

THE RETURN OF MARY O'MURROUGH

BY ROSA MULLHOLLAND
Author of "The Tragedy of Chris," "Nanna," "Onora," etc.

CHAPTER XI
WHAT'S LEFT OF HER

Mrs. Dermody left the stranger resting on her own bed, and went out to meet her daughters, who had been attending to the animals in the yard, and driving home the hens from the field.

"You'd never guess who's in the house," she said. "I often heard tell of Mary O'Murrough. Well, she's home, an' Father Fahy has brought her to us for a lodgin'."

"It'll be hard on her, the way she'll find Shan," said Bess. "I thought she wasn't to come for another while."

"She's here, anyway. An' it'll be hard on Shan, too, to see her—what's left of her. If her own mother was to come back out of the other world to meet her, she wouldn't know her. All the beauty she wore out of her, an' she's gone an' that's yer American for y', that yer talkin' about goin' to."

"I don't want to go to America," said Bess. "not unless I go with Miles. I'm sorry for poor Mary O'Murrough, if that's the way with her."

Mrs. Dermody was too much shocked to take any notice of the mention of Miles. The tragedy of the parting of lovers had taken life and shape before her eyes, for the moment.

"Don't take any notice when you see her," she said. "Her long white face is not what anyone expected to see with her name to it, an' every body praisin' the beauty of her when they mentioned her. You mustn't be lookin' at her strange, as if y' were missin' the round cheeks an' the rosy colour of her, an' the laughin' mouth an' the dimples. She's down enough, poor creature, without seein' the whole of her loss in other people's faces!"

Anne Bridget had been listening attentively, and the stranger's case appealed to her even more forcibly than it did to Bess. Happiness foregone had taken the light out of her own eyes early, and it moved her to hear that the much-lauded Mary O'Murrough had come home at last to her lover, and was beautiful no longer.

Margerton was mulling his head in night clouds before the three Dermody's returned to the house, and found the stranger sitting alone at the table.

"There now, I was tellin' them what a good rest y' were gettin'," said Mrs. Dermody reproachfully.

"I couldn't rest," said Mary, looking wistfully at blooming Bess and fading Anne Bridget. "I'm sure the girls won't remember me. Kitty Casey didn't."

"Oh, I do remember you, a little," said Bess, eager to give comfort with words, but betraying her pity and dismay by her eyes.

"It's me that remembers you," said Anne Bridget, "an' I'd have known you out of a thousand. Bess wouldn't mind so well, because she's a good deal younger. Sure you're not so much changed, except that you're a bit thin, and tired-lookin'."

"An' no wonder, with the trouble that's before y' on Shan," said Bess.

"Now, don't be talkin' about that," said Mrs. Dermody. "Sure it'll all be over after a while. An' Mary'll be as happy as a cricket here wid ourselves, an' goin' to see him, an' watchin' for him to come out."

So did the kind creatures strive to soothe the wounds in a heart that the return wave of an ever outgoing ocean had washed over their threshold.

It was agreed that Mary could be lodged in the little loft over the kitchen, which was accordingly prepared for her; and Bess went down to the forge in the evening to see if there was 'er a passin' cart would call at the inn at Ballyorlin' for her trunk. Miles was there to meet her, and Bess announced her news.

Mary O'Murrough's come home, an' nobody would know her. Her good looks is all wrecked, an' she's nothin' but a shadda."

"The men were silent and shocked at the girl's words and her tone of calamity.

"I was fearin' that," said Tom. "I knew Mary would come the minute she was bid. Pity it wasn't sooner. I'm sorry for her looks. A woman has beauty, an' so has a flower. It won't stan' time and roughness. Y' better take warnin' yerself, my girl, an' marry before it happens to y'."

"Aye, Bess!" said Miles, watching the changes in her usually bright face on the red light of the forge shone on it.

"What will Shan say? How will he bear it? He was always talkin' of the beauty of Mary, whenever he mentioned her. It'll break her to pieces if he doesn't be glad to see her."

"If he's a man, he won't mind," said Tom. "Look at my Meg. D'ye think she's the same girl that she was when I courted her? Why need I care if her beauty's gone? Was she any wise woman, an' as good a wife, in the beginnin' as she is at the end?"

"Shan will care," said Miles. "A young man will care. It's a differ of a thing with you, father, that has your wife through all the changes."

