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THE LAST OF THE CATHOLIC O'MALLEYS.

A TALE. BY M. TAUNTON.

CHAPTER XIX.

Day after day, passed, and no tidings, no clue, found to Nurse O'Birn's whereabouts. Poor Grace went almost every day down to Seeley's Lane. The house remained as it had been left; and, as Mike Doolan said, "as she has left her bits of furniture in the house, you see, mam, I don't know what to do; and, faith, no one seems to want the house."
A month passed away! You may be sure that during that time the O'Donnells had been in more than once to see Grace, and frequent messages had passed between the families.
Everything and everybody had now resumed their usual state, for Hoche's expedition had been scattered to the winds by a storm. It is a curious coincidence, that the French Legion, coming to liberate Ireland from the English, their oppressors, was destroyed by a storm, and in like manner the Spanish Armada.
However, like many others, the O'Donnells had returned to their own home, for now all fear was allayed for the timid, and the most sanguine gave up the hope, for the time being, of liberating their country by the aid of French arms.
One day, about five weeks after Grace had returned home, she received an early visit from her relatives, the O'Donnells. They had on a previous occasion called on the magistrate to ask his advice as to what they had better do, now that so long a time had passed without making any advance in their search for the child. He had none to give. There were no detectives in those days. There were what were called Bow-street officers; but he did not think that they would be of much use. No, he did not think that any more could be done; that time alone could unravel the mystery.
" Now, Mary," said Mr. O'Donnell, " I shall tell Grace what has been in my mind from the first and that is, that the boy is dead, and the woman has gone off to hide, not daring to tell the poor mother."
" I should not wonder," replied his wife. At any rate, it would do no harm to suggest it to Grace, for how dreadfully this suspense is telling on her! She does look terribly worn and ill, and I have no doubt will become so if this state of things continues. Yes, it would be happier even for her to know the child is dead than to go on expecting it every day, to be each day disappointed. Her servant-girl tells me that she often hears her in the night getting up and pacing the room, sighing and moaning, for she has not shed a tear all this time."
" Well, then, I will suggest this new idea at once, and see what effect it will have, Mary."
Carrying out this plan as soon as the first greetings were over, Mr. O'Donnell told Grace of their visit to the magistrate, and of his inability to offer any further advice or suggestion.
" But now, my dear Grace, I will tell you what was my idea from the first. I really believe that poor Teddie had some sudden attack

which—which—well, which killed him; or some accident, most likely: and she hadn't the courage to see you and tell you, and so went off, perhaps to England, or elsewhere, where you cannot find her."
" I thought of that myself, James," said the dry, bloodless lips of the poor sufferer; " and I inquired of the neighbors if they had heard anything to make them guess that. No, they hadn't; they had seen both the children playing about the day before they missed them. But it may be that something happened in the night."
" They borrowed the cart the day before," said Mary, " so it was not such a sudden determination to leave as it would have been had anything happened in the night."
" I have a fancy," said Grace, " to go and examine the house. I suppose that I could do so if the landlord gave me leave, eh, James!"
" Of course you could: and should you like me to go and do so for you? we might find some clue to where she is. I wonder that it never struck any of us before."
" No, James, thank you; I must go myself to be satisfied."
" Well, that I can understand. Is there time this afternoon?"
" Plenty," replied Grace, " if your horses are not tired."

They got the key from Mike Doolan, and went into the house. Everything was tidy, though, of course, covered with dust, showing how long since any one had been there.

The opened every little cupboard—examined every nook and corner. No scrap of paper which Grace had hoped she might find had been left behind, to give some indication of where they had gone. She went up alone to the little room which was used as a sleeping apartment, and there were the beds. There was a child's chair, which Grace had sent for Teddie, to sit up to the table in; and in one corner, as if forgotten, an old pair of tiny shoes that she knew were his. Her heart, as it were, stood still; and what no words had been able to effect, the sight of those tiny shoes did—they opened the floodgates of her sorrow. She wept and wept in a passion of grief; and Mrs. O'Donnell, who flew up the stairs at the sound, found her prostrate on one of the beds, holding those precious relics in her hands—these memorials of her lost child.

