

THE BLAKES AND FLANAGANS.

BY MRS. JAS. A. SADLER. CHAPTER XII.

A MARRIAGE AND A PROSPECT OF ANOTHER.

Free soon after Henry's becoming a Freemason, his father was surprised one evening by a visit from Mr. Pearson, the father of our fair friend, Jane. After some preliminary conversation, the visitor inquired whether Henry had apprised the elders of his house of certain matrimonial intentions entertained by him.

"No," said Miles—"not that I know of, though he was here awhile yesterday evening? Mary, did he say anything of it to you?"

"Not a word, Miles—not a single word!"

"Well! that is rather strange!" observed Mr. Pearson; "however, the omission is of little consequence, for I can myself ascertain your sentiments. Your son, Mr. Blake! has been for some time past paying attention to my daughter, as you are probably aware."

"Yes, I thought he had a sort of liking for her," said Miles coolly. "And so he wants to marry her?"

"Precisely; he made a formal declaration this forenoon, and as my daughter seems to have no objection, I just called to have your opinion before matters are brought to a close."

Miles looked at his wife, and she looked at him. Neither seemed to know very well what they ought to say, for, to tell the truth, both were completely stunned; but Eliza came to the rescue with—

"Pa and ma are so overpowered by their feelings at this moment, Mr. Pearson, that you must leave them time to arrange their thoughts in speaking order. I'll answer for them that they have no objection to the match, but are, on the contrary, perfectly satisfied. So I told Henry when he consulted me on the subject."

Miles looked at his wife, and she looked at him. Neither seemed to know very well what they ought to say, for, to tell the truth, both were completely stunned; but Eliza came to the rescue with—

"Oh! Miles, dear! don't be so down hearted," said his wife, soothingly; "it's an old saying and a true one, that sorrow is time enough unto comers. Things may turn out better than we expect."

Miles shook his head despondingly, as he proceeded to search for a book he had been reading. "Did you see that book that Edward Flanagan lent me—the Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald?"

"It's on the table in the next room there," Miles went to fetch the book, and his wife heard him sigh heavily. "God help you, poor man!" said she to herself, as she resumed her sewing; "it's little heart you have for reading, only you want to bother grief, if you can."

Whether Blake's hint was fully understood by his son, or that the young gentleman began to think it might look better to consult "the old man," he made his appearance in the paternal mansion on the following evening.

Eliza contrived to give him an admonitory pinch on the arm as she met him at the parlor door, glancing at the same towards their father, as much as to say: "You must manage him carefully, or things won't go well." To which Harry responded by a slight inclination of the head.

Miles' surmise regarding the money was perfectly correct. Henry T. Blake knew right well that he could not make such a figure, as he would wish to make, without some of his father's "hard cash;" even Mr. Pearson had made this suggestion in the most delicate manner possible, telling the enamored aspirant for his daughter's hand: "Love is all very well—so is law, in its own time and place, but depend upon it, Henry, there's nothing like money, especially when a young man is about to enter the temple of Hymen. Money is wanting at the outset, and money must be had, in order to give you a fair start, and secure to Jane what she has hitherto had—the means of making a respectable appearance in society. Go to the old man, then, and rub him down smoothly. He's Irish, you know, and won't do with common applications. Give him a touch of the blunney, Henry—that will soften his heart!"

Acting on this politic advice, Henry was much more respectful in his demeanor, on the present occasion, than his parents had seen him for years before. Still he did not broach the subject nearest to his heart, until he had prepared the way by an hour's good conduct. Many a significant glance had passed between him and Eliza, indicating a joint course of observation in feeling the parental pulse, as it were, and it was not till Miles had actually come to the laughing point, and his wife's face looked blithe and cheerful as in former days, that Henry ventured to "declare his intentions."

"I've been thinking of getting married, father," said he, and then he stopped.

"So I hear," said his father, drily. "Didn't you send Mr. Pearson to tell us?—Why didn't you let us know before now?"

"Oh! because I was waiting for the matter definitively settled before I troubled you."