"Oh," said Bess with sudden tears, "if we have to wait long enough, it's

little y'll be wantin' me when the time comes."

"Now y've done it, my boy!" said the blacksmith, lifting his hammer. "Take her away for a walk y' great boothoon, an' make up for yer impudence!"

"Come on, Bess," said Miles. "Y' know well I didn't mean it. Y' know I'd want y' if yer two eyes was put out. I only want to say that I'd rather have y' as y' are."

When Mary lay down that night in her little loft on her bed of fresh straw that still smelt of the wheat, and her pillow stuffed with the down of the bog-blossoms, sleep did not come to her at once, tired as she was.

Her senses were keenly alive to the presence of things long unknown to them, but familiar to memory. Resting in body and with closed eyes, she heard the murmur of subdued talk rising from the fire-side of the kitchen below. A little light from the turf blaze shone upward between the chinks of the slightly-boarded floor. The smell of the burning turf, the intonation even in the murmur of the old sweet brogue, and many another small sound contributed to the assurance of home.

In such a loft she had slept as a child, with a sister who was taken out of it by angels, in a hungry year. So had she lain on the fresh straw and the bog-blossoms, listening to the murmurs of the talk of her elders from the fire-side below. Were they really all gone, and had she ever been in America? What was the dream, past or present, each looking so like the other as they hung round her, hand in hand, winged, and with loving faces. Father, mother, brothers and sisters, were with her now. Shan had no part in this experience of the life of the child soul, wonderingly convinced of ancient things, undoubtingly satisfied with the security of visible surroundings, and the infallible and sound conceptions of mortal protectors. As the sounds from below ceased, and silence fell on the little household, the hours were still full of life for Mary, and rustling with intelligible whispers as they flitted past her.

After midnight a rising wind started her with other suggestions, begot of moaning and threatening; and she fell on her ears like the sound of her mother's weeping. Out of the storm came Shan's face, lighting up the world; and then the clouds again, and the separating sea, and the years among strangers, some of whom had grown to be friends, and were left behind now and forever.

As the early hours of morning wore on, present circumstances re-asserted themselves in all their dreariness and cruelty. The hurrying of the wind, the cry of the anemone, the fowl out of its sleep, were as echoes of painful thoughts. Once she got up and peered through the small window across the murky night landscape, in the direction of Shan's farm, which, in the darkness, was not to be seen. Later, as the sky cleared, she saw in the faint star-shine under the slanting eaves, in her scrip for three hundred pounds—her earnings for Shan, and the price of his future welfare, of her lost beauty, and of her youth outlived. Afterwards, all other thoughts were swept away in a great wave of grief that ran towards an unknown distance, through clouds and winds, and over fields and hills to the lover of her youth in his prison, suffering for some other man's wickedness, and dreaming of the young sweet-heart he was never again to see eyes upon.

When grief took so risen to its climax sleep took pity. Anne Bridget creeping up the little ladder to the loft, found Mary in a sound slumber, and went creeping down again.

"I wouldn't say but it's in her first sleep she is, was her remark; and mother and daughters moved about quietly, fearing to recall the creature, God help her!" too soon to her sorrow.

She had scarcely eaten her breakfast, when Father Fahy appeared to tell Mary that he was on his way to see Shan, to inform him of her arrival, and endeavour to make arrangements for a visit from her to the prison at the first available opportunity.

"Mayn't I go with you now, Father?" pleaded Mary.

"No child, you're too tired, and besides, Shan isn't expecting to see you. We must prepare him for a surprise."

"Surprise enough!" muttered Mrs. Mulquin, who had come early to see the returned exile, and whose bitter thoughts about America were not softened by the sight of the ravages made by time and rough toil in the person of Mary O'Murrough.

Mrs. Dermody frowned at her, at the same moment shouting at an intrusive hen, in order to drown her neighbour's thoughtless murmuring.

Mary was obedient, and when the priest went his way, she sat down at the fire-side, picking up a half knitted stocking which Mrs. Dermody had laid down, and making the needles fly between her fingers.

"Can't y' be at peace, an' rest yerself?" protested her hostess, looking up with admiration.

"You'll have to give me work," said Mary. "I'm used to it, and I couldn't live without it."

"Oh, then, we can give y' plenty," said Anne Bridget. "I wish I could knit as fast as you do."

Many friends dropped in that evening to see if it was true that Mary O'Murrough had come home to Killelagh. That, after all the years, she should have returned to find Shan in prison was recognised as a painful fatality, a tragic chapter in a story of patience and constancy.

