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THE LAST OF THE CATHOLIC O'MALLEYS.

A TALE. BY M. TAUNTON.

CHAPTER VI.

The first family in the neighboring county—Sligo—were the O'Donnells. They owned the largest estate in the neighborhood of the town of Sligo. There were only two sons; the elder, already married, but without any family; and the younger brother, who, of course, was looked upon as the heir, Mrs. O'Malley had fixed upon for her daughter.
Times being so changed with her, she was too proud to be the one to open negotiations on the subject with the O'Donnell family, as she would formerly have done; so she had to wait until, as she hoped, the proposition would come from the O'Donnells themselves. She had not miscalculated on the attractions of her daughter. Edward O'Donnell had himself come to the determination of appropriating the beautiful Miss O'Malley; and the widow hailed with joy his overtures for the hand of Grace, and as it was just such a marriage in a worldly sense as a Miss O'Malley might be expected to make, her mother was not for a moment deterred in consenting and arranging it by the knowledge that there was not in the county a more wild and dissipated young man than Edward O'Donnell.
He was very young, too, to bear such a character, being only eighteen; yet it was said that at any of the heavy drinking bouts (so horribly common in the days I am writing of), that he was hardly ever outdone by the oldest stager; and that two or three times a week these orgies beheld this young man the foremost in the riot and the debauch.
Yet it was to him, because it was a suitable marriage, that this cold, worldly woman meant to confide poor Tom O'Malley's only child—the only link left of her poor husband; and that about a year and a half after his death. Was this fulfilling the trust he had left her? To care for their child and supply his place to her? Well, she thought that it was.
She arranged everything with him without mentioning the subject to Grace, and why, do you think? Because she knew how the poor girl disliked the little she knew of Edward O'Donnell. It had happened, on more than one occasion, that Grace had come home from some visit or message she had been sent out upon later than she had intended, and in accounting for her want of punctuality, she would make the excuse, "Oh, mother dear, I saw that horrid Edward O'Donnell coming down the street, so I just turned back and came home the long way, and that has made me late." Such speeches as the above were not uncommon, therefore Mrs. O'Malley knew her daughter's feelings on the subject; but it did not make her waver in her resolve, for it was a suitable marriage!
When the thought of his sad habit of intemperance would intrude itself, she silenced her conscience by saying—"When he is married it will be different. Young men will be young men, and must sow their wild oats."

I fear that Mrs. O'Malley has, even in these enlightened and practical days, many imitators who stifle their common sense by such fallacies, and confide the happiness of their daughters to as frail barks, with as little likelihood of their hopes being realized.
Is it that mothers feel their honor concerned in settling their daughters in marriage as quickly as possible after they leave the school-room, no matter to what kind of a man as long as he is rich? It does not matter his antecedents! "Oh! he is no worse than others!" "He must cure him of his bad ways!" Such are the answers one gets if a doubt is raised as to the advisability of such a marriage, or the chances of a girl's happiness being endangered, trusted in such hands. Have they, who speak thus, found that their mothers were right when they used the same arguments about the husband chosen in their own case? Oh! you cannot say so; nor can I for you. When I look at the careworn and sometimes hopeless expression on the faces of some married women I know; the cold, every now and then, "my dear," said with averted eye to the man whom they were to model into everything a man, a husband, ought to be, and to make into a loving, unselfish, self-denying partner as soon as they married him, tells volumes—needs no proof that they have failed. Ah, no indeed! Your experience has taught you that a bad, an unholy youth, an unbridled giving way to passion, a want of principle, holds out but slender hopes of any one, out of such material, forming a model man, a good husband, a happy household.
What you have found impossible to achieve, oh, mothers!—namely, being able to reform a bad man—what on earth makes you expect your poor child to do it? What greater means has she than you had? You know, that is if you allow yourselves to think about it, that you are only cheating yourselves. You know full well that he will remain, at least for the best years of her poor young life, what he is when you give her to him. Then, in the name of all that is womanly, why do you do it? Often it is to secure for your daughters the best match of the season, instead of allowing Mrs. \* \* \* \* \* to triumph over you. It is this unworthy motive which often makes you sacrifice the young affections and happiness of your children; but, oh! do think what an unhallowed sacrifice to Mammon.
CHAPTER VII.
Grace had been spending the day out with a young friend; her mother sent her early, but enjoined her to be sure to return home by six in the evening, not later. Of course she was exact to the time.
She was met at the door of her house by her aunt (Mrs. O'Malley's sister), who took her by the hand, and said, "Come up stairs with me."
She followed her aunt wondering what this meant. Her aunt went on before her, straight into Grace's bedroom. A glance showed Grace a new dress laid out on her bed, and the several adjuncts on the dressing-table.
She turned quickly to her aunt, who did not give her time to ask what this meant, but answered her inquiring look by saying, "I want to dress you, Grace, for you are going to be married." (Reader, this is no fiction; it is a fact.)
"To be married! and who to? Not to that horrid Edward O'Donnell?"
"Yes, Grace, to Edward O'Donnell; and you must not be so silly as to speak of him in that way. It is the best match in the county, and your mother wishes it; nay, she intends you to marry him: so don't be silly."
The poor girl threw herself on the floor in a paroxysm of tears.
"Oh, I never can! I never can! I hate him."
Her aunt stood by until Grace had exhausted herself, and when she could make her listen to her, she said,—
"My dear girl, the priest and all the company will be here in half an-hour. Your mother will be coming up soon to see if you are ready; and you know, Grace, that it is no use disobeying her. When you are married, you will like him better than you think you shall now; besides, surely you don't want to make yourself the laughing-stock of the county, by letting them all see that you were obliged to marry? for marry him you must, as your mother says that you are to do so: so dry your eyes. Here, bathe them; don't let your mother see that you are not a dutiful daughter, and that you are murmuring at her wishes, after all the pains she has taken to secure for you this good marriage. Besides, think what a nice home you may have when Edward comes in for the estate; and now the nice home you are going to—the house is all ready—you will so much admire everything. Here—here is your mother, make haste to bathe your eyes; don't let her see that you have been crying."
In this way, and using such like arguments, the aunt hurried on the poor girl. At last, her

