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THE LAST OF THE CATHOLIC O'MALLEYS.

A TALE. BY M. TAUNTON.

CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

This was a cousin who lived on a wee farm on the island of Achill (not such as it has been made of late years); it was then but a poor place, with only one or two homesteads on it. Mrs. Dwyer was a cousin by marriage of Nurse O'Birn, and owned one of these small farms. "Bless us, and save us!" cried Nurse O'Birn, "Sure read that again, Katey." She complied, and then the mother sat pondering. At last she turned round quite fiercely—with such a malignant expression on her face. "Katey," she said, "we will go! Sure what have we to keep us here? Your John won't be home these three years good, as the ship only sailed a year ago, you know, when you came back to me—" "Mother, but—" "Whist, I say, and listen; don't stop me when I'm a telling you. You must not breathe a word to any one, do you hear now? But we'll borrow Mike's car, put up our things, and be off to-morrow morning in the dark, or to-morrow evening perhaps, more likely."

in and be off before daybreak. Nobody need be the wiser for when we start, as you can put the horse in. Now Katey, aoush! a mind, not a word, or they'll be preventing us going, to have the rent, and I have not enough for that and the journey." She said this to quiet Katey's tongue, for, indeed, she had plenty of money—being, paid well for poor little Teddie. Next morning—strange anomaly that she was—unknown to Katey, she left the amount of the rent on the table, wrapped up in paper, as she knew that her landlord would be the first to open the door, after it was found they did not come back. I have often observed this in the Irish—although they will be revenged, and their revenge will overcome every feeling of humanity! causing them to murder in the most cruel way—yet they will be honest! Untold gold may be under their hands, and without any fear of detection if they took it—yet it is as safe as in the bank! But mind; they are given to pilfering—especially the servants. I think that pilfering is taught them by keeping them always on board wages, even when the family are all domesticated at home. It is the custom; but a custom I do not approve of, and I am sure leads to their stealing food.

CHAPTER XIV.

Everything turned out as arranged, in fact, as Nurse O'Birn said. When they borrowed the cart for the day, it was supposed that it was to go to Mrs. Edward O'Donnell's, so it caused no remark their doing so. A little contretemps awaited them in Galway, as they had to wait two or three hours before the public car for Castlebar started; and Nurse feared that she might come across some one who knew them, as the morning was well advanced by the time they were to start; but they were lucky, for they saw no one to recognize them. It was so late when they reached Castlebar, that had not Nurse been afraid that some one might be coming after her, she would have preferred staying the night there, or have hired a car to take them part of the way on; but she so feared being traced that on they trudged, after taking some refreshment at a roadside inn. Oh, what a weary walk they had across that barren and boggy road, lugging not only the bundle of clothes, but the restless babies each had to carry! and then, when they could do no more, they sat against a stack of bog-turf that stood by the road-side, or rather in the middle of a field by the road-side, fed the children, and carefully covering the babies with their own shawls, they lay down by them overcome with fatigue, and soon fell asleep. The sun awoke Nurse O'Birn next morning, and she started up, fearing that she had overslept herself, and that it was later than it really was, for it was but five o'clock. However, they fed the babies, and resumed their walk, reaching their destination, opposite Achill, about eleven. There were two or three small boats lying about, and they soon secured one to row across for few a pence. It was only now that Nurse breathed freely, feeling secure from detection. As she landed, she turned to her daughter, saying: "Now mind, Kitty, you must let Mary Dwyer think both the children is yours." "Both mine! And why, sure?" "Never you mind. I have my reasons. I'll tell you later; but now mind what I say." I need not detail their welcome, nor Mary Dwyer's joke at Katey's twins, so unlike each other, and yet both boys; but look a little into Nurse O'Birn's thoughts and intentions, now that she had succeeded in her undertaking of going off with little Teddie. She did not very clearly define to herself what she meant to do—as regarded Teddie. She knew that she wanted to keep him longer with her, partly out of love for the child, and partly to be revenged and to thwart the mother. To be revenged for fancied affronts; for except on the occasion we have mentioned during her husband's illness, Grace had never had a word with Nurse that could have annoyed the fiery-tempered woman; but that was the offence which could not be forgiven! "The wisp of a girl," as she rudely designated Grace, "made her own boy turn agin her, for he sided with her, and told nurse that his wife did not want her help just then; and she, who had reared him until he was ten years, the motherless lud as he was, and then she had to give him up to a girl who had brought him niver a penny when he married her!" Nurse never meant to keep the boy always from his mother. No, indeed! When she thought it time to give up the care of him, why then she would; but she would not be said by "a wisp of a girl" what was or what was not the right time; not she, indeed! And then she persuaded herself that it was much better for the boy himself to remain in the country than to go into Galway, which