The change in her appearance and her health gave an added touch of pathos to the situation, and, spite of good natured efforts to conceal it, the general impression of dismay was visible in every countenance.

Mary saw it all with a pale smile, grateful for, but uncomfited by the warmth of the welcoming that was poured out on her. Tom Donohue the blacksmith and his gentle motherly wife sat one on each side of her, and talked to her about Shan.

"There isn't such a man in the county of Kerry," said Tom; "clever at his business, an' keepin' a hold on everything, an' a good son, with the blessin' of his dyin' mother; humourin' that quare old father o' his, an' never as much as lookin' the way a girl went, because she wasn't Mary, an' her in America! D'ye mind Meg, the way he used to talk to you an' me about his Mary O'Murrough?"

"Sure I do that!" said Meg. "I love the ground she walks on, Mrs. Donohue, he says to me, 'though it's American ground, to my sorrow!'"

"Wait a bit, Shan," says I. 'It won't be always American ground.'"

"It's true for you, Mrs. Donohue," says he, 'for she'll be coming with the spring flowers,' says he, 'an' ne'er a one of them same to compare with her,' says Shan, says he."

A little faint rose grew on Mary's cheek listening, and she gathered up these and other sweet words repeated to her, and hid them in her heart with fear and gladness.

CHAPTER XII
WHY WOULDN'T IT BE A COMFORT TO HIM TO SEE HER?

In a gleam of wintry sunshine Mary walked across the fields and through the gaps, to the ruin of the cottage where she had been born.

Scarcely a bit of the old roof remained, only wrecked walls, broken window sockets and an entrance without a door. Nettles were growing beside the hearthstone, the black stain behind it showing where the home fire had warmed father, mother, and children; a little crowd, with laughter and prattle, song and prayer, gathered round it.

She sat on a fallen fragment of the wall and closed her eyes, and lived in the old scene, seeing the faces and hearing the voices. Surely the loving spirits would come round her now, here; years of heaven would not make them forget her. Time was nothing where they were, nor place, nor were there any conditions of limitation. Of all that she had been well instructed and long assured. If they could have forgotten her, had not her prayers to God in their name forged links to bind their memory? In whatever language Mary might have formulated these thoughts, if called on to utter them, such convictions, expressed or unexpressed, were as absolute to her as her own identity.

A footstep roused her, and Father Fahy appeared in the broken doorway.

"Now Mary O'Murrough, my poor child, what are you doing here, God help you?"

"I couldn't but come to see my own, your reverence. I isn't heaven all round you; and why can't you see them any minute, everywhere, without coming to break your heart, and their hearts too, going back on troubles that they're laughing at long ago?"

"You never taught us to think they could break their hearts in heaven, Father!"

"Now, don't catch me up, Mary! You know where they were, nor they wouldn't like to see you frettin'."

"When am I to go to see Shan, Father?"

"Come out of this, child, and I'll walk across the fields with you."

Mary obeyed.

"When are you going to see him, Father?"

"I have been to see him, Mary. He's brave and well."

"When am I to go to see him? You're in a great hurry child. Why are you in such a hurry?"

"I am in a hurry. I want to see Shan."

"Of course, of course. And you will see him—after a while."

"Does he not want to see me?" said Mary, with a sudden chill to the heart.

"Well now, Mary, he does want to see you. But he's proud, the poor fellow, and he can't bear to think of you seeing him in the prison."

"Oh, Father! He couldn't mean it! Am I to wait all that time? After comin' from America, an' him never to set eyes on me? What do I care about the prison when I want to see Shan?"

"You're a brave girl, and I told him so. And he said 'needn't tell him that the sun was warm, and the grass was green; and a few more things like that. One small bit of praise he gave you was—only that you were an angel. But we must allow that Shan's a little proud and stubborn when he takes a notion. And he's full sure that it would only make him ten times more miserable if you were to see him first, after all the years, in the dress and in the position of a convict.'"

Mary was silent under this fresh blow. Her lips were paler than ever when she said at last: "It's hard, Father."

"It is hard, Mary. I don't deny it. But we've got a man to deal with who has a good share of trouble on his back, and we must humour him. You can write to him, and I'll take your messages. You have come through plenty that has taught you patience, and you've only got to be patient a little longer."

"What does he want me to do?" asked Mary, after another silent appeal to her courage.

