

# A QUESTION OF RELIGION

G. K. TURNER

In the center of The Holler, crouched along the road, lies the old mill, a decrepit old monster of blue and grayish native stone.

If you go down into the black hole which faces on the road, in the basement of the mill, you will reach first a narrow passageway; then to the right of this you will come to the joint boiler and engine room, where you will discover Pat Foley.

"Ask the old man about him and Hooter," he said. "Who's Hunter?" I asked. "Oh, he's the man before Pat."

"They tell me you've had some lively times with her," I continued, angling. "How about that?"

"No, I was not," said Pat. "That toime with Hooter, ye was," interrupted Tom.

"And so we had him hooked. 'Ye never see Jim Hooter, did ye, sor?' No? Thin you missed the seetin' of a most peculiar man. A most unusual man he was; was he not, Tom?"

"A most unusual man. Big as an elephant he was. Not soft-loike, but bristlin' all over his anatomy with bones. He had a chest on him loike thin boilers. Six feet three he stood, and his big white beard trailin' down to his waist—a folne old figger of a man, for all the world loike the pictures of Moses and the blessed patriarchs. A loikely lad he must have been that any woman might be proud of, but niver a woman had he looked at. They fright me, Pat," says he.

"A good feller was old Jim Hooter, and a good frind. Thirteen year him and me lived together in affeshun that would put money a bridal couple on their honeymoon to shame. Thin come the raptible into Paradise in the form of a woman. Five years ago she come and when I learned it first I was near paralized. Several toimes I found Jim Hooter gone to town at night, and after a toime I asks him where he'd been.

"It's called into town I've been," says he, "for social discourse."

"A woman," says he, "nather more nor less; but there are others as will."

"Oh, you old rascal," says I. "A notice time this is to break down the rascalshuns of a loifetoime."

"Thin, a little after, she come in from town to visit him. A dirty, misformed, unwomanly thing she was, loike a big, slouchy rag doll, with a sour, yellow face."

"Oh," says she, turnin' her eyes up, "she looks at the Old Girl here, 'how wonderful are the works of the Lord!'"

"What is that to do with it," says I to myself. "Madam," says I aloud to her, "she was made in Schenectady, New York."

"Who is the famale?" says I to Jim Hooter when she'd gone away. "She's no famale," says Jim Hooter; "she's a woman of God."

"Thin her face is not her loiciness," says I. "She's opened the Scriptures to me," says Jim.

"And that she had in a most peculiar way. For a year thin Jim Hooter did nothin' but rade the Book sittin' where you sit now, sor, and git that woman to point out what it meant. Thin he took to makin' thin pictures of strange basties along the wall, as you see. And thin he figured alongside of thin. No mathematical jaynus he was, and it come hard for him to figure; but figure he did night and day, mutterin' to himself.

"And why don't you think on these things?" he says to me. "I leave it to thin better able, says I. 'You're a poor lost follower of the Babylonian woman,' says he, manin' the Holy Church of Rome."

"Oh, out with ye," says I, "with your flyin' goats and your five-tailed rats and all your other bad drames. If I don't question your choice of women, you might have the decency to leave moine alone."

"One mornin' I found him lookin' at me unusual—more fond loike than for mony a day. 'Pat,' says he, 'you poor lost soul, won't you listen to me and prepare?'"

"For what?" says I. "The ind is at hand."

"What ind?" says I. "The ind of the world," says he. "When is it scheduled?" says I. "A wake from next Thursday, at noon," says he. "It was revealed to me."

"Oh, was it?" says I. "It was," says he solemn loike, "and there are others also who know the appointed toime."

"Do they?" says I. "I'll bet you a month's wages, to be paid in hiven or no."

"How about that?"

"Correct, I have," said Pat, puffing away to light his pipe again. "Cursed be the moind that conserved her and the hand that laid her down. She niver yet was set to rights. 'Twas some little dry goods clerk that made her, and no true machinist."

"Were you ever afraid of her?" I asked. "No, I was not," said Pat. "That toime with Hooter, ye was," interrupted Tom.

"Will, thin, wance I was, and wance only."

"And so we had him hooked. 'Ye never see Jim Hooter, did ye, sor?' No? Thin you missed the seetin' of a most peculiar man. A most unusual man he was; was he not, Tom?"

"He was," said Tom, with great solemnity.

"A most unusual man. Big as an elephant he was. Not soft-loike, but bristlin' all over his anatomy with bones. He had a chest on him loike thin boilers. Six feet three he stood, and his big white beard trailin' down to his waist—a folne old figger of a man, for all the world loike the pictures of Moses and the blessed patriarchs. A loikely lad he must have been that any woman might be proud of, but niver a woman had he looked at. They fright me, Pat," says he.