"Your mother and myself are entirely obliged to you, Mr. Henry!" said his father with much gravity; "it was very kind of you to save us the trouble of thinking or speaking on a subject of such importance! You acted like a dutiful and loving son, and we'll not forget your good conduct in haste. Eh, Mary, what do you say?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I was a little hurt at first, but then I got over it soon," replied Mrs. Blake, with a smile of doubtful meaning; "I began to think that Harry wasn't so much to blame after all, for how could a simple old couple like you and me Miles, have anything to do with choosing a wife for such a son as ours? The Flanagans or the like of them might act differently in such a case, but then they belong to a different set. Our Henry couldn't be expected to imitate such old-fashioned Irish people."

Eliza, he laid his hand on her head, saying, "Don't cry, Lizzy! when he was in very good humor he always called her Lizzy, don't cry, you know my way, and how easy to ruffle my temper—but, then, Harry's ingratitude should not make me cross with you. Dry up your tears, Lizzy, dear—that's a good girl, and I'll not say another word about Henry—if I can help it!"

"Come, come, Eliza, let us have no more about it," said her father—"you needn't take on so very bad. I told you I was sorry for what I said—what more would you have?"

"Oh! nothing, pa—nothing more, I assure you, but my feelings are so easily touched, my sensibility is so very acute, that I cannot heal the wound all at once. Allow me to retire for a little while."

"There she goes, now," said Miles, when left alone with his wife; "there she goes in high dudgeon because her father ventured to say a word that she didn't like. You'd think I was the greatest tyrant in creation. Now mark my words, Mary Blake! that girl is not a bit better than Henry, if the truth were known; she just thinks as little of her mother, and wants to keep a smooth face on the matter. It's little comfort we'll ever have in our children. I see that plain enough!"

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Mrs. Blake, who was promptly met by Henry's assurance that Jane was not at all particular about religion—in fact, she would almost as soon go the Roman Catholic church as any other. He had not, he said, the smallest doubt but she would become a Catholic as soon as they were married. This made all smooth, as smooth as could be, and when Henry rose to take his leave, he was in such excellent humor that he actually promised to dine at home next day. Moreover, he graciously invited his mother and sister to go with Jane, in the forenoon, on a shopping excursion. This last move was the finishing stroke of Henry's clever tactics. It was the "real touch of the blunney," and did more to conciliate Miles and his wife than all the well-managed policy of the evening. It is needless to say that his mother willingly consented.

When Henry reached the outer door, he found that he had left his gloves on the table in the sitting room, and called to Eliza to bring them. This Eliza could not do, but she brought herself, which was much more to Henry's purpose, for the gloves were in his pocket. What he said to her in whisper nobody heard, but herself, but he certainly said something, amounting in all to about half a dozen words. What- ever it was, Eliza nodded assent, and then hastened back to the sitting-room.

Mrs. Blake, before she retired for the night, held a consultation with her daughter on what they were to wear next day.

"You can wear that new lilac muslin," she said, "it is so very pretty and so becoming to you, and I'll wear my brown satin. I think it's the most suitable for a woman of my age; don't you Eliza?"

"Yes, ma; I quite agree with you—the brown satin is the very thing," Eliza spoke quite seriously; but there was a smile curling her pretty lip, and a twinkle in her soft blue eyes, that her mother never noticed. How could she—poor simple woman—speaking in all good faith herself; she never dreamed of any lurking satire in her daughter's words.

Unfortunately, the brown satin was not taken from its station in the wardrobe all next day. When the time came, or rather a little before it, Eliza was attacked with a violent toothache, that her mother never persuaded her to go to a dentist, but Eliza had a nervous horror of dentists; the very thought of their instruments was enough for her. So she contented herself with rubbing some camphor on the cheek without—ditto the gum within, and then lay down to take a sleep, "if sleep she could." She had great hopes, and so had her mother, that the camphor and the heat of the pillow would prove effectual. Eliza's greatest trouble was the necessity of disappointing "poor Jane." She tried to persuade her mother to go without her, but her mother would not hear of such a thing.

"Well, what will you say, ma, if Jane sends for us?"

"Say! why, I'll tell the truth, to be sure. There's no other excuse wanted."

