

THE RETURN OF MARY O'MURROUGH

BY ROSA MULHOLLAND
Author of "The Tragedy of Christ," "Nanna," "Owen," etc.

CHAPTER IX—CONTINUED

THE OUTRAGE

"I'll keep the people at home," said Shan. "There'll be a lot o' things to see to, said Tom. "If I was a young man I'd like to be in Parliament myself. I could give them wrinkles. I picked up many's the thing in my time, standin' here, year in an' year out, an' talkin' to everybody that come past. I have plans of my own. There'll be a lot o' nonsense to get put out o' ignorant peoples heads."

"You may say that," said Shan; "but we'll know better how to do it for them, ourselves, than to knock it out o' them with the batons o' the polis. We'll have the law in our own han's. The Irish made good laws in ancient days gone by, an' they'll do it again." When the talk that followed was finished, Tom walked a piece of the way with Shan, and shook him by the hand at parting.

"Well, my boy, good luck to you an' her, an' maybe Killelagh won't give Mary the big welcome!" Shan walked away with his hands in his pockets, looking up at the planet Venus which now hung in a blaze of white glory above the dark, overtopping crag of Mangerton, giving softness to the long shadows of the more retiring mountains.

It was not Venus he saw, however, nor the darkness it illumined so tenderly, but Mary's flower-like face shining in the sunlight. She was coming towards him; she would be here in a month. The spell was broken that had kept them so long asunder. He would see that face again with his open eyes which he had been looking at with his mind all these toilsome years; that face which had no equal for sweetness and beauty, as it was given in to her in all the country round, let alone round the rings of Killelagh!

As he passed along by a bank separating his own farm from another he returned to the consciousness of things around him, and stood still a minute looking at a bit of ground, in size about a square yard, which had been long a cause of quarrel between his father and the neighbour. "To think that anythin' the size of it could be made such a row about!" he said to himself; "but there's no knowin' what our men won't give fight for. Sure it wouldn't make one cow, nor calf, a meal in a week!"

While he spoke he was aware of dismal sounds coming from one of the neighbour's fields, and the next moment a loud bellow of pain reached him. "Seems like somethin' wrong," he thought. "Is anythin' aildin' Rorkie's cattle?" He sprang over the bank, and followed the moans which rose at intervals on his ear. In the next field, by the starlight, he could soon see three cows lying near each other, and found that the lugubrious sounds proceeded from these poor animals groaning and bellowing in chorus.

Shan approached them, and by the crystal white rays of the planet Venus, mildly illuminating the dusk of the field and showing the dense, dark forms of the cows, he inspected the creatures, back and front, passing his hand over their heads and their bodies and limbs, trying to find the nature of their hurt or ailment. All at once he stooped with an oath, for his hand was wet, and he knew it was with blood.

are the charges against him. It's our business to arrest him. "Don't dar' to come near me," said Shan. "If y' do y' may take what y' got from me! When ye have anythin' more to say to me, ye know where to find me."

The policemen conferred together, and agreed not to risk any further maltreatment of their own persons. After a little more excited altercation they retired, assuring Shan of an early visit from a sufficient number of the force on the morrow morning; and Sullivan and old Rorkie proceeded to see what could be done for the unfortunate cattle. The next morning there was wild excitement in and about Killelagh when a large force of police arrived with handcuffs to arrest Shan Sullivan. Old Owen "took a wakeness" when he heard of it. The neighbours on all sides gathered round the house, exclaiming loudly against the iniquity of the accusation.

"God Almighty! Is it Shan? The best of a neighbor. An' sure if the two old men would be skirmishin' at each other wid their tongues about the size o' my apron of a bit o' land, what has that got to do wid it. Shan would be laughin' at him always, an' Pat Rorkie and him was friends." Tom Donohoe walked over with his hammer in his hand, and the police looked uneasy while he harangued them. The Dermody women were there, all of them crying. Mrs. Mulquin was clapping her hands, as grieved for another's trouble as her own sorrow would allow her to be. The excitement had reached its climax when Father Faby came hurrying to the spot.

"Don't bother yourself a ha'porth about it, Father," said Shan. "I'm going to see it out. Let them put me on my trial, since they have accused me. Somebody be to have done it, an' he's got to be found. I suppose they'll keep me in jail till the right man turns up." The old priest, with tears in his eyes, took the prisoner by the hand. "God bless you, Shan. I'm grieved for you. I'll be hard on your father."

