

It was a warm July afternoon when the two sat side by side outside Mrs. Anderson's house. A humming bird was flitting among the flowers, there was a sense of mellow peacefulness in the air; everything seemed to indicate that the crucial moment had arrived. Miss Anderson's little hand lay invitingly upon her lap. The curate took it.

"Don't you wear rings, Miss Anderson?" he inquired, smiling.

"Not on that finger, Mr. Brown," answered the girl, blushing with confusion as she realized that he was holding the engagement ring finger.

Rev. Aloysius slipped his hand into his pocket and pulled out a diamond solitaire. The girl looked at it and her eyes sparkled.

"I bought this," said the curate, "for the girl I hope to marry. I have not told her yet. Do you consider it a rash speculation, Miss Anderson?"

"Indeed, you know the proverb, 'None but the brave deserves the fair,'" replied the girl.

"I am going to risk telling her the next time I have a chance," said the curate. "I value your confidence, Miss Anderson, more than I can say. I don't believe I should have mustered up courage to speak to her if you had not encouraged me. I hope you two will be the best of friends."

And, raising his hat, he went away, leaving Miss Anderson gasping with humiliation and mortification upon the stoop.

The girl could not conceal her agitation. She ran into the house, and, flinging herself on the bed, gave way to angry tears.

She would never speak to the curate again! She would leave the village! She had been deliberately mocked, her love scorned. The girl had quite forgotten her light raillery with her friend upon that occasion. She had come to feel a deep regard for the young curate.

In the room which he occupied in the rector's house Rev. Aloysius Brown flung himself down heavily

into his chair. Somehow revenge did not taste as sweet as he had imagined it would. And then, he was conscious that he had acted in an unchristian manner.

"Go to her and ask her pardon," said the curate's conscience.

"But I shall make myself a laughing stock," urged the curate.

"All the better. It is your duty to make atonement. She knew it was deliberate and that you were not so simple as you pretended to be," said conscience.

"Go to the Bahamas!" answered the curate.

"Thanks, but I prefer to remain with you," rejoined the curate's conscience.

Quietly the curate rose and went back to Mrs. Anderson's house. It had grown dark and he had had no supper, but that imperative voice within him would not be restrained. Rev. Aloysius' mind worked quickly and by the time he had reached the house he had already reviewed what he was going to say and found it satisfactory.

He was going to tell Miss Anderson the whole miserable story from the day when he overheard her remarks to Miss Bowen. He would tell her how he had planned the whole thing and he did not mean to spare himself. Then he would ask her whether she preferred to let forgiveness enshroud the matter in silence or whether she wished him to leave the village.

Somebody was seated alone upon the stoop. The curate raised his hat.

"Well?" came a muffled voice, and the curate sat down beside Miss Anderson.

"Miss Anderson," he began, "I have come back to tell you something, to make a confession. I—er—I bought the ring for you and I want to ask you to marry me."

The curate stopped in consternation. Was that his voice? He had not intended to say that at all.

But suddenly he found that Miss