Accordingly, when Jane did send, Mrs. Blake told the messenger that she was very sorry to disappoint Miss Pearson, but her daughter had a dreadful toothache, and she couldn't leave her. That settled the shopping excursion, and it was all happy to say that Eliza's toothache was not of long duration.

When evening came it was almost quite gone, so that Eliza was able to play and sing some for her father and mother, to their great delight and entertainment. Mr. and Mrs. Blake began to think that there was a great deal of truth in the old proverb, "All's well that ends in laughter." Fears and misgivings were flung to the winds, and they dream'd of bright days to come.

While this marriage was on the tapis, Mrs. Blake was one day surprised by a visit from Dr. Power, whose visits had latterly been like those of angels, "few and far between." He had heard of the proposed alliance, and came to ascertain how matters really stood.

Mrs. Blake assured him, with no little exultation, that it was "true enough that Henry was going to be married to Miss Pearson."

"And with your consent?"

"Certainly, Father Power. The match is, in every respect, pleasing to Miles and me; for the only objection we could have was about religion, and my son tells us that Jane cares nothing at all about religion. She'd as soon be a Catholic as anything else."

"So much the worse," observed Dr. Power, gravely.

"Why, Lord bless me, Father Power, I don't know what you mean. Sure, isn't that all we want?"

"My dear Mrs. Blake, you are quite mistaken," replied the doctor. "I have little hope of a person who cares nothing about religion. Such persons are rarely, if ever converted. A man or woman who is really attached to any system of religion may be supposed to have a certain fixed idea of saving his or her soul; and if once convinced that salvation cannot be found beyond the pale of a certain Church, will gladly embrace the truth when it is once presented to them, and become obedient children of that Church—but for the indifferent there is no hope. You tell me your son has great hopes of his intended wife becoming a Catholic; let him take care that he himself does not become a Protestant—or, if not that, something worse."

"Lord save us, Father Power! you're enough to frighten the life in one. I wish you'd just tell Henry what you're after telling me."

"I should be very willing to do so, my dear Mrs. Blake, but I have had so many opportunities, one way and another, of sounding your son's disposition, that I have not the smallest hope of making any impression on his mind. Could not you or his father hold out against the match? And yet, he added, thoughtfully, "and yet, that is a poor resource. Darkness overshadows the land, and gross darkness the people." This last was said internally. After a moment's thought, he said to Mrs. Blake: "So you and your husband have both given your consent?"

"Well, yes, your reverence"—she

hesitated, awed, she could not tell why by Dr. Power's manner.

"In that case you cannot well retract, so I have only to wish you a good morning. When sorrow comes, as come it will, you know where to find me. If I could do you any good by coming to see you, I would come often; but, unfortunately, I cannot. Good morning. He was gone before Mrs. Blake could think of what to say."

When Miles came home, his wife told him of Dr. Power's visit, but Miles only laughed. "What fools we are!" said he; "he thinks to frighten us with his prophecies, but it won't do. We're too old to be caught with chaff. He's mad because he wasn't consulted. There's no use telling Henry anything about it; for, of course, he couldn't go back of his word now, even if he wished it."

Mrs. Blake was fain to obey, though her reason, and what religion she had, were both in open rebellion; but she resolutely put them down, and went on her way as quietly, though, perhaps, not as comfortably, as if Dr. Power had never spoken to her on the subject.

Three weeks more, and Henry led Miss Jane Pearson to the altar, as the fashionable journals would say; that is, to the altar of the world, represented by the communion-table in her own meeting-house. They next proceeded to the residence of Dr. Power, where a similar ceremony was duly performed. Grave, and even sad, was the face of the good priest, for he knew that the marriage was not "made in Heaven," and his far-seeing eye could already detect the dark clouds of sin and sorrow gathering over the devoted heads of those whom he was made the unwilling instrument in bringing together. So pretty Jane Pearson became Mrs. Henry Blake, and the joy of parents and friends was exceedingly great.

Miles Blake testified his joy and approval by a cheque on the United States Bank for \$5,000, a favor which the bride and bridegroom graciously acknowledged, and, no doubt, duly appreciated. Eliza Blake was first bridesmaid, and immediately after the ceremony, the happy pair set out for Saratoga, taking Eliza with them.

