

(CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE.)

strongest of the men who assisted. The doctor looked on with eyes fixed on the face, ready to note the faintest motion; but it was Moll Murtha who caught the first flutter of the patient's eyelids, and she was the first to hasten to announce the fact: "Glory be to God! he's alive! he's alive! Scrub away, boys, for the Mother of Mercy's sake! He's coming!—the own Dan! the light of his old mother's eyes, an' the pulse of her heart!" She broke into a hysterical laugh, and, unable longer to support herself, sank down on the floor, murmuring: "He's not dead, he's not dead! Glory be to God! He's not dead!"

CHAPTER VI. Dan Murtha's bodily health was soon restored, that within a week from the night of his hurt he was able to walk to his little home on the hill-side without aid from anyone, save that his mother held his hand in hers for guidance. For, as the surgeon had predicted, the injured brain no longer did its appointed work; and there was little inducement to distinguish Dan Murtha from a born imbecile. Some link between himself and his mother remained unbroken, for he would follow whithersoever she led, and do her bidding freely in so far as he was able to gather its meaning. From the rest of the world he seemed entirely severed.

Day after day Moll Murtha beheld with increasing anguish and remorse the condition of her stricken son; and day after day she prayed amid flowing tears that he might be restored to his former state. She had given up her wandering habits, to devote herself more thoroughly to the helpless young man; but, being obliged to go down at times to the village shop, she heard in due course what the whole countryside was talking of—how Kitty Donohoe, having entered without dispute into formal possession of the lands and premises bequeathed to her by the miser, had refused point-blank to dwell thereon, and parted with a neighbor for a farm of lesser value, and at the opposite side of the townland; how the bewitching Kitty, being now a young woman of property, could never go to Mass or market, never tread a hundred yards beyond her door, without an escort of half a dozen fine young fellows, who hung defiant glances at one another, and were barely restrained by her presence from rushing into mortal combat; and how, although it was admitted that Kitty Donohoe bore herself with great discretion towards them all, the wise old women of the district had come without a dissenting voice to the belief that Long John O'Connell had the greatest share in the girl's regard. And Moll Murtha, when she got home, with these things fresh in her memory, looked on her ill son and wept silently.

"It was," the old woman wailed, "it was, God forgive me!" "An' what did you ever see wrong in me?" the girl asked sternly, with heightened color. "Nothin'—nothin'—nothin'!" Moll sobbed out; "nothin' was ever seen by you towards gentle or simple but what was always good an' nice. But, Kitty alanna, I thought I was doin' you an' him good by partin' yez; but the Lord was above, an' cut me to the heart every day o' me life since for me wicked sin. Say you'll forgive me, Kitty avourneen; I ask it on me bended knees; God maybe will be more merciful to me if you forgive me."

The struggle in the girl's breast was of brief duration. Her native generosity triumphed, and she held out her hand to the sadly humbled match-maker, saying: "Here, get up, Mrs. Murtha. Don't talk to me about forgivin'; I have too many little black wans o' me own to be lookin' out for. Howdander, I'm sure you had something else to say to me when you came so far to-night."

"When I had, alanna. As Dan was talkin' about you to-day, I was thinkin' that maybe if you'd come up an' talk to him he might come to himself out-an'-out." With a lighter heart than she had known for many a month, Kitty Donohoe agreed to go at once, and the two women set out together, after a few minutes taken for preparation by the younger.

They found Dan Murtha sitting listlessly on the edge of the large table that lay in the centre of the kitchen, his eyes dull, his features hanging and heavy. "Good luck to you, Kitty alanna, let me see what you can do," the mother said, wringing her hands. "Bright drops stood in the girl's frank blue eyes, and her mouth quivered, as she advanced towards the young man. Suddenly chucking herself, she said: "He wouldn't mind a word I'd say to him that way—cool an' regular-like. Here goes to give him a bit of a start!"

And, while bravely trying to assume a cheerful mien, she seized her apron, and glided into a dancing movement, as the same time pattering in tones that lacked much of their usual ring: "Mother, when I die, sure you won't sell the griddle, oh! Mother, when I die, sure you won't sell the griddle, oh!" Dan Murtha's dull eye grew bright at the sound, and settled with pleasure on the graceful motions of the girl. He caught his head between his hands, and, with a wild whoop, exclaimed in recognition: "Kitty Donohoe, your soul! Who! Kitty Donohoe for ever!"

