

Scandal in Bögölyön

Distributed for:
The Ministry of Adult Education
by:
Hungarian Photo - Slide Department
Budapest, 1953

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What in heaven's name?
Was that a gunshot, or has the ceiling fallen in?
Neither one, nor the other friends!
It was a slap, and a powerful one, in Shoo-fly!
Such a thundering slap that the whole country heard it
from Tolna to Baranya.

Why deny it? It was as strong as lightening!
The cantor went wild, and attacked the priest
like a bull.
But hush! They'll wait their turn, and
we'll hear this holy tale,
or why and how it happened last Fall
in a respectable transdanubian village.
So, let's start from the beginning!

Who's sitting here with long noses?
What's this group up to?
Look at how sad their faces are
Ben Clavach, the parson,
explains, and then sighs deeply:
"Good old days, where have you gone!"
Mrs. Stomper grunts in his wake,
'My thousand acres all, all gone!..'

Mr. Stomper was a great lord once,
now he's been made a ruin
partly by sorrow, and partly by wine.
He turns to the Parson:
"I'll say this much, dammit,
something has to be done.
The collective farm, I hear,
is going to assign work units...."

"Work units! - My lord!
Parson, we need a miracle!
fumes the kulak, Mr. Biggut,
and even his eyes are begging.
Mr. Sorrowson, the businessman,
has a few theories of his own
"Who in the world could help,
other than God, or America!"

"Shall I make a miracle" says the Priest
with his arms held wide to the company
"I can talk to the peasants,
but they don't listen to me,
they listen to others these days"
We've tried with this and that,

with holy water and divine grace,
and we didn't get much blessing,
except from one or two old ladies".

"Work units! Work units!"
Mr. Stomper is shaking with rage
"The collective just keeps growing,
dear parson Ben Clavach,
and can you only have effect,
with a little tricky diction,
with a few ornamental parables?...
It's what the Vatican wants."

And come Sunday, in the temple
sat nine kulaks in a row,
and the Parson preached:
"Yes the village is growing, it's a city,
but why struggle,
if we'll die anyway one day!
It's smarter not to change the old for new,
as your soul just may be damaged."

That's what the preacher said, and nine kulaks
avidly prayed, and even Mrs. Stompers lips shook so
that she almost started crying.
She's praying! And for what?
For the two pigs she's hidden,
and she's asking God
to save her Wertheim cash box

The Priest's words just fly:
"You don't need goods on this earth!"
while he watches with one eye
what goes in the collection box.
His other eye - now wait a minute -
is stuck to Mrs. Jonathan Squeak,
and perhaps upon her bible.

The Mass has come to an end.
The priest prepares for lunch,
when two men come in:
"We'll talk of peace this evening,
and our Parson should come too!"
And what does Clavach say to that?

"I only care about faith, the hereafter
and nothing else.
My bread is a prayer,
- not a thing of this earth, and not politics."

After returning from the temple sighing
aunty Susie tells her husband
what she heard that day in church:
"Say what you want, the final word is
we won't join the collective farm".
She understood, she's clever enough,
that's what the Parson really meant.

Aunty Susie's husband John then says this:
"Shame on you Susie, don't you see

the kulaks standing behind the priest?
Sorrowson and Stomper,
who would steal from the people again.
They'll promise you heaven,
if you'll just put your head in their yoke."

And in the holy parsonage,
there's no lack of coming and going,
It's evening, and getting dark...
and Mrs. Jonathan Squeak comes stealing,
not for a prayer, and not to confession,
she's come for a visit for something else,
come for something else, that's for sure,
and they quickly turn out the lights, just to be sure

They do, they do, but in the cool evening,
the cantor was passing by just when,
out of the priest's house who should come sneaking
but a woman, by God and Son!
She slips out of the parsonage's
through the little door. My heavens!
It's Mrs. Jonathan Squeak, without a doubt.

And the cantor thinks and thinks:
is our parson all THAT pious?
While he's advertising morals
He's squeezing Mrs. Jonathan Squeak?
The cantor has begun to swear:
"Hey, gosh darnit, shoot,
that darn fellow keeps on
saying, that he cannot even pay me."

The next day the village starts to talk
from top to bottom comes the story,
and their talking, whispering
all about the priest's long evening.

"When I left her only the cantor,
only the cantor could have seen me
He's the one" - cries Mrs. Squeak -
"I wish he'd burn in hell"

Poor, poor cantor, now he'll suffer
for seeing Mrs. Squeak where he shouldn't,
because no matter what he does,
it's wrong shouts the parson.
Nothing's been good, for days and days,
not the choir, not the songbook...
The cantor's teeth are gritted:
oh what he would like to say!

And the affair is drawing near,
the one that happened in Shoofly.
The litany was just happening
in the middle of the altar.
There Ben Clavach the priest was standing
and the cantor sadly played,
and the choir's song rose so that,
even the wall shook from it.

Then the priest's face grew dark
and he roared up at the cantor,
the church has never seen anything like it
come the cries of the believers:
"There goes the beautiful litany!"
The priest is shouting like a bull:
"What sort of song is that! Stop it!
You're howling like a bunch of cats!"

And as if lightening had struck
the cantor just bears the shame
with eyes lowered to the floor,
but it's not enough for the priest,
not enough, for he shakes his bell,
he makes fun of the cantor,
he calls him this and that,
and even names his mother.

And at that the poor cantor,
even though he's not too brave,
steps in front of the priest to say:
"That's enough!"
Hey, but it's as if Ben Clavach
had become a snake. He hisses, and snaps
he'll have no argument.
Who has ever seen such a litany?

He breaks out like a rabid dog:
"You're fired! Fired!, and even the
holy pair in the pictures there
are horrified at this speech.
If Saint Veronica could do it,
she'd shut her two ears and eyes,
because now is when it happens
that something snaps, and slaps out

And does it slap! But before that,
let us tell you what happened first.
The cantor who's lost his patience
starts to raise his voice too:
"By the seven holy saints of the altar,
first you'll give me my due.
Three months I've been caterwauling
singing here, for not a farthing"

And that was all the priest needed
first he turned pale, then red,
and then by God's holy truth
kicked the cantor in the stomach.

The cantor himself is no softy,
and he gave the priest such a slap,
and so quickly and so loudly
that the temple's window's broken

The strife! The struggle!
They fought like dogs.
Mrs. Squeak screamed, Tromper wailed
while one or two even laughed.
-Auntie Susie's stomach was turned,

and she clapped her hands in disgust
and said as she left:
“May the heaven’s fall on both of you!”

That very evening
a church meeting was held
a meeting whose only point
was to expel the cantor.
Nine kulaks sat on the bench:
the accusation flew, and the cursing,
Sorrowson sat and sighed:
so much for belief, so much for belief!

And in the Shoofly night
Mrs. Jonathan Squeak danced a dance
and not with the priest, and not with a lad
but with her own broom handle.

The broom was in her husband’s hand
he whaled her with it quite soundly.
Such sorrow thus comes
from lovely religious lessons

And here we are back where we started
the little company sits together again,
their noses have only gotten longer,
and everyone of them is really drooping.
They’re not in the mood for talk now
nor for English radio.
Only Sorrowson says to the priest:
“They’ve given you a handling too”.

Mrs. Tromper says amidst tears:
“How can they ever believe you now?
The peasants: big and small,
how will they take divine grace?
The collective is getting stronger
and there will be more and more of them in it.
And what trick can we use now to protect
my Wertheim cash box by Christ?