every one knew was not a healthy place. Nurse could not help chuckling at the idea of the fright she was giving Mrs. Edward when she found them gone off. "Serve her right, the silly fool; as if I could not care for him wherever he was." You would think that she would care for the payment she received with the child; but really she did not want money now, and she had plenty of her previous savings. You see that she was at no expense for board or lodging; she and Katey did the work of the house between them; minded the pigs and the fowls, or whatever was to be attended to; and her ousin was thankful to have them there to work for her in her present bad state of health, "for they kept things straight and tidy, they did." As to Katey, she more than once returned to the subject of letting Mrs. Edward know where they were; but each time she touched on the point, her mother got into such a passion, threatening to turn her and her child out if she said anything more, or mentioned the subject to any one. So at last Katey gave up meddling in the affair at all, though her heart was not easy on the matter; whenever she was caressing her own boy, she felt sorry for the mother that was deprived of her darling. On the spur of the moment, one day, she could not help saying, "I wonder, mother, when Mrs. O'Donnell will be coming or writing for Master Teddie?" The mother's dark frown warned Katey that she had better not talk on the forbidden subject, when all of a sudden Nurse O'Birn turned to her daughter, and said— "And how do you know but that it is her own wish that we took the boy away? Sure, if she is after marrying again, she won't want the man to see that she has a child to bring him." "Oh, that's it, is it?" replied Katey. "Oh, then, kissing her own babe, "I would not have the best man living who would not have you, too, gramacree! Oh, that's it, it is, Mrs. Edward? I don't like you for it, I can tell you." And from that moment all Katey's interest in poor Grace ceased. Her mother, in her cunning, had hit upon the best manner of silencing her. I must leave them now, and return to my poor heroine.

CHAPTER XV.

Grace joined the family party as was arranged, and, no delay occurring, they reached in the evening Look Ina. This fishing-box Mr. O'Donnell rented from the proprietor of the lake, as had his father before him; so that it was the custom of the family to spend one to two months there every year. Although they had already paid their annual visit, yet no one made any remark on this second excursion, the season being unusually fine. The house was very pretty, but very plainly furnished, such as a rural home might be expected to be; but it was the scenery about it that was so lovely, also the grounds immediately round the house. Two or three boats were lying in a little cove, where ladies could manage to start them, when inclined to enjoy the exercise of rowing, so that Grace would have enjoyed the dolce-fur-niente sort of life she was expected to lead on this beautiful spot, had she had her Teddie with her, as Mr. O'Donnell had promised she should have. But the first and second day passed without any mention of baby, which she attributed to the unsettled state they all felt in. However, when the third day passed without Mr. O'Donnell's alluding to his promise of sending for the child, she determined that next morning, after breakfast, she would broach the subject. Accordingly, when they stood up after that meal to go and seek their own amusements and occupations until dinner time, as was their wont Grace said,— "James, you were kind enough to say that Brady should go for Teddie—" "Oh, dear yes," said Mr. O'Donnell, interrupting her, and reddening at the thought that he ought to have remembered his promise, and not have required the reminder; "Oh, dear yes, Brady," turning to the butler, "do you think that you could go to-day?" "Why, yes sir," replied the good-natural old man (with whom both Grace and Teddie were especial favorites); "but I should not, may be, be able to be back in good time to-night; for Nurse would, may be, want an hour or two to ready herself and the young gentleman; so if you please, sir, I had better sleep in Galway, and come on to-morrow in good time." And so it was arranged. Before Brady left, Grace slipped out to ask him at what hour she might expect him next day. "Well, mam, I should think about three to four at the soonest. You may be sure that I will bring Master Teddie as soon as possible, as I know that you're waiting to have him." "Do, Brady; come as quickly as you can,"