"Don't, Father! Don't mention her. She'll be comin', an' I grieve." "She won't come so soon, maybe. And we won't tell her. Keep up your heart, my boy. You'll be back to us before long." "Will y' write her a word, Father, to keep her back? Make some kind of an excuse for me, till all this is over." "I will, Shan. I will."

"An' I'll look after the ould man, for he'll be had with the trouble." "You may trust me." "Good-by thin, an' God bless yez, Father, an' all friends. Start now to the policemen. I'm ready for y'." "I'm going with you every step of the way till I see you where you oughtn't to be," said the priest. The neighbors were of the same mind, and a crowd of men, women and children (there are few of the latter about Killelagh now) followed the little band of Shan and the "polis" and Father Faby, as it moved forward and took the road to Ballyorglin.

There was consternation in the town when Shan Sullivan was marched down the street between the policemen, Father Faby marching abreast with them, and followed by as many of the Killelagh people as had found themselves able to tramp all the way. The townspeople left their affairs and joined the crowd that stood in front of the barrack, cheering the prisoner, and hissing his captors. The priest went into the lock-up with Shan, and returned alone, and then a ringing cheer was raised for the sogaarth. That night the polis were peiled with mud in the street, an' followed by a man who knew to the world, was matter for grave scandal.

What would be done, it was asked, for a people who sympathized with the most cruel and dastardly outrages, led by priests who gave countenance and encouragement to criminals? This miscreant, taken with the blood of the poor dumb animals on his hands, and his knife at his feet, having perpetrated a crime more revolting than many a murder of a human being, was applauded as a hero, and his just punishment would be regarded as a martyrdom.

CHAPTER X. "I'M MARY O'MURROUGH FROM AMERICA"

The passengers by an American liner had been landed at Queens-town. In the midst of the bustle, friends meeting, travellers hurrying to catch trains, hustling of porters and hauling of luggage, a young woman stood apart, searching the crowd with earnest eyes, eager to recognize some one who did not appear. After an hour's waiting she sat on her trunk still, an image of patience, until finding that she was attracting attention she shook off her air of intense expectation, and departed like her fellow-travellers for the railway station.

"To Ballyorglin?" said the porter. "We can't send you all the way, but you've just missed the train that would take you nearest to it." "I'm a long time out of this," said the woman. "I thought you might have a train to it by now." She retired to the waiting room, on her face still that look of enduring patience, her whole person indicating by movement and non-movement a steadfast energy of character. Her dress was neat and plain, the black hat shaded a thin worn countenance. After half an hour's perfect quietude she left the waiting room and walked up and down the platform, decision in her step, and some pride in the carriage of her head and shoulders.

Arrived at her station she hired a car, and was driven the seven or eight miles which had to be travelled still to reach Ballyorglin, gazing intently at one point after another of the landscape, the joy of recognition still overshadowed by the failure of some one who had been counted on to meet her. The carman took her to a little inn, where she was received by a blooming young woman with a baby in her arms. It was now dark, and an oil lamp was burning in the small parlor of the house of entertainment.

"Y'll never get on to Killelagh tonight," said the mistress of the place. "We can give y' a bed an' a cup o' tea. How far are y' aither comin', if I may be askin'?" "I came from Queenstown to-day," said the stranger. "I've come from America, too, but that took me eight or nine days." "So it would. An' ye've come over to see Ireland? Maybe yer father an' mother was Irish?"

"They were," said the stranger, gratefully accepting the tea set before her by her hostess. "How are the people up there in Killelagh?" "They're well enough, all that's left o' them. A power o' them's emigratin' every month or so. An' it's that brings the sorra; to them that's stayin' as well as them that's goin'." "Father Faby is still the priest up there, I believe?"

"Of course he is. Sure Killelagh widout Father Faby would be like a face widout eyes. Isn't he the comfort in everythin'? Look at him the other day when Shan Sullivan was took—" "Took where?" "To jail by the polis. Mother in heaven, girl, what's the matter wid y'? Yer gone as white as my apron!" "I'm tired," said the stranger. "What did Shan Sullivan do?"

"Nothin'. Put down for an act that he never done. The case was made out dead against him. There was no witnesses but the polis, an' his own word was not to be taken. So there he is. Maybe yer father an' mother knew his people." "They did," said the stranger faintly. "An' who might you be now. I suppose it's no harm to ask, an' you comin' to see us?"