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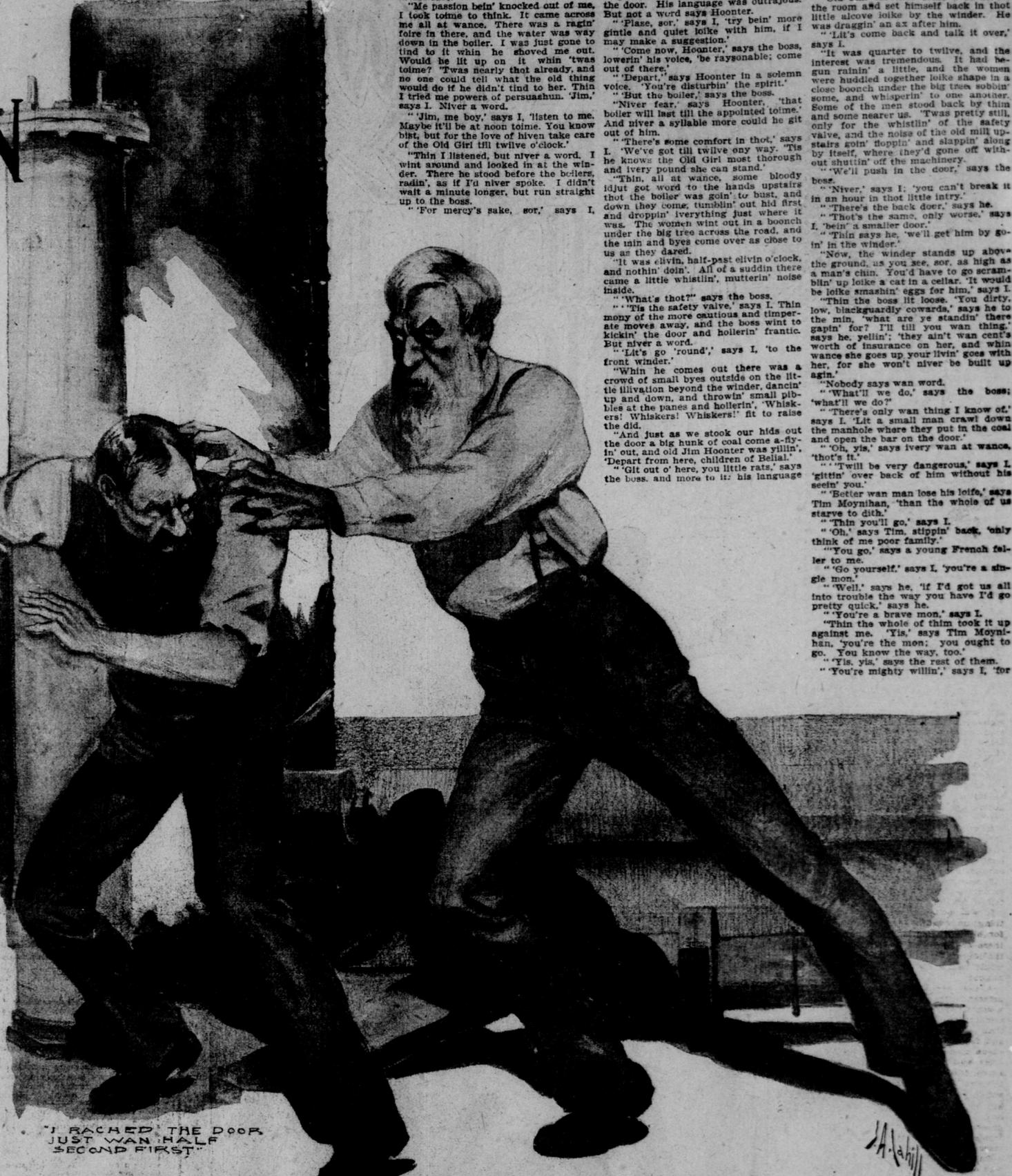
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"I RACHED THE DOOR JUST WAN HALF SECOND FIRST."

"Why don't you go yourself?" says I; "this is no place for resgvin' angels. I'll take care of the Old Girl."

"Niver, Pat," says he. "Where should they look for me but here, where I've been these thirty years? No, you'll go yourself."

"Niver," says I, "not wan step." And thin for a little while he dropped it. "At half-past tin it was, or near elvive, when he came at me again. 'Are you goin'?' says he, throwin' wide the door. 'Not I,' says I.

"You must," says he. "I'll take mony an insult to drive me from this place."

"With that he took me by me shogylers and pitched me outside—I was no more than a poor mouthful for him—and the first thing I knew I was bat-

"come along down and tind to Jim Hooter."