Wisely, her sister-in-law did not, by word or question, interfere to stop these saving tears, but patiently waited until they had exhausted themselves; then she gently besought Grace to come away with her. The poor creature let herself be led away, but she hardly had strength to go down the stairs, and Mr. O'Donnell had almost to carry her to the carriage.
Mrs. O'Donnell made her to bed as soon as she reached home; nor did she oppose the advice. She was utterly prostrate. The violence of her grief, coming on the previous tension of nerves for so many weeks, seemed to have entirely taken away all strength. However, very soon Mary had the comfort of seeing her fall into a profound slumber—the first good sleep since her trouble.

CHAPTER XXI.

" Oh!" cried Mrs. O'Donnell, to her husband, when she stole out of Grace's room to tell him the good news. " Bless'd tears! thrice blessed tears! Blessed, when through sorrow for sin they wash away guilt and restore the sinner to virtue! Blessed, when they ease the breaking heart! Blessed, when they soften the obdurate heart to pity for the woes of others! And again blessed when they restore estranged, though loving hearts! And lastly, blessed when the mourner finds their solace at the grave of the lost one! Oh, James, her tears at sight of those little relics of the lost boy have, I verily believe, saved the reason of that poor suffering mother!"

And so they truly had. Her sister-in-law remained in the room watching Grace, and was inexpressibly relieved to find that she slept all through the night until eight next morning, and that she woke up, if sad, yet quiet and resigned, and perfectly convinced that her brother-in-law was right, that her child was dead.
And was he lost to her? Ah, no! any bereaved mother will tell you that her dead child seems more especially hers when the grave has closed over it than it was before.
It seems always with her—she can talk to it, and fancy it is watching; and, as it were, participating in all her feelings, much more so than it ever did in life.
It seems more essentially hers; no one can go between them; no one can draw the little one's heart away from her. No; a dead child belongs by right to the mother. Who cares for it now as she does? Who remembers it as she does? Does she ever put it aside from the family circle? No, it is always

counted as there. And though she knows that in praying for her children she need not, must not, pray in the same manner for it as she does for the living, yet, is it excluded from her prayers? Ah, no; although, if by their tender years, she feels sure that they are before the throne of God, then she asks them to remember her, rather than pray for them. And if they were of longer stay in this world that she feared the stain of earth might not have quite been washed away—ah! then she can still mingle them in her prayers, when praying to the Heavenly Father for mercy and salvation for those dear ones still left to her care.
Mrs. O'Donnell would not again leave Grace, but made her go with her back to Waterdale, when she had sufficiently recovered to hear the change.

Though week after week passed, until they began to count the months instead of weeks, yet not the slightest clue could be obtained of Mrs. O'Birn or her daughter.
And now they persuaded Grace to give up her house in Galway and live with them; for so young as she was, and with no family, it was by far the wisest plan.
About seven months after Grace had removed to Waterdale she heard from her aunt, with whom Mrs. O'Malley resided, in Dublin, that her mother's health was beginning to decline; and Grace was not long ere she was roused from her abiding sorrow by a summons from her aunt, to come without delay, for her mother had a stroke of paralysis.

Now began quite a new phase in our heroine's life, which I much proceed to describe.

I do not fancy that you feel very interested in Mrs. O'Malley more than I confess I do, so you will not want me to enter greatly into the details of her illness, and that it will be sufficient to say that after five or six weeks of dutiful and affectionate nursing, Grace saw the grave close over the only near relation she had. And although there had never been warm sympathy between mother and daughter—still Mrs. O'Malley had loved her daughter as warmly as a nature like hers could love; and during her last illness, had shown that she appreciated the attention shown her by her dutiful child, to whom she left the small property belonging to her. So, that, with what Grace inherited from her husband, gave her a genteel competence.

Mrs. O'Shawnessy, the sister with whom Mrs. O'Malley had resided, was the widow of a lawyer. She had been early left a widow with a son and two daughters, and her husband dying young, had been unable to leave much property behind, so that her means were very straightened.
At the time we are introducing her to you, her son had become, what was called in those days a counsellor, or as we should say now—a barrister, or Queen's counsel. He lived with his mother and sisters, to add to their income.
Grace could not help seeing and knowing that her mother's death was a great loss to her aunt; and, therefore, as she had no particular tie to Galway, she offered, if agreeable, to remain with her aunt in Neville Square.

Mrs. O'Shawnessy was but too thankful to refuse her offer; so Grace made Dublin her home for three or four years, occasionally going to Waterdale for a few weeks every summer.
You may be sure that she never visited Galway without making what we may call a pilgrimage to Seeley Lane, but without obtaining the least piece of intelligence of Widow O'Birn.

