

other immature collegians. But its immediate effect upon Jonathan junior was good, for he felt very compunctious about the anxiety he had caused his mother, and he faithfully promised that in the future he would avoid the chaps who led him into trouble and select some Christian gentleman for a chum. He did, and soon found a new companion who, he assured his mother, was a model along her own lines. And so it proved, but to her consternation she found that his name was Maurice O'Donnell. He had carried out her injunction that he should choose a Christian gentleman, but the Christianity of this new chum was of a type that did not meet with her approval.

However, Jonathan junior was obdurate in the matter of his loyalty to Maurice, and though she argued and pleaded still, she found it all unavailing, and finally took to prayer and relied upon the Lord that no harm should come to her dear Jonathan. None did come, and she felt that her prayer had been answered. Particularly so because Jonathan junior soon began to attend divine service with her, and to her great surprise she learned that this happy outcome was due indirectly to the influence of Maurice. Maurice was very punctilious about his religious duties, and as he remained unspoiled and a good fellow still, Jonathan followed his example. The mother's estimate of Maurice went up a good many points then, but it fell a good many soon after when she found that Jonathan smoked tobacco, and that Maurice's example was responsible for that, too.

Maurice never knew that he had been a matter of contention in the Spencer home, and soon began to call there with Jonathan and to see something of his mother. She found him to be largely made up of contradictions, so utterly did he fail to measure up with her preconceived notion of what an Irishman was in some things, and so completely did he fulfil them in others. But, on the whole, as she came to know him better, she grew to like him more, until when he and Jonathan completed their collegiate course and the Spencers went back to Oldtown she loved Maurice only less than Jonathan.

Indeed, her love for him was so great and so genuine that she was actually saddened, with intense personal sadness, that he should be steeped in such 'invincible religious superstition and idolatry,' and her dislike for his Church was correspondingly increased. Its machinations against mankind were of a wholly unpersonal sort before, but now its influence over Maurice made it a matter of deep personal interest. She fervently longed to do something to relieve him from its terrible thrall, but she was too loyal to her genteel instincts to take advantage of her status as his hostess to introduce the subject of his religion in a controversial way, and no other opportunity ever offered.

Thus they parted. The Spencers went back to Oldtown, and Maurice to his home in an opposite direction. For a while their intimacy continued through the mails, but in a year or so there was nothing to remind the Spencers of Maurice except an occasional reference to Jonathan's school days, and they became gradually less and less frequent.

The Jonathan junior who returned to Oldtown was an entirely different chap from the Jonathan who went away. He was as solid, substantial, and sensible in a modern sort of way as his father was, and 'the works,' to which he now gave his attention, took on a new life that would have succeeded, did not geographical obstacles make it impossible, in giving Oldtown the commercial importance of which its people once dreamed.

Jonathan soon became a sort of an American lord of the manor. Everything and everybody in Oldtown relied upon him in one way or another, and his word and dictum were accepted at par in matters the most diverse. His father retired from active duties, and his mother basked in the sunshine of his wisdom and his love, and they all lived happily together in the 'big house,' just as his progenitors of several generations before would have done were they of the English nobility.

He and his mother were lounging in the shade of the massive maples on the big lawn that stretched itself for an acre or more in front of their home one summer Sunday afternoon, some years after he returned from college. She had been reading comfortably in a large rocker, and he was stretched out in a hammock, smoking a pipe, a practice to which she had become reconciled. Her book had fallen into her lap, and she was gazing at him as he lay with his eyes half closed. Presently he became conscious that she was watching him, and they looked steadily into each other's eyes for a moment.

'What are you thinking of; mother?' he asked. 'Or are my good looks more interesting than your book?'
'You'd smile if I should tell you,' she answered.
'Go ahead. Don't let us lose a smile.'
'I was wondering why you don't get married.'
'It is a smiling suggestion surely. What prompted the thought?'

'I sometimes think you are lonely with only your father and me.'

'Lonely! Why, mother, I never had a lonely minute in my life.'

'I'm glad to know it, but, just the same, there is no good reason why you shouldn't get married if you want to. I hope you do not hesitate because you think I would care.'

'No, mother, that is not the reason. But there is a good reason, and I don't think you will smile when I tell you what it is.'

'You have thought of it, then?'

'Seriously.'

'And what is the reason?'

'The only girl I would care to marry will not marry me.'

'Gracious! Who is she?'

'Mary Ann O.'

'Mary Ann O'? Why, Jonathan, she—'

'Irish and a Catholic, and that's the very matter, or at least her religion is the matter.'

'Why, Jonathan Spencer, what are you thinking about?'

'About Mary Ann O' most of the time lately, but I'm afraid it's a lot of good thought wasted.'

'Well, I am sure I never expected anything like that.'

'Don't worry, mother dear; there is no danger. Though if she would have me, I'd give you an Irish Catholic daughter as soon as the trousseau could be built. That is, unless her old Church would hitch on some condition that would take more time, in which event I would patiently and docilely wait.'

'I shall worry; I can't help it.'

'Of course you will. I am a ninny to have told you anything about it.'

'You should remember your family obligations, Jonathan.'

'Family obligations? How do they interfere? I have known her all her life. We were at school together for years, and she always knew more the first week than I learned the whole term. We graduated together, and she was miles ahead of every other scholar in the class. She has been the best daughter to her old father of any daughter in Oldtown. She has been his helpmeet, counsellor, and protector since her mother died and left her a little girl in short dresses and long braids. Her father is one of our most substantial and respectable citizens, and has been such for nearly forty years. For nearly ten years she has kept the business of the works running smooth and regular in a way it was never run before she took charge of the books. She is the very head and front of Oldtown society. Under her modest direction you have led it out of the depths of banality to be a thing of life and vigor. She is the most graceful, beautiful, and accomplished young lady in Oldtown, and is so aristocratic in her ideals that she turns down what you consider the best match in the county as a matter of principle. Where would the family lose in dignity, respectability, or anything else?'

'Have you spoken to her?'

'Not a syllable. She won't let me. If I had the slightest tangible assurance that she cared for me I would ask her to be my wife. And yet I know she does care for me, and that it is her religious scruples that prevent her from showing it.'

'You may be mistaken.'

'Not possible. I can't explain why, but I am sure that if she were a Protestant or I were a Catholic she would be my wife.'

'Then you may become a Catholic?'

'I wish I could.'

'I am afraid you will. I was afraid of that from the time you first met Maurice O'Donnell.'

'Yes. I remember. He has been made a priest, and I am going to write to him. Maybe he can suggest something.'

'Then you are determined?'

'As determined as the governor was when he wanted you. I wish I had as much hope as he had.'

Mary Ann O' was named Mary Ann O'Shaughnessy, but it was too long to spell out, and hence to all Oldtown she was simply Mary Ann O'. She was the daughter of Dennis O'Shaughnessy, who had come from County Tipperary, Ireland, forty years or so before. She was lots of other things that were good, too, for it is good to be the daughter of a Dennis O'Shaughnessy anywhere in the world.

Maurice had prospered during these years. He had been ordained and assigned as an assistant to a city pastor, and his prospects were bright. He would have a chance to serve the Lord as an inconspicuous curate for many years and have infinite occasion to develop the virtue of humility. He had not heard from Jonathan for several years when his letter came, and he was considerably astonished at its purport.