"My name is Mary O'Murrough." "Mary O'Murrough! Maybe you're some relation to Shan's sweetheart that went to America, an' was always comin' home, an' isn't come yet?" "I am," said the stranger. "See that now, how well I guessed it. Maybe yer an aunt of hers, though I never heard she had any one there before her. She wasn't a bit like you, any way, except that you have somethin' of the blue in the eyes. Oh sure, Mary an' me were comrades at school, an' she was the purtiest creature y' could clap your eyes on. Did y' ever see the blue on the side o' Mangerton?" "That was her eyes. An' her lips was as red as the holly berries at Christmas, an' her cheeks were as smooth as milk, an' two dimples in them! But sure yer dead bet wid the journey, an' y'd better get to yer bed."

Next morning Mary O'Murrough left her trunk at the inn to be called for, and with a small bundle in her hand set out to walk to Killelagh. The sad look on her face deepened when she found herself alone on the road, every turn of which was familiar to her memory. Shan's failure to keep his promise to meet her at the boat, and the reason for it, had been a hard blow, followed by one harder still, and the words "she wasn't a bit like you" had left a sting of their own in her ears. There was little change in her school-fellow, the woman at the inn, and Mary had shrunk from revealing her own identity, not having before thoroughly realised the change that had been wrought in her own personal appearance. Overwhelmed by keen anxiety for Shan's unhappy state, and a new deed that he, too, would do, she would not recognize her, she struggled with a sense of more entire forlornness than had ever been experienced by her when the ocean had separated her from her old home and kindred. But this

was soon controlled, and aided by a habit of courage she gathered up her energy, and her bundle, and proceeded on her journey. Arrived at Killelagh, she looked eagerly around. There were the long hills in their winter grey, and the big mountain crags behind them. Here, the green pastures, and the little hedged fields, a gleam of cold sunlight touched the streams now full and moving, and shone in the pools of the brown bog that are like open eyes looking up to heaven.

Over yonder were the homes, among them the ruined walls of the house in which she had been born. Further away was Shan Sullivan's farm. The house was not visible, but she knew the clump of trees that hid it from her view. The chapel with its cross was a striking feature of the landscape; close to it the cottage of the priest, with its roof of thatch. "Thank God for Father Faby! I will go to him first!" was her conclusion after a wide look around the scene, so familiar, yet from which she had been so long estranged. The fact that Shan was not there, and the reason why, after years of separation he could not receive her with joy, seemed to set her still further aloof from friends, to deny her any welcome from the well-remembered homes of Killelagh.

The priest's door was always open, a home to all and with a vivid recollection of a kind face bending over her dying mother, Mary O'Murrough hastened her steps to Father Faby's little garden wicket. "The Father was just leaving his house as she approached, and met her appealing look with—" "Well, my child, is there anything I can do for you?" "Father Faby! Do you not remember me?" The old man adjusted his spectacles on his nose and looked at her attentively.

"I do not child. Ought I to know you? Did I ever set eyes on you before?" "You did, Father. You christened me. And you buried my mother. I'm Mary O'Murrough from America." "God bless my soul! Mary O'Murrough! But—but—I remember Mary well, and you—and you—" "I know, Father! I'm changed. It's a good many years since I left home, and I worked hard, and went through trouble. I'm not the girl I was when I said good-bye to Killelagh."

The priest looked at her, astonished and compassionate. "How are the people up there in Killelagh?" "They're well enough, all that's left o' them. A power o' them's emigratin' every month or so. An' it's that brings the sorra; to them that's stayin' as well as them that's goin'." "Father Faby is still the priest up there, I believe?" "Of course he is. Sure Killelagh widout Father Faby would be like a face widout eyes. Isn't he the comfort in everythin'? Look at him the other day when Shan Sullivan was took—"

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minute, and I'll be going along with you." Father Faby seized her and stick, and he and Mary were soon threading the bog-paths and boroens made to carry feet to the little gables and thatches that stand up against the mountain blue, or the green and purple and dun-brown of the low woods crowning the slopes and cushioning the hollows of Killelagh.

"Now, here's Mrs. Dermody! It's many the time she talks about your mother," said the priest cheerily. The little farmhouse had a bare look, now that the elder-bushes were out of flower and out of leaf, and there were no dahlias making a column of color at either side of the lintel. As the Father spoke, a head in a white frilled cap was thrust from the door, and Mrs. Dermody hastily put off the working apron and came forth to meet him. "You're welcome, yer reverence," she said with a questioning glance at the stranger.