The O'Donnells spent a month or five weeks in Dublin every year, as was the habit with most country families of distinction to do; therefore Grace saw a great deal of her kind and affectionate brother and sister-in-law, to whom she was very dear.

CHAPTER XXIII.

What a difference in Grace's life was the excitement and bustle of Dublin. Still young enough to enjoy gaiety, and although trials of no common nature, and deep sorrow, had shaded her early life, she was young enough still to retain in a great degree her naturally buoyant spirits.
Her aunt, on account of her daughters, saw a great deal of society; and her cousin Counsellor O'Shawnessy's professional connection, introduced to his mother's house many of the choice spirits of the day—a day which was very rich in clever, witty, and rising men, such as Grattan, Phillips, Horne Tooke, and Curran. This was a particularly brilliant epoch of the Dublin bar, such as has never been seen since, at least, in so large a proportion; in fact, there may be now-a-days, here and there, a clever man; but where is the wit that deserves handing down as did the spontaneous effusions of the men of those days? Where the eloquence that enchained men, and made an audience

weep, as did Phillips when addressing the court on some domestic tragedy he had to plead the cause of? Where the preacher, such as Kirwan (though a pervert from the faith of his baptism), who was so eloquent in his pleadings for charity, as to cause the ladies to take off their ornaments, and place them in the plates as they were carried round for subscriptions; not satisfied with the amount they had brought at their contribution to the charity which he was advocating, but so wrought upon by his burning words, that again and again fresh contributions were deposited until the very rings were taken off their fingers, in the excitement and enthusiasm he excited?
Is it that we do not possess such talented men now-a-days. Or have we, who listen to them, become colder or too practical to be moved to forego our prudence? I rather think that it is that we are at a duller time; for real wit, real eloquence, real talent, must make itself felt—must move even a nineteenth century society; nor do I believe that we have lost our enthusiasm for sterling talent.

It was in such society that Grace found herself; it drew out all her dormant cleverness, and she thoroughly enjoyed it. She was not unappreciated herself for her ready repartee; her beauty was a great element of success, even among such a set; and she was called everywhere "The Beauty." "Have you seen the Beauty to-day?" was a common question put from one to the other, or "What will the Beauty say to that?" &c. (The Irish are so fond of nicknames.)
Grace had several offers of marriage, but she appeared insensible to all who approached her; however, Fate was advancing with rapid strides, though she guessed it not, and thought herself secure.

One day Counsellor O'Shawnessy, at the breakfast table, begged his mother to expect to dinner Lieutenant Robert Noel. "I met him yesterday at Walker's and invited him to dine with me to-day. I hope there is nothing to prevent his coming?"
" Nothing, John, that I know of," replied his mother.
" Then four o'clock, mother. Good-bye till then; but, girls, put on your best bibs and tuckers to astonish the Englisher."

" Oh! you may be sure of that," said his sister Eliza, the younger of the two sisters; " but what is he like?"
" Oh! you must judge for yourself; so good-bye to you all." And he was gone.
Of course they discussed the subject, and Mary O'Shawnessy exclaimed, " But what is the use of our thinking of or caring to look our best? what will it signify how we look? whilst cousin Grace is by we are never noticed."

" That is all nonsense," interrupted Grace. " However, make your minds easy on this point, for I never would have anything to say to an Englishman, if he was hung all over with diamonds."
" Oh, then, I would have something to say to him," said Eliza, " for I should like to pluck off a few of the diamonds."
" Well, not I," said Grace, " for I am sure the diamonds would be dull and not sparkling enough for me. So, now you know that you have the field to yourself as far as I am concerned, make the best use of your opportunity."

" You are disposing of this good man very quietly, girls," said the mother. " I beg to remind you that you have not heard whether he is married or single, old or young; but which of you will come out with me this morning?"
" I will," said Eliza; " for I have a little shopping to do on my own account."
" Ah!" laughed Grace, " to buy a hook to secure some of the diamonds; eh, Eliza?"

And so they parted, and each went to their several occupations, until the quarter before dinner hour reminded them it was time to prepare to go down to meet the expected guest.

CHAPTER XXV.

At five minutes before four, Lieutenant Noel and another friend of John O'Shawnessy's entered the drawing-room.
In those days they had not the insane fashion when asked for one hour to arrive an hour or perhaps two later, as they do now-a-days.
Then, punctuality was considered a sign of good breeding, not a *gaucherie*, as it is at the present day. There are not even any old-fashioned people left on this side of the century, who, by their punctuality, throw the whole household where they are invited into hysterics, by coming to the time named on the card of invitation.

