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goin' to marry Jim Ryan, I put on my bonnet and went straight over to her house, and I says to her, says I, 'You mark my words. It won't be a good year before that girl will be practicin' all kinds of Popery, and we'll have to turn her out of church.' And I hap-pened to go round to Mis' Elrod's and Mis' Foster's and Mis' McGee's, and I told all the same thing."

A murmur of assent followed, which was broken by the Moderator asking: "What are your charges, Sister Watkins?"

The old woman took up her narrative with evident zest, and the congregation listened as attentively as if they had not heard the same story from the same lips a dozen times.

"My charges is this, Brother Moderator, that that girl is gone clean over to the invidious practices of Rome, and ain't no longer fitten to be a member of this congregation. And I can prove what I say by what I seen and heard. You all mind when her baby died. Let's see, it was a month ago come next Sunday. Well, early that mornin'

it was proned into me that I ought to run over the hill and see how Jerushy and the baby was gettin' on; for I knowed that she didn't have nobody but a nigger girl to look after her when Jim was gone to his work. So after I had done cleaned up, I took my foot in my hand and went. And I tell you, Brother Jones, in the hearin' of all these present, that I never seen and never am to see nothin' to so astonish and rile me like the sight I seen when I stood on that doorstep. There sat Jerushy Ryan, the child of a respectable Christian mother, with the baby on her lap, a sayin' 'I baptize thee,' and a criss-cross-in' it with holy water. She baptize!" she cried, pointing an accusing finger at the silent girl. "And our own Parson Goodwin wasn't good enough to do it; but they must keep puttin' it off, and puttin' it off, tryin' to go to town to a Catherlick priest. I ask my sisters here, which one of us would have been foolin' long of holy water when there was catnip tea to be made? Not one. And I tell you here in these presence that it was the judgment of God, and the want of a hot mustard bath and some possum oil rubbed on its chest and the bottoms of its feet that killed that baby, for it drew its last breath before I could git to Jerushy to stop her out-dacious foolery."

Mrs. Watkins reinforced her lungs with another long breath, but the Moderator cut short her painful rehearsal by a quiet gesture.

"Sister Ryan," he said—at the sound of his voice, the bonnet that had sunk suddenly forward, was raised again; no one but the gray-haired man and God saw the face beneath it—"Sister Ryan, you have heard the charges against you, of how you've wandered away from your faith and the practices of your own church. I charge you, as you are a truthful woman, to stand up and tell this congregation your spiritual condition; and explain to them if you can, why you have done those things that you ought not to have done."

Jerushy rose to speak. The first few sentences were lost in the folds of her bonnet, but, being admonished by the Moderator, she took off her headdress and stood with it in her hand. In happier circumstances she would have been "a mere girl," but the patience of the dumb burden-bearer, stamped upon her features, left no room for the suggestion of a sometime girlhood. It is true, that when she faced her accusers, and her glance singled them out individually, the pathetic brown eyes lighted up for a moment with something like the fire of challenge.

"Are there anybody here that's seen me worshipin' idols?"

A Voice—"You've got them in your cabin."

"They're Jim's saints, and Jim pays the rent," she answered simply. "And it ain't to say worshipin' 'em, is it, to keep the dust off and have 'em settin' where they can be seen? It does Jim good," she said, turning to the Moderator, "for the sight of 'em makes him more peaceable and quiet-like when he's drunk."

There was perfect stillness for a few moments, and then she went on in a quiet voice, "Jim sat me one day how I would feel if anybody was to speak disrespectful of my mother, and he said it was just like that to hear me talk like I did about—about—the Blessed Virgin—so I've called her 'blessed' ever since, though there ain't nobody here as can truthfully say I ever said a prayer to her. It was just the way Jim felt about it that made me stop eatin' meat on Friday, and then it was a savin' of of victuals and a savin' of work, too.

The congregation shifted a little uneasily as the woman stood for a moment looking down at the rough plank floor. When she raised her face again, a pitiful pallor had spread over it, but the patient eyes were dry.

"When the baby was took sick so sudden-like, there wasn't nobody there but just me; for I'd sent Diley over to the mill. He was havin' spasms, and I was skeered to leave him and skeered to stay—and there wasn't no way to git a doctor, or Jim, or anybody to help me—I hadn't had baby but three weeks, and it seemed like I didn't know nothin' 'bout how to do for him. I did work with him the best I could, till I saw it wan't no use. Then I thought about Jim comin' home—and thinkin' his baby was lost for good because he hadn't been baptized. And—and I done what Mis' Watkin' tole you—not on account of the baby—but on account of Jim."

The speaker paused, glanced at the Moderator, drew in a breath as if to speak, but suddenly pressed her lips together, sat down, and drew her sun-bonnet over her head.

The Moderator slowly arose. His glance rested upon the congregation, calmly, but before he spoke he cleared his throat twice.

"Brethren and sisters," he began, "is there any action to be taken upon this charge?"

Silence followed. A woman in the far corner burst out into hysterical sobbing.

"If there's no action," continued the deep tones of the Moderator, "I declare the charges dismissed."

A gray-haired elder raised himself to his feet.

"Brother Moderator," he said, "I say amen to them words."

And a chorus of "amens" followed.

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