"Passi, passi, prego! Let me entertain you," I said, "to come in!" I held the door open wider. The friar made me a low obeisance, and with a smile that acknowledged my powers of persuasion entered the hall and stood expectant on the doormat.

In here, I went on, as I pushed him before me into my study. "O quanti libri! What a lot of books!" he cried in unfeigned surprise. "It almost reminds me of what our convent library used to be!" "Used to be?" I asked mightily pleased at his praise of my books. "Have you no library now?"

"Alas, no, signore, not above forty old volumes or so. They took our books from us when we were suppressed, and put them in the town library, where nobody says the guardian, ever looks at them, because they are all in Latin and treat of theology." "But how can you have been 'suppressed,' when you are still in existence?" I asked laughingly.

The friar laughed, too. "We died," he answered, "and came to life again. They turned all us out of our convent and put it up at auction. Two pious gentlemen bought it and gave it back to us. But it is against the law now for a religious body to own property, so two of the fathers hold it in their names as their own private and personal possession." "Then if these two fathers turned traitor, they could turn you all out again and sell the convent."

It was an inconsiderate remark, drawn from me by curiosity, surprise and the study of law books. "Fra Pacifico shuddered slightly. "Almighty God will not permit so great a calamity," he answered devoutly. "Simple soul! I had meant to be so considerate, too, and avoid all pitfalls, and yet here I was, at the very outset, sowing new poisonous seeds in his mind that might bear all the bitter fruits of suspicion and distrust. Fortunately for me, they fell upon ground in which no rank or poisonous weeds would grow."

"But sit down!" I continued, for we had been standing all this time. He was about to expostulate, "Tus can fashion, when his eye caught a picture on the wall, and in an instant he was before it with hands clasped in strong emotion. It was the "Death of St. Francis," by Ghirlandajo, a colored reproduction of the Arundel Society. When he had satisfied his hunger for gazing, he turned to me, and his blue eyes were moist.

"The signore is a Catholic, then, he said, "that he has a picture of our holy founder?" "Your holy founder," I answered, "if the product of one Church, if the founder of one order, is the inheritance of all mankind." "Fra Pacifico opened his eyes wide in surprise. "Is he so great as that?" he exclaimed. "So great that even the Protestants love him! I had not known it. Alas! in my dear country, so changed from what it was, there are those who revile him and his children, as they revile the holy faith he professed!" "How musical his voice was, and how innocent, how captivating his enthusiasm."

My mind wandered as he talked courteous commonplaces to me, and I took instead of gazing at him and speculating about him. What was he before he put on that habit? What was his rank in life from which he sprang ere he had become transubstantiated by the magic wand of St. Francis? Was he of patrician family, or was he a peasant's son? Surely the son of prince or duke, if gentle manners are an index of noble birth. These were gentle manners, certainly, but there was a quality in them that could not be ascribed to mere gentility of birth. It was a quality that might have been attained by peer or peasant, but not easily either by the one or the other. For want of a better word I must call it spirituality. And then a sudden explanation of it all rushed into my mind; this was a religious man, and I had never been face to face with such a one before.

"Is your convent far from here?" I asked presently. "Some twelve miles or so along the coast." "And do you come into town often?" "Every week or ten days, according to our necessities, for we live entirely on alms." "But there is no train or other conveyance along the coast." "I walk," answered Fra Pacifico, simply. "If I start at 4 in the morning I am here by 8 o'clock, and have the whole day before me to disturb the good and kind."

Fra Pacifico shrugged his shoulders. "Breakfast is not a meal," he said, "but there are kind friends who give me breakfast in the town." "Then you walk here without having eaten anything!" I cried. Fra Pacifico blushed when he saw that I had discovered his act of mortification. "I hope," I resumed, "that you will sometimes do me the pleasure of breakfasting in this house." The friar rose from his seat and made me a bow. "I shall indeed be honored, signore," he replied. "And may I come and pay you a visit at the convent? I shall drive, though, and not walk." I added, laughing. "Again the humble friar rose and bowed to me. "The guardian will be honored to welcome you, signore," he said. "But our convent is a poor place, and we have neither pictures nor marbles to show. It is the

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