"What's this?" says the boss. "It's Jim Hooter," says I. "He thinks the world is comin' to an ind at the noon whistle. And he's locked himself in down there, and he's runnin' her-

was tirable. "But they'd done their part; they'd got him wild and excited. There he was inside, walkin' about stately loike in the white steam from the boiler, loike a poor dommed, sufferin' ghost in hill."

"With a little gulp she turned away and wandered blindly onward. When the mist cleared from her vision she found herself in the Egyptian room. Great carved figures gazed at her with stolid faces, and a ripple of interest stirred within her. With mournful eyes she read the inscriptions beside the mummy cases."

"So this brown and moldering bundle had once been a Queen. Through the raised lid of the case she could just catch a glimpse of the object now so dried and terrible, but once so splendidly human."

"Poor Queen," she murmured softly, as she gazed down at the gorgeously ornamented mummy case. "Poor Queen!" and before she realized it, a tear had splashed down on the glass.

"Having been a Queen, something of the sadness and futility of it all stirred her spirit. Somehow, being rich or poor did not now seem to matter; being happy seemed the greatest thing."

"She was too absorbed in her thoughts to notice a young man who had been making his way nearer and nearer to her in a somewhat furtive manner. Suddenly, as if he could no longer resist the temptation, a few quick steps brought him to her side."

"The ex-Queen looked up in surprise and then put out both hands impulsively. But the proud, high look of mastery had not yet vanished from his face."

"Did you really mean it?" he demanded, her chin lifted her eyes to his for one brief, full moment. Even Queens must learn their lesson. She had had hers.

Outside the steady drip, drip, drip of the rain was only interrupted by the walling of the wind and the Egyptian room was very quiet and deserted."

As the newly enthroned Queen turned to leave she looked down with a flushed, wistful face at the royal mummy. Then she murmured something softly.

"What's that?" asked her lover. But at her reply he looked slightly mystified.

"There's no use of telling you," she laughed, "being only a man you'll never understand, but I was saying good-by to the other Queen."

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# TWO QUEENS

By Keith Gordon.

ment!" she flung at him in a tone of dangerous clearness. "I only wonder what I could ever have hesitated! It is 'No, a thousand times no!'"

She noticed with a cruel delight the sudden, still whiteness that overspread his face as, with an ironical bow, he turned and walked rapidly away. Then a new feeling suddenly clutched at her heart.

Had she not lately been a queen, with a loyal, faithful subject to whom she had turned an ear quite royally indifferent? Had not a revolution occurred in her small domain and a republic been proclaimed? Could she not understand now the sorrows of a Marie Antoinette or a Eugenie?

And so at last the latest of dethroned queens reached her own door, trying to philosophize about the matter, as doubtless her predecessors had done before her. After all, it was for the best. She was poor and Steve was poor—in possessions. But, by some freakish operation of the law of compensation both were endowed with tastes of an unmistakable richness.

"Yes, it's all for the best," she said aloud, as she closed the door of her room behind her. "It's all—"

The rest was lost in the pillow, for the ex-queen had thrown herself face downward on the bed and was indulging in the plebeian comfort of a good cry.

For days thereafter such interest as she felt in the dull, gray world was centered in the postman and such messenger boys as appeared from time to time in the street in which she lived.

Not that she repented that ringing "No" that she had given Stevens on the day of their quarrel, by no means. Her heart, she told herself, was dead. She could not be poor. She would not! She would marry some good old soul to whom she could render the respect of a

daughter—and the bills of a wife. That was all that a girl in her position could do. It was the fault of modern ideas.

It was after she heard about his attentions to the Folsom girl that she went no more and became markedly indifferent to the coming of the postman. From this time, too, she conscientiously tried to tolerate old Mr. Fullerton and his flowers, the two ever arriving with an alternate regularity that was full of meaning.

She pictured herself as a Queen again, and this time with all the outward semblance of one. But, perversely enough, she could not, keep Steven. Converse out of the scene. If she saw herself rolling down Fifth avenue in the Fullerton victoria she saw instantly evoked the image of Steve doffing his hat with cold politeness while she nodded with the haughty nonchalance of a great lady.

And so the weeks lengthened into months, and the ex-Queen assured herself that she was forgetting.

"Not going out, my dear?" protested her mother as she appeared in the hall one gloomy Sunday, with mackintosh and umbrella.

She had never entered the place since that fateful afternoon, but now she was all a-tremble with eagerness to get there. Some inward barrier of pride had gone down, and she knew that she wanted to visit the scene once more just because there she could feel a little nearer to him.

The turnstile admitted her with a click, not so much, it seemed to her, into the museum as into the atmosphere of that distant afternoon. Before the "Victory" she stopped for a mournful dedicatory moment. It was here that he accused her of being no clerk, not so much a man you'll never understand, but I was saying good-by to the other Queen."

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