her forgiveness, accuse himself as a jealous wretch, smother her with passionate caresses, and promise all manner of amendment for the future. This would be to render her loyal sacrifice of no avail; to apprise her that the husband she had striven to spare was writhing under more than the shame she had labored to shield him from. No, he must drink this cup in the lonely place of his own soul.

His eyes roved like those of a creature at bay, seeking some exit from this torture chamber, when abruptly a black curtain descended before them. It was the skirt of Father MacNeil's cassock; and Father MacNeil's quiet voice said to the wondering girl outside:

"The priest to whom you were confessing is suddenly ill, my daughter." And he swept the little man, shaking and mutely convulsed, behind his own tall figure.

Father MacNeil's reproofs always bit to the bone, and now he was white hot with righteous wrath. But despite the enormity of his present offense, Reddy was far past dread of his priest, or even of his Bishop. Something of this came home to the reverend father as he looked at that blanched, convulsed face.

"There, there, Mahoney!" he repeated striving vainly to think how he should deal with this extraordinary outrage, when suddenly Reddy threw himself on his knees before the priest.

"For God's sake, Father MacNeil," he panted, "never tell her! 'Twould break her heart. But give me a penance—a double penance. When you go in there," with a distraught gesture toward the confessional, "she'll tell you—lay me the penance for both; you'll know why; but don't let her know—about—"

Reddy's utterance failed him. The priest looked keenly into the upturned face. "I'll lay you no penance, Mahoney," he said; "you'll get no penance from me." And the little man's look of terror told him that his intuition led aright. This turbulent soul had delivered itself into his hand at last! It should not buy back the old dangerous freedom with a penance.

"But," he said, with his rare, winning smile, "you may trust me not to tell her."—Reddy's face brightened,— "till I see you jealous again."