

a long way to prove its claim. But—and this is more to our present point—it also helps us to understand the following significant event related by the Roman historian, Tacitus:—‘Pomponia Graecina, a distinguished lady, wife of Plautius, who returned from Britain with an ovation, was accused of some foreign superstition and handed over to her husband’s judicial decision. Following ancient precedent, he heard his wife’s cause in the presence of kinsfolk, involving, as it did, her legal status and character, and he reported that she was innocent. This Pomponia lived a long life of unbroken melancholy. After the death of Julia, Drusus’s daughter, by Messalina’s treachery, she wore the attire of a mourner, with a heart ever sorrowful. For this, during Claudius’s reign, she escaped unpunished, and it was afterwards counted a glory unto her.’ The Roman lady thus accused of some foreign superstition, was evidently a Christian, for when an historian like Tacitus could not find a name for her religion, it must have been something new and unfamiliar—and such was Catholicity in these early days. And as a matter of fact, some inscriptions unearthed in the Roman Catacombs during the past century show that fifty or sixty years after Pomponia’s death many of her family were Christians.

Her story brings into prominence two things: In the first place, whereas in the years 49-50 outsiders could see no distinction between Christians and Jews, now, seven years later, the distinction was beginning to be realised even by them. Secondly, infamous reports were already in circulation about Christians, who were now becoming objects of hatred and calumny to the people, and of suspicion to the Government. This prepared the way for the persecution under Nero, Emperor from 54 to 68.

## The Storyteller

### A MATCH THAT WAS MADE IN HEAVEN

Isn’t it funny now how dreams can affect one! My, oh, my! Just think of all they can cause. People chasing after pots of gold and hidden treasures; or worrying over an evil that will never happen; and sometimes even a little good may come out of them. Of course I’m not saying you can believe them. But I want to tell you a bit of a story. It’s one of my experiences. Father John says it’s a funny thing that all the experiences happen to me. It’s an odd thing and the funny part of it all is that I was the dreamer. I’m getting to be an old man—forty-one years a priest and thirty-seven a pastor. Yet what ever came over me I can’t explain.

You know Tom Casey, who lives on Fremont, past the boulevard? As good and God-fearing a man as I have in my parish! I didn’t baptise him, but I did prepare him for his Confirmation; and I married him; and Mrs. Casey is every bit the mate that the Almighty could intend for him. Wasn’t she the popular girl though! And saying my prayers at night (they were keeping company then), I often thought a bit of a prayer that all might be well with them wouldn’t be amiss. An old priest without kith or kin, and no one to boss me or make me miserable but my old house-keeper (and sure, it’s just her nature, she doesn’t mean anything by it), I took a great interest in the young folks, feeling just as much joy at a happy union as I felt sorrow at one—well, not so happy. It’s odd! Even when I married a couple at the foot of the altar and prayed for blessings on their heads, I couldn’t help feeling a little sad. There was Tom and Joe and Will, who used to serve for me, and Mary and Ann and Kate graduating from one society into another, or singing in the choir—I felt I was losing them when they married. But that’s neither here nor there with my story. I’m a poor hand at a story. If Father John was telling this you would notice the difference right away.

Tom Casey and Kitty Kirkpatrick were keeping company a good deal and their parents and even myself liked it. Tom was a big, strapping fellow and when scarcely able to vote was drawing his hundred a month, and giving it to his mother to keep for him. Faithful as a clock in his duties, never missing a Sunday or a holy day, but you would find him in his seat. And Kitty, well, ask any of the boys and girls who knew her. She was popular and good looking, and a leader in everything. I think poor Tom often paid more attention to the choir than to the altar. But then Tom was a mighty nice boy, and Kitty was not ashamed or annoyed at his company.

But all of a sudden came the smash. I don’t know just what started it or how it happened, but there was a smash. Oh, dear me! They wouldn’t speak or go near one another. But I knew all the time they were just longing for a chance to make up. It bothered me quite a bit. Poor Tom was an old altar boy, and I felt a little sorry to see so good a match broken up. But, think I, I’ll just keep clear of the whole thing, and if they’re intended for one another they’ll make up without my interfering.

Then came the dream. I was sitting in my old chair dozing away and thinking that it would be a great blessing if quarrels and spats were banished for ever like the snakes in Ireland, when who comes in the door but Tom and Kitty.

‘Well, Father, we have decided to be married, and you can publish the banns to-morrow.’

‘I was just thinking,’ said I, ‘that you two were meant for each other and ought to come to your senses. But still it’s better to quarrel before and see the foolishness of it all, than to fight afterwards. Isn’t that so, my lad?’

‘Yes, Father. It was all my fault in the first place.’

‘Why, Tom Casey! Don’t believe a word he says, Father.’

‘Tut! tut!’ said I; ‘it’s all over and forgotten, and you’ll be the better for it. When is it to take place?’

‘We haven’t just decided the date, Father. But you can publish the banns to-morrow and we’ll be over during the week to tell you the day.’

And with that away they went.

Well, I finished up my Office and got to bed as quickly as possible knowing I had a long day ahead of me. Two Masses and a sermon and Vespers, and maybe a sick call or two.

Well sir, for the life of me I could not find a note or a scrap of paper anywhere the next morning with the names and ages and parents’ names, such as we must make for the record. Think I, ‘I’m getting very careless. I must hoop up a bit.’ And so I sat down and wrote out their names and parents’ names in the announcement book.

Well, sir, I thought no more of it until I turned around at the proper time to make the announcements. And there were Tom and Kitty right in their places. I thought it odd; most of them go to early Mass when their banns are published. But, think I, they’re proud of it and so am I, and I read it off.

Dear me! If a bomb had exploded or some one had died in his seat you wouldn’t have seen greater consternation; and I’m sure my sermon was spoiled. I knew something had happened—and such a sermon as I gave! I was glad when the Mass was over and I got into the sacristy.

Faith, I no more than got into the sacristy when in comes Tom with a scared look in his eyes, and after him Kitty just spitting fire all over. Wasn’t I in a pickle, though.

‘What!’ said I, ‘you don’t want your banns published after handing in your names yourselves last evening and telling me you had fixed up all your little grievances? Is it out of your senses you are?’

Well, sir, the looks on the two of them.

‘No, Father,’ says Kitty, ‘we’re not out of our senses, and we didn’t hand in our names. I haven’t been in your house since the sociable.’

‘Tut, tut!, now,’ says I; ‘Come back this after-