Leaping to his feet he began to caper vigorously; but whether it was that his mind was unable to control his movements, or from some other cause equally obscure, after a few steps he succeeded in tripping himself so thoroughly that he fell to the ground as if shot by an engine. Screaming, the two women rushed to his assistance, and dire was their terror on observing a little blood spurt from his pole. But every feeling of alarm gave way to glad surprise when, sitting up on the floor, and surveying all around, he said: "What's the matter, mother? Was I sick, or what? Something happened to me surely! Oh ay! I remember now—Dinny Horan, the cowardly little thief! An' Kitty Donohoe—oh, oh!" here Kitty retreated into shadow—"the girl I thought so much about! Well, well!" And he rose to his feet. Clinging to him wildly, Moll Murtha almost screamed: "I told you lies about her, Dan Darlin'—all a lie, God forgive me."

"Me head's queer," he answered stupidly; "I don't think I'm hearin' rightly." And he glanced around the apartment to make certain of being conscious. His eyes caught sight of the blushing girl, on whose face it rested for an instant; then swiftly turning to his mother, he spoke sharply: "What's that you said? Say it agin' till I make sure of it."

"O Dan! don't hate me," she returned, clinging to his neck, "don't hate me! sure I thought it was for your good to part yez, while I told you that big black lie. Don't hate!" "Lave go o' me, woman," he broke in with sudden anger; "lave go o' me; you're chokin' me, I say!" He shook her from him, and going over to the wall, leaned his head against it in his hands. There was silence for a while, broken only by the sobs of the old woman. At length Dan Murtha, slightly turning his head in the direction of Kitty Donohoe, said in a low tone: "Kitty, agin', if it was anyone else's oath I wouldn't have believed it."

The girl shot a glance of content at the young man, and then moving over to his side, laid her hand upon his shoulder. He passed a hand over his brow, and walked across the floor. "It's past and gone now, mother," he said offering his hand; "let no more be said about it." The reconciliation was complete.

We will not dwell on the happy days that Dan Murtha and Kitty Donohoe spent thereafter, nor in the fondness for young Driscoll, the child of her adoption, developed by the match-maker; nor on the sudden retirement of Kitty Donohoe's voluntary escort when Dan Murtha came into the field. Let it suffice to say that on a fine Spring morning the young couple made their vows before the altar of their parish church. They had reasons strong enough to make them wish for as little publicity as possible; so, contrary to the custom of the place, but few were present at the marriage ceremony; fewer still accompanied the happy couple on their homeward way. Yet to those most interested it was a pleasant morning journey. The bridegroom, ostensibly employed in lending the horse along the rough highway, was chiefly engaged in twisting his looks to gaze on the young bride, who, from the pillion whereon she was seated, received his ardent looks with tranquil, if rosy, composure. Then followed the bride-maid and best man, with another mate friend of Dan's companioning his mother, by whose side young Driscoll trotted stoutly. And if no boisterous mirth was heard among them, the wedded pair at least had the tranquil deep satisfaction which is a bliss of a higher and more sacred kind. Imbued with such feelings, and surrounded with the good wishes of their neighbors, we leave Dan Murtha and his wife at the door of the home wherein they began life together.

A few words about the match-maker may fitly close this narrative of the mischief her scheming wrought. Her part in the matters detailed in these pages soon leaked out—we greatly fear through the agency of charming Kitty Murtha—and the people of the place, persisting in charging her with having "a hand" in the miser's death, strove to avoid her, and feared to meet her as an "unlucky" person. Moll Murtha was so gung by this change of manner in those who were wont to meet her with such warmth of yore, that she retired to the town of Dingle, where she was unknown, and where her son provided her support. Faithful to the whim that seized her when first she looked upon the motherless child of the Widow Driscoll, she clung to the young fellow still, and brought him to the remote western town with her. And when, some two years afterwards, broken down with mortification and remorse, she felt herself about to depart from life, she caused the Dingle schoolmaster to write to her son Dan, entreating him to charge himself with the care of the orphan, and recommending the child to the good graces of Kitty. We need hardly say that young Driscoll was warmly welcomed into the Murtha household, and that he grew up among the children of Dan and Kitty as a brother.

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