"He wants you to amuse yourself and be happy, so he does, poor Shan."

"Amuse myself, an' him in prison? Is it a foolish young girl he thinks me still, Father?"

"You never were that, Mary. But he wants you to make the best of it. An' when he meets you, it'll be in his own clothes and walkin' in the fields of Killelagh. That's about what he means in it, and if I know you at all you're not the girl to contrary him."

"What am I to do with myself here in the meantime?"

"Well now, one thing you could do, if you're the angel Shan takes you for. There's poor old Owen, Shan's father, a miserable sick and sorry old man, and one that is to blame for the long separation of the pair of you. He's gone near blind and near deaf with grief about Shan's misfortune, and still God's not taking him yet, and he's lonely, and every way unhappy. If you would set your mind to it and look after him a little, it would be as great a charity, as ever a woman put her hand to."

"I'll do anything I can for him," said Mary.

"God bless you, and do. I'll go up and speak to him, and tell him you're coming to see him."

Long accustomed to patience, Mary made no further complaint. If a meeting in prison, their first meeting after so many years, would fill his cup of bitterness to overflowing, then she must not think of seeing Shan. She must wait at least for some change in his mood, and meanwhile let her faithful letters and her messages through the priest assure him of her nearness and her sympathy.

Old Owen was sitting in his straw chair at the fire when Mary came in to him.

"Is it you, Mary? Father Fahy said you would come, but I thought you wouldn't. We kept you away too long, waitin' for the best, an' now all's at the worst. Come a bit nearer to me, for I'm that blind I can only see a sketch of you that might be anybody at all, an' the shape of some kind of a face is all that's plain to me."

"I'm glad to see you—I'm glad to be home again," said Mary. "God's good, an' things'll be better by and by."

"Oh, that's Mary that said it," said the old man delightedly. "Sure I'd know your voice anywhere, an' you're as usual. Not a bit changed is it. Mary's voice is the blackbird in the spring morning before the light in the sky, Shan used to say to me. An' so it is still, Mary, an' it's good o' you to be comin' to see the like o' me, a poor miserable old creature that's not long for this world; an' sorry I am to be leavin' it with things not the way I would like them to be."

"You're not leavin' it yet," said Mary. "Shan will soon be coming back to you, and then we'll all be happy."

"The pair o' y' 'll be happy, I hope and pray. But I'll not live to see it, I'm feared. 'Deed an' y' will,' says Father Fahy, says he to me, 'an' if you don't see it sittin' there in your old straw chair,' says he, 'sure y'll get a better view from where y'll be. For you're sorry for any sins y' ever done, Owen,' says he, 'an' you're bein' yer sickness well,' says he, 'an' the Lord wants no more than that, for He done the rest Himself long ago,' says his reverence, says he."

"I'm glad you're that comforted," said Mary in her sweet mellow tones, answering, tearfully and heartily, to Shan's lover-like words about them. "It's Father Fahy who knows how to put hope and heart into a body. An' 'twas him that sent me here to talk to y', an' nurse y' up a bit."

"Aye, aye, Mary, an' 'twas you who was the good nurse to your own mother; and God bless you, an' they to hold me together till Shan comes back, for, if it was plazin' to His Majesty, I wouldn't like to die without settin' my two eyes on my little boy's face wanst more. Not that I can see a dale of features in anyone now, but I'd know it was myself when he'd say, 'Father, won't y' give us yer blessin'?'"

TO BE CONTINUED

THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S BIRTHDAY

On Sunday, Sept. 8, the Church celebrates the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. The earliest document commemorating this feast comes from the sixth century: St. Romanus, the great ecclesiastical lyricist of the Greek Church, composed a hymn for it. This saint was a native of Syria, and wrote his hymns between 530-550. The Catholic Encyclopedia tells us that the feast may have originated in Syria or Palestine in the beginning of the sixth century, when devotion to the Mother of God was greatly intensified. St. Andrew of Crete preached several sermons on this feast, in the beginning of the eighth century. There is a legend in Angers, France, that the feast was instituted there by St. Mauritius, in consequence of a revelation made about 430. On the night of Sept. 8, a man heard angels singing, and asking why they sang, he was told that they were rejoicing because the Blessed Virgin had been born on that night. The feast is a double of the second class, with an octave. In the Mass

for the Nativity we find this beautiful prayer:—

Impart to Thy servants, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the gift of Thy heavenly grace; so that we, for whom the bringing forth of Thy Divine Child by the Blessed Virgin was the beginning of salvation, may, on this the joyful festival of her nativity, be blessed with an increase in peace of heart.