The whole party, including Miles Blake and his wife, had breakfasted at Mr. Pearson's, but it is needless to say that neither the Flanagans "nor any of that set" were invited. In fact, the whole thing was kept quite a secret as far as Henry's "Irish" friends were concerned. Not that the latter were at all in the dark as to what was going on, but, of course, their knowledge came to them by indirect channels; they were none of them favored with an official announcement. Perhaps we should except a lying visit from Mrs. Blake a few days before the wedding. She was on her way to make some purchases, and "just ran in," she said, "to tell them a secret." To her great surprise she found that the secret was no secret, although none of them would tell how they heard it.

"I suppose it was them tattling girls that I have; we can't turn in our skin for them."

"Never mind, Mary," replied her brother; "it doesn't give us much concern. If God spares us we'll have a wedding of our own before long, if it was only to spite you and Miles. We'll make your tooth water, depend upon it, how they heard it."

"You don't say so, Tim?" inquired Mrs. Blake earnestly.

"Yes, but I do say so!" returned Tim, gravely.

"Ah! then, never mind him, Mary," said Mrs. Flanagan, with her quiet smile, "the man's only making fun of you."

"Well, but I did hear something about that Margaret O'Callaghan," observed Mrs. Blake, "and I've not seen her walking with her sometimes. She's a nice-looking girl, and I suppose she'll have a little money to get. They say the old man has something by him!"

"Something by him!" repeated Tim, drily; "I rather think he has; maybe as much as your Mr. Pearson, high as he holds his head."

"Oh! nonsense, Tim, you know very well that can't be possible. But I'm sure I hope Edward will get something handsome with the girl, if it comes to a match. A couple of thousand dollars would give you a lift in your business."

"True for you, Mary!" returned Tim, with a sly glance at his wife. "But mind I didn't say that Edward was going to be married, or that Miss O'Callaghan was his intended. I only told you that we'd try to get a wedding for ourselves. How do you know but it is Susan there that we'll make up a match for? there's Mr. Fitzgibbon, the schoolmaster, has a great eye after her."

"No, I won't have him," cried Susan, with a pouting lip; "he didn't bring me that candy he promised me, and I don't like him. I like Father Power a great deal better, for he always gives us nice pictures. I'll not have Mr. Fitzgibbon."

Everyone laughed at Susan's child-like declaration, and Mrs. Blake suddenly remembered that she was staying too long. When she was gone, Mrs. Flanagan asked her husband why he had so thoughtlessly hinted at the possibility of Edward's marriage. "You know it isn't quite settled," said she, "and there's no use setting rumors about till we're sure the thing will take place."

"But I know it will take place," said Tim, positively; "Don't we know very well that O'Callaghan wants to bring it about, and that Margaret likes Edward as well as he likes her. And, then, as for ourselves, I'm sure we'll have no objection?"

"Well! at any rate, the affair is not settled, as I said before, until you and Edward have talked it over with Dr. Power, as you mean to do this evening. Then let us all make up our minds that it is to be a match, but I wouldn't see you making a blowing-horn of it till you see your way straight before you."

Evening being come, and supper over, Tim, got up and took his hat. Edward followed his example, but, somehow, he was in no hurry to move. He looked back at his mother, and saw, or thought he saw, a tear in her eye. Going back quickly to where she stood, he took hold of her hand and squeezed it hard,

hard. "I know what you're thinking, mother dear, but never fear, with God's help, you shall lose nothing by this change in my condition. Even if I do become a husband, I shall be none the less your son. No mortal can ever take your place in my heart. Pray for me, my dear mother, that I may worthily discharge the duties of whatever state I may embrace."