Nurse need not keep you long waiting. I do, indeed, long to have him here." Grace resolutely set herself to letter writing which was in arrears, in order not to let the time hang heavily on her hands; she even volunteered to row Mrs. O'Donnell on the lake for an hour or two whilst she fished (for the ladies were as fond of this sport as the men), and so got through the day. I cannot say that next morning Grace was so successful in passing away the time. She began a dozen things without continuing ten minutes at the same thing, but when three o'clock came she flung down the book she had in her hand (for she was not really reading it), put on her bonnet and went down to the Cove, taking a glass with her in order to see the boat as soon as it should leave the opposite side of the lake. But four o'clock came, and no sign of the boat. "And yet he said four at the latest," thought Grace as she restlessly walked up and down; "perhaps I misunderstood him; I will run and ask Mary (Mrs. O'Donnell) if she knows when he is expected; but perhaps they may come whilst I am away. What shall I do? Oh! there you girl, Judy, Judy, come here." Judy, a servant girl who happened to be passing, came to her call. "Just go in Judy, like a good girl, and ask Mrs. O'Donnell if she knows when Brady is expected?" Mrs. O'Donnell came out to answer herself Grace's inquiry. "You are thinking the time very long, Gracey, before Teddie comes; but never fear, they must soon be here, though, to tell you the truth, I do not know at what time James expects Brady home; but surely that is the boat?" "Where, where?" cried Grace; "oh! do you mean that one?" following with her glass the direction in which Mrs. O'Donnell was pointing. "Oh! no, that is James; they must come opposite to where we are standing." "Ah! yes, I was mistaken, for now I see that that is James, and he is rowing towards us. I suppose he sees us, so he will be able to tell you all about Brady." "I thought," said Grace, with a disappointed tone, "that Brady told me three or four at the latest—it is now nearly five." James, in reply to the query, eagerly put to him by both ladies, said,— "That he had not fixed any hour; but as Brady had spoken about not keeping Teddie out too late on the previous day, it was odd that he had not arrived before this; but you know that Brady is so safe and steady, not to speak of nurse, that it will be all right depend on it." And to make Grace laugh, he added,— "How do you know but that Brady and nurse may have waited to be married, before they were so indiscreet as to travel together; he such a smart bachelor of seventy-five; and she a widdle! always dangerous individuals." "You must have your joke, James," replied Grace; "nevertheless I am uneasy." However they went into dinner, or rather supper. No Teddie, even after they had left the supper table; nay, they had to go to bed without any news. You may be sure that Grace did not sleep well; and yet she thought herself unreasonable, because what harm could come to the boy, with such steady servants as were Brady and Nurse O'Birn.

Once she started up in bed,—the thought of the French had come to frighten her. "Oh! perhaps they had all been taken prisoners;" and yet she soon laughed at herself for such an idea—"What would they want with an old man, and old woman and baby? Besides, James had been talking at supper-time about the French, and had said that as yet nothing had been heard of them: so, indeed, she was silly to let such a thought enter her head." She lay down again, but not to sleep. She found that was impossible after the foolish fright she had given herself, and which had completely roused her. CHAPTER XVI. Grace was very glad when it was light enough to get up and dress, and to go out into the fresh air after her restless and anxious night. She waited about until called into breakfast, and yet no boat was in sight! However, they had not concluded that meal before one of the maids rushed in with—"Please, sir, the boat has just come in sight." Grace was on her feet directly, when the maid went up to her and said—"Please, mum, Brady seems to be alone!" "Oh, no, that cannot be; nurse and baby must be with him!—so, perhaps, it is not Brady," said Mrs. O'Donnell. "You wait here, Grace, and I will go and see who it is," said Mr. O'Donnell. Poor thing, she sat down, feeling ready to cry, and certainly not liking to disobey her brother-in-law. He was absent a good quarter of an hour, and when he returned, looked anxious and worried. Grace started up, saying—