DOLCE FAR NIENTE

Anna Blanche McGill in Rosary Magazine

If the melodious phrase, "dolce far niente," were not in existence, it should have been invented for Tony Domenico's ideal of life. Sitting outside his delicatessen shop beside his fruit stand—row on row of golden oranges, lemons, bananas, rosy apples, crisp green edibles arranged with the consummate art of the Italian fruit-vender—he might have served as a model for the spirit of ease and plenty. His face and figure added to the impression—well-covered bones and flesh betokening the abundant presence of olive oil and succulents in his diet. If there were any doubt that he loved his ease, that doubt would have been dispensed by his leisurely mode of serving his customers, chiefly students and teachers of the neighboring university. Then, too, there were his avowals.

"These are New York people, they go too fast! 'Prestamente,' always 'prestamente!' Knock-a you down knock-a each other down—'perche?'—then nobody care a tere so quick after all! Shove and poosh and noise—particular down-town. So, I come up here where not so much noise and poosh."

One might have wondered why he chose to remain within the precincts of a city so unregenerate in manners, so bright in philosophy of comfortable living. Meanwhile it was not for me to regret his presence in the wretched place—his fruit was so delicious, his prices were reasonable. Moreover, I half agreed with him; often after a day downtown in the conditions he so aptly described I found his comments amusing and refreshing. Criticisms of local abuses and affairs alternated with references to his bella Italia. That dear land divided his ardor with another subject—his son, thus informally introduced to me one day: "You not-a know my boy, Guilio? Good boy. Not live here since you come—he down in Pennsylvania!"

Here another customer interrupted my acquaintance-by-hearsay with Guilio—but I had visualized him immediately. His father's glowing words and expression had conjured a tall, strong lad, likely holding a good position somewhere in the neighboring State, enjoying the good fortune that often awaits the second generation in America. Anybody with any logical faculty and a few sociological theories could have deduced such a natural evolution as I supposed Guilio to be. Brief as the father's words had been, they had left no doubt as to his satisfaction with his offspring. I must ask Maria, Tony's wife, about the boy—the maternal doting would likely be even fonder than the paternal, though Maria was less expressive than her husband. She was quieter in temperament, a somewhat dignified figure and not without a certain beauty; in her dull wine-colored skirt, her dark-blue handkerchiefs pressed above her forehead, she reminded me of the models for some of the Madonnas painted in her native land. The Madonna was indeed her devoutly honored patron; I had noted the silver medal worn on a bright ribbon around her neck, symbolizing her piety—a very different thing from Tony's. I had never credited Tony with much piety; as a matter of fact, he never seemed far remote from the care-free, pagan of antique Italian days. For all the liking he inspired, there was no denying his materialistic strain; he was one to whom the things of this world are very dear—yet who was I to censure him severely, I who had frequently and luxuriously feasted upon his toothsome fruits?

Pagan, however, as I mentally catalogued him, he had certain close Christian affiliations, as I was to learn when next his disconcerting return to the subject of his son. "You never see my son—non? He a priest, you know. You see him some day when he come; maybe hear him preach—he preach fine English and Italian, too, if they want."

I nearly dropped my bag of fruit, my surprise equalled by displeasure at my family deductions. I had fancied the youth as a clerk in a wholesale fruit store, as head perhaps of a fruit-stand of his own, but I had never suspected him of occupying so exalted an office as that his father had mentioned. Meantime my surprise had not been noticed by Tony, who, when launched upon the tide of his garrulity, usually proceeded in his Latin urbanity assuming the interest of his hearers. "Yes, a priest, and a good priest, I tell you! And smart, everybody say. And he's lucky boy, too—have a it fine down there in Pennsylvania; big mines there and he chief priest. Little town it is, but plenty rich men—they like him piety; make his church over new; build him nice house. I show you picture some day, and you see how fine he have it. Nice grassy yard; and back ones, a garden—flowers and vegetables. All turn out just like I say when he leetle boy, say: 'Piccolino, when you grow up, you be priest and have nice house and nice time—everybody think you a fine.'"