These words produced an effect contrary to Edward's expectations, for his mother cried all the more, and sat down in a corner with her apron to her eyes. Her tears, however, were not tears of sorrow; they flowed from the mother's heart at the thoughts of even partially losing the companionship of a dear and many long years been the comfort of her life and the pride of her heart. But still there was no bitterness in what she felt, for she knew Edward's words were true, and that she could rely on his affectionate sense of duty. The wife, too, whom he was about to take, was her own choice as well as his. As for Tim, though he had heard every word of what his son said, he pretended not to have heard it. After a moment's delay, during which he, too, had been swallowing down certain choking sensations which came upon him, he called out from the hall-door, where he stood holding the handle; "I'm blest and happy, Edward, but it's trying my patience you are; what on earth is keeping you? why, if you're as dillatory as this on the wedding day, Margaret will be apt to complain! Out with you here, or I protest I'll go off without you."

Edward came out laughing good humoredly, and they both left the house together. Just as they reached Dr. Power's door, they saw a woman coming out crying as though her heart would break. She was thin and slightly clad, and yet there was that about her which told of better days. The light of a neighboring lamp fell full on her wasted features, under the shade of an old straw bonnet, and Tim Flanagan knew her at a glance—it was Mrs. Dillon, the mother of our worthy acquaintance, Hugh.

"Why, Mrs. Dillon, can you?" said Tim as he met her face to face on the steps. "What's the matter with you, poor woman?"

Mrs. Dillon started when she heard her name so unexpectedly pronounced. She raised her heavy, tearful eyes to the speaker's face, and, recognizing him at once, she held out her hand.

"Oh! Mr. Flanagan, dear, is it here I have you?—what's the matter with me, is it? Oh! indeed, indeed, there's a load of trouble on my heart; this night, sure that poor man of mine is lying for death, and I was in asking Dr. Power to come and give him the rites of the Church."

"For death!" repeated Tim. "Oh! I trust it's not so bad as that with him—poor John! many a pleasant hour we spent together in our younger days. What does the doctor say to him?"

"Oh! he says there's no hope—none—none. But sure that's not the worst of my trouble. I set to let that unfortunate son of ours know of his father's illness, and it's what he sent me back word that he didn't care a d—n He did, indeed, Mr. Flanagan, and oh! oh! but it's the hard thing for me to have to tell it. He said he wouldn't come next or night us, and that the old fellow might go to blazes, for he cared. Oh! I think of that, Mr. Flanagan—think of that message for a poor, heart-broken creature like me, to get from her own son about his own father."

"God help you—God help you! that's all I can say."

"But what in the world will I do, do, Mr. Flanagan?" exclaimed the wretched woman; "my eldest daughter is away out of the city—God only knows where and I haven't a dollar between me and death, except this two dollar bill that Father Power's after giving me—the Lord's blessing be about him now and for evermore."

Edward whispered some words to his father, who nodded assent, and then addressed Mrs. Dillon, who stood as if waiting for an answer. "Well, go home now, my poor dear woman, and keep up your heart as well as you can, though I know it's not easy. You're not so desolate as you think. I'll tell my wife when I get home, and she'll be with you in the morning, if she's a living woman. And if the worst does happen, Mrs. Dillon, his voice trembling with emotion, "you'll find plenty of friends, take my word for it. Good night, and may God comfort your afflicted heart!"

Mrs. Dillon's answer reached the father and son as they entered the lighted hall. Her words were few, but they came from her heart:

"May you or yours never know the want of a friend, or the want of God's blessing!" she added, in a hoarse sepulchral voice, as she thought of her unnatural son.

When Tim Flanagan and his son were shown into Dr. Power's parlor, they found him preparing for his sick call. He was just taking up his ritual to set out, but on seeing the Flanagans, he laid down his book, and advanced to meet them with a cordial shake of the hand.

"You are both heartily welcome," said he, with his benignant smile. "I hope the family are all in good health. Pray be seated."

"We're all well, thanks be to God," replied Tim. "We had something particular to say to your reverence, but we'll not detain you now. Another time will do as well. We met that poor unfortunate Mrs. Dillon at the door, and she told us how matters stood."

"Ah! poor woman, she's much to be pitied," observed the doctor; "did she tell you of her son's ingratitude?"

"Yes, sir, she told us all," said Tim, eagerly. "But how in the world does it happen that she and her husband are so miserably poor; why, it is only a very few years since they were quite comfortable."