Now, even cooks never think of being ready for quite an hour after the time mentioned, to save their reputations and to ensure the dinner being served hot.
Well, I have left Mr. Noel and Mr. O'Shawnessy waiting in the drawing-room with their hostess, whilst I was tiring against present

fashion, in contradistinction with the old, making it evident that I prefer the latter to the former. Excuse me, reader, and I will now return and introduce them to the young ladies, who, accompanied by Grace, entered the room a few minutes after the gentlemen arrived.

Mr. O'Shawnessy was an old friend, so we need say little about him, but that he was not only an old friend, but a general favorite. Mr. Noel is the one they were curious to see, as the stranger.

Mr. Noel was tall and very good looking; nay, even very handsome.
His uniform became him; he wore it on this occasion, for it was not, as now, the custom to be in *muff*; officers of all kinds, when with their ship or regiment (that is, in the same place with it), wore their uniforms. Mr. Noel was dark with plenty of color, and a profusion of black hair.

Of course his manner appeared stiff in contrast of the Irish *song froil*, but then it was hardly a fair test what his manner might be on ordinary occasions, for who does not feel it a trial, that ordeal before dinner is announced? more especially when all the party except your host or hostess are strangers to you.

At last the happy summons is given: Mrs. O'Shawnessy was of course led in to dinner by the stranger, and soon the congenial habit of taking wine together broke the ice, and made conversation become general. What a pity that this custom is exploded. It made people at a dinner-table much more friendly than they are at present. I know that often, under the old *regime*, it brought some disagreeables and affronts; if a poor man omitted inviting any one he ought to have honored to "the pleasure of a glass of wine, Mr. or Mrs.," what a mistake! But then, on the other hand, it often made up a coolness that had but wanted something as trifling as this to make it all right again.

During the evening, the ladies, in turns, amused their visitors by singing their old Irish songs (the melodies had not then come into vogue). Grace had a peculiarly sweet voice—quite uncultivated, but in its rich, soft tones admirably adapted to the melancholy and touching songs of their native land.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Of course, our Englishman was struck with—taken desperately captive—by our heroine! perfectly astonished at the beautiful and graceful girl who entered the room, accompanied by two plain, though good-natured looking girls. We are apt, when we know one or two members of a family, to expect the rest to be like them! It is this preconceived idea that caused Mr. Noel's surprise at Grace's beauty—for both Mrs. O'Shawnessy and her son were remarkably plain, almost ugly.

Nor could he quite understand when his hostess said, " Allow me to introduce you to my niece, Mrs. O'Donnell," he supposed that he had misunderstood Mrs. for Miss; for surely she seemed too young to be a married woman—so girlish as she looked; however, when he had convinced himself that he had not heard wrongly, and that it was indeed Mrs. O'Donnell, how grieved he was! As he sat, after dinner, listening to her sweet voice and pathetic rendering of those old ballads—which she felt as well as sung—the thought that so fascinating a woman was already appropriated was unfortunate, for, indeed, he knew that he had never before admired any one as he did the woman before him! He left the house wishing that he had not accepted the invitation of his new friend.

On paying a visit, a day or two afterwards, in Neville Square, Mr. Noel found the elderly lady alone. The younger ladies were out. So he ventured to remark on the youthful appearance of Mrs. O'Donnell—of course adroitly bringing in the subject—and heard with delight that she was a widowed niece who always resided with her aunt.

Now did Mr. Noel give way to his smothered feeling of admiration as he walked away from the square. Now did he mentally promise himself, " I will win her." Now did he begin to lay his plans for the siege, and with the old-fashioned hospitality of Dublin (now, alas! gone the way of all good things), it was not a difficult matter to arrange.

Mrs. O'Shawnessy had said to him, " I shall always be happy to see you, Mr. Noel, when you feel inclined to drop in of an evening," and he resolved that he would put her sincerity to the test.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A couple of mornings after his first visit, he began the attack by bringing four tickets for a ball, which was to take place at the Rotunda. Mrs. O'Shawnessy received them with thanks; but what was his disappointment in the evening to see the O'Shawnessys at the ball and no Grace with them! He had stationed himself in the doorway to meet her—and had to give his arm to the old lady instead! As soon as