"Oh! James, I see that something has happened to Teddie!" "Well, Gracey, something is wrong; but I cannot explain it; so, Brady, you had better tell Mrs. Edward all about it; it will be best that she should know all that you can tell—begin." "Well, mam, when I had seen to what the master gave me commission to do in Galway—which was as quiet as could be—" "Never mind about Galway," put in Mr. O'Donnell; "go straight to the point; don't you see the state she's in? the poor thing!" "Well, sir, I will then. When I had done all as I had to do in Galway—" "My dear James," said his wife, "why cannot you let him tell it his own way, instead of interrupting him?" (This was said in answer to a gesture of impatience on Mr. O'Donnell's part.) "Well, Mary, I believe you're right; so get on, Brady; only be as short about it as you can." "Well, mam, where was I? Oh! leaving Galway. Well, as I said, I took a car, thinking, maybe, to save time, rather than walk the short distance, which another time I should not have minded, being a good walker—saving your presence, ladies; and then it was best for bringing nurse and Master Teddie back in good time; but otherwise I could have carried Master Teddie all the way, and glad to do it—bless him and save him this day, wherever he is!" Grace became paler, and started as she heard this last word, but was so anxious to hear the end that, wisely, she made no remark. "Well, when I arrived at Seeley's Lane, as the village is called, you know, mam, I asked at the first house, your ladyship knows," (Brady always ladyshipped them when he was nervous); "there are about eight or ten near each other, but at least they are not close together, but only a stone's throw apart. Well," I said says I, "which is the Widdle O'Birn's cottage?" says I, to a bit of a girl who stood at the door of the nearest house. "Do you see that one with a bit of a garden before it?" says she. "Why then, I do," says I—"Oh! Brady, do go on," put in poor Grace, her patience sorely tried. "Yes, mam, I will; for sure you must be so anxious to hear all about the end! at least, not that I know the end; but please let me tell you all I did?" "Yes, Brady; yes, please," ejaculated the poor mother. "Well, then, mam, milady, I went up to the door, but it was shut—shut fast; I shook it, but sorrow a person came. I knocked at the window—a liberty, considering Master Teddie lived there, that I did not like to take, it went against me to do it; but, saving your presence, I did do it: no more answer than if the dead lived there. So I said out loud, through the keyhole, 'if you're all asleep or dead!'" "Dead, did you say?" asked Grace. "No, no, I did not say that they were dead; I said only that they was as silent as the dead." Grace breathed again. "Well, then," says I to myself, says I, "I had better go to the next house, and ask what it means." So I says to the man, whose name I found was Mike Doolan, (and how I knew that was because it was written over the door, it being the post-office; and I suppose they put it up there so that you may get redress if you don't get your letters in proper time.)—"Never mind that, Brady; do go on!" "Yes, mam. Well," says this man—a very civil-spoken man, indeed—well, then, sir, I can't tell you where they're gone to; they borrowed my cart, they did, two or three nights ago; and, before any one was stirring in the morning, they was gone; but my cart was sent back next morning all right." "And have they not been home since, nor sent a messenger?" says I. "No, sir," says he; "and, what's more, I don't think they is coming; for the house is mine, you see; they rented it from me." "And a very nice little house it is, sir," says I; "and makes a neat little property," says I. "You may say that," says he; "but why I think they are not coming back is this—" "You're right, sir," says I, "to come to the point; for that's what I came to you to hear, and am wanting to hear when they will return." "Sir," says he, "they will not return, I was going to tell you; for when I made sure of it in my own mind, I just thought I'd go and see that all was right in the house. I won't be against owning to you, sir, that I felt a little bit squeamish about the rent that was due; so, as I said, the door being unlocked, only latched, I walked in. I tell you this in confidence; but I should not like any one else to know that Mike Doolan would go into anybody's house, and he not asked in. Trust you, because you look a real gentleman, and have come a distance, as I see, by your looks, seeing I don't know you, and I think I does know every man, woman, and child—"