"Sickness, my good friend; sickness has exhausted their little means. Poor Dillon has been unable to work for the last twelve months. The consequence was that his business very soon dropt off, and he was obliged to dismiss his hands. The little he had saved was

soon expended when nothing was being added to it, and so the poor old couple have gradually come to the destitute state in which you find them."

"What a heartless wretch is that son of theirs!" cried Tim, in the fervor of his generous sympathy. "I don't know what that vagabond deserves!"

"God forgive him for his sins!" said the priest, mildly. "I am heartily sorry for him, if my sorrow could do him any good. The poor old woman is much troubled about not having the means of burying her husband decently."

"Well, tell her from me, your reverence," said Tim, dashing away a tear which he could not repress—"tell her from me that if it pleases God to call poor John away now, he'll have as decent a funeral as we can give him. He was a good-hearted fellow all his life; besides, he was an Irishman and a Catholic, and must have a decent burial; Edward and I will see after it ourselves."

"It is just what I would expect from you," said Dr. Power, with a friendly smile. "And now, what can I do for you? You came on business, did you not?"

"Oh, that is of no consequence, sir," replied Edward, speaking for the first time; "we can wait for another opportunity."

The doctor smiled again, and fixed his keen eyes on Edward's face. "I can hardly believe you, Edward," said he, "although it is the first time I doubted your veracity. The business on which you come is of great consequence; what say you, Timothy?"

"I can't contradict your reverence," said Tim; "it's a matter that everybody knows to be no joke. I see your reverence has got an inkling of it already."

"You are not mistaken, Timothy. I have heard of this matter, and I am well pleased with Edward's choice. If you came merely to consult me, as I think you did, there is no need for further postponement. I can give you my opinion in half a dozen words. Margaret O'Callaghan is just the wife I would have chosen for Edward Flanagan. This is my answer for the present so that you need not delay your arrangements waiting for my approbation; you have it, and may God bless you all the days of your life!—Good night, my worthy friends. I must hasten to bring the consolations of our holy religion to that poor, destitute, old man."

Dr. Power then threw his cloak over his shoulders, took up his ritual once more, and set out on his mission of mercy, while Tim Flanagan and his son retraced their steps to their own quiet dwelling.

Tim was not long in the house until he told Nelly the whole story of Mrs. Dillon's sorrows, and Nelly was so deeply touched by the recital that she "never closed an eye" that night. Indeed, very little would have induced her to go off at once "to see what she could do for the poor old couple," and it was only Tim's positive commands that kept her at home. Mrs. Flanagan had certain singular notions of her own, which are only to be accounted for by her old-fashioned Irish breeding.

THE MASTER OF THE MILLS.

By Mary Catherine Crowley.

"What a picture that church spire with its uplifted cross makes against the sky!"

George Bryson smiled as, leaning forward in his armchair, he looked out upon the scene framed by the window of his little study. It was a typical New England landscape. In the valley lay a neat village, some of whose houses were quaint and old, dating from the Revolution; others aggressively modern and pretentious. Close beside the river rose an imposing pile of factory buildings—the Bryson Cotton Mills; beyond the settlement, the woods and waters; and the fertile farms stretched away to the purple, mist-veiled hills.

The yellow bellry of the Unitarian meeting-house, almost embowered by the trees of the foreground, had been a familiar object to Mr. Bryson all his life. For he was born in the home where he now lived, and so much had his energy gone to the development of his native township that it was now known by his name.

The lofty tower and grey walls of the church, within a stone's-throw of the mills were, however, a novel feature of the panorama.

"As I sit here sometimes, when the white wind-clouds drift past the cross, it seems floating in the air; and again at a touch of the sunlight it becomes a cross of flame that sends my memory back to the legend of Constantine and his sign of triumph."

As the elderly gentleman spoke, pleasantly, yet with the languor of one in ill health, he turned toward his sister who, flourishing the daintiest of feather-dusters, stood at the reading table, flecking imaginary dust from the magazines and newspapers, and restoring order out of the chaos in which they were heaped together. Like her brother, Miss Bryson was a young, young woman, against his sixty odd years she could count at least fifty-five; but she was still in the vigor of perfect health, and it