"But he like it ennyhow bein' priest—pius boy he was, like his

mother. I see he was going to church much, acolyte long time—I say: 'That's right, Guilio, be priest and have good life and not work so hard like your papa and mama. Long years we work verra hard signoria; up early in the sunrise many years. Hard, sure, it was in early days when we have first one cart, then two cart, then after while a little stand, then this big one and the shop. Three more children we had besides Guilio—the girls—and they eat much and wear much before they marry. Now they got nice leetle—what you call—'dats?'

Well, the three girls—but Guilio be do best of all; he only one with real house, real home all his own. Do as please there—say his Mass, sit in garden and smoke good cigar. Ever' body like him. Maybe have automobile some day. Mo and Maria, we go down see him next week. I tell him about you leetin' to speak Italian out of book. Maybe I bring new picture of him—he look better now than when he was studying so hard to learn to be priest—he learn many books before they say he can be priest. He still learn books—always bring 'em in suitcase when he come home to see us; but he not-a have to work so hard to learn so much now; he know so much he jus' sit on portico and read newspaper and book."

Another customer appeared—and I was glad, for I was thoroughly shocked by Tony's materialism. Scarcely a word about any side of Guilio's career except the physical comforts secured! How accurate my analysis of Tony as a pagan! Yet as he happened to be living in a Christian era and country, where had he acquired such notions of a priest's life? To do him a little justice, perhaps in some small Old World town or countryside he had observed a venerable padre passing his days in a routine apparently idyllic, yet doubtless composed of diligent labors, constant solicitude about his flock, austere unimagined by such as Tony. What disapproval Guilio would feel—at least I sincerely hoped so! I walked along in distinct impatience with easy-going, hedonistic Tony.

As I walked, a few of his countrywomen and their bambini crossed my path and gradually my wrath began to subside; for after all, Tony's point of view did not differ widely from that of many high-minded fathers and mothers of my more intimate acquaintance, intent upon the well-being of their children. This dream of a happy life for one's child—was it not a natural human desire? The most sophisticated of us are glad to have our dear ones pledged to noble and exacting causes, yet what a satisfaction to know that they have enough to eat and other necessities; a luxury or so, we suspect, could do them no harm. Perhaps I was too hard on Tony—I tried to feel more tolerant. Yet for the sake of the son's high calling I trusted that he had inherited more from his mother than from the mundane spirit of his father.

Toward the end of the following week I made my way to Tony's shop with some exacting causes, yet what a satisfaction to know that they have enough to eat and other necessities; a luxury or so, we suspect, could do them no harm. Perhaps I was too hard on Tony—I tried to feel more tolerant. Yet for the sake of the son's high calling I trusted that he had inherited more from his mother than from the mundane spirit of his father.

"Buon giorno, Tonio, glad to see you home again!"

"Buon giorno, signorina! Come sta?"

"You must tell me all about your visit. I'm sure you and Maria enjoyed every day of it!"

"Si—si," responded Tony, but somehow with less conviction and expansiveness than I had expected. What had happened to leave any shadow was not Guilio as comfortable as the father had said? Were the front porch and the garden, after all, not so beguiling? I actually began to have sharp regrets if they weren't—somehow I, too, now wanted the youth to have a good home and good food so he could go forth as a young David every day to slay the Philistines. Was his charge difficult? All along I had had suspicions that his path was not all roses, even if he did have a good bed to rest in and wholesome food and the support of the worthy people of his neighborhood. I became deeply concerned; I must hear the worst.

"And Padre Guilio—he is well? And wasn't he glad to have you?"

"Si, si; yes, verra glad!"

"This simplicity of the statement, this lack of elaboration was so unlike Tony—just what was the new? Relentless analysis pressed for the facts.

"And his home is nice and comfortable, all you told me?"

"At last I had struck fire. 'Si, comfortable home—but what good it do Guilio? Eat there, sleep there—non, not always eat there and sleep there! Peoples gettin' sick an' hurt in middle of night, callin' him out to go see them! All day ever day he go here, go there—what good nice home to him? Nice porch yes; fine garden—might as well be somebody else.'"

I drew a deep breath of satisfaction. "So his flock keeps him busy?"

"Busy? So busy, Maria and me don't have time see him when we go down a visit, him!"

"Well, now, that's too bad!" The tone of sympathy provoked further confidences:

"We get there Saturday afternoon, you know; Guilio, he meet us—all verra nice—he look fine. Maria and me fix ourself for nice visit. He carry us home, we have fine lunch—"

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