toilette completed, notwithstanding the several break-downs, which her aunt sought to counteract by sal-volatile, &c., she suffered herself to be led down stairs, to obey the summons they received. As she entered the room she saw that Mr. O'Donnell the elder, and his wife, another sister, and a niece of her mother's, the bridegroom, and the priest constituted the party assembled. She shriekingly drew back as the ardent gaze of admiration cast upon her by Edward O'Donnell met her eye. Her aunt pressed her hand, and whispered in a low voice, "For goodness sake don't disgrace us all, and make a fool of yourself."
Her mother came forward, took her hand, and kissed her forehead. It was enough, the flood-gates again were unloosed, and she threw herself into her mother's arms, saying, "Oh, mother! mother! don't send me away from you!" Her mother coldly drew herself back, and leading the weeping girl towards the temporary altar, signed to the priest to begin!
It is over! The bride of fifteen is clasped in her husband's arms! The rest of the guests left the room, but Mrs. O'Malley was instantly recalled—for Grace had fainted! Edward O'Donnell was beside himself with fright!—Mrs. O'Malley calmed him by saying, "That it would soon be all right! that it was only natural, her being taken so by surprise—that she would soon recover!"
When sufficiently able to be talked to, her mother told her that she now belonged to Edward O'Donnell; that she was a lucky girl; that if she did not let him come in, and speak affectionately to him, that he would take a dislike to her, &c.
Poor thing! she no longer struggled against what she knew was inevitable; and consented to be led into the supper-room, which had been prepared for the feast, or, as poor Grace would have said, for the sacrifice!
The guests kindly left the young bride, thinking that it was excessive shyness and love of her mother that caused her emotion; so they kept up an animated conversation among themselves, which gave her time to recover herself.
Marriages always took place in the evening, and also in the private dwellings of the parties, especially of Catholics; though they would have to go to the Protestant church, either before or after their own ceremony had been performed, to render their marriages legal.
The carriage was at the door, all too soon to take the unwilling bride to the house of her husband; but she offered no resistance; she felt too miserable—too done up—to make any. Even parting with her mother barely made the tears come into her eyes—at least, I do not think that it was really parting from her mother that caused them to start, but rather the leaving the home that she had known as her father's.
No, her mother's unkindness, in repulsing all her tenderness, drove back to her heart all filial feelings of affection, and made her able to command herself sufficiently to listen to all her husband's rapture at last possessing what he had so longed for—his own Grace!—and to respond to the good wishes of her and his relatives, as they said good-bye at the carriage door.
Edward O'Donnell, au fond, was a good-hearted fellow, and when sober, full of love for his beautiful child-bride, and also full of contrition for his weakness in allowing himself to be led into scenes of riot and debauchery. He was full of good resolutions for the future—a future that never came to him—I mean a future of amending and giving up his evil companions! He had this peculiarity, when he was only half tipsy and able to speak and walk, however imperfectly, that he was like a madman! At first, of course, Grace did not know this, but she bitterly learnt his ways!
He had kept away from his old haunts; he had courageously refused all invitations for about three months (Mrs. O'Malley was pluming herself that after all she was right; that marriage had reformed him), when one day he did not come home to dinner as Grace had expected. She waited for him, hour after hour, until the night was well advanced, when she heard his footsteps coming up the stairs. She ran on to the landing, saying, "Oh! Edward, where have you been? What has kept you so late?"
Hardly had she spoken before she saw the state he was in. I cannot repeat the words he said; but it ended in his knocking her down and kicking her brutally, until he stumbled and fell on the floor, where he lay unable to rise; and she, poor creature, crept away, and out of the room, looking herself in a spare one near her own, so frightened was she that he would follow her.
But she need not have feared, for he could not get on his legs again, but by degrees fell fast asleep on the floor.
The next morning poor Grace was too frightened to open the door, when she heard her husband moving about his room, having slept himself sober; and then she heard him go down

stairs, and presently call her. She feared to go to him, yet went, dreading to excite his anger by not obeying his summons. He was full of contrition, and so disarmed her indignation by throwing himself on his knees and humbly begging her to forget his weakness in allowing himself to be led into joining a drinking party, that you would have been sorry for him.—When he perceived the bruise on her shoulder he made her tell him all about it. What could Grace say or do but try and console him, and assure him that she knew that it would not happen again; that he would be her own brave husband, who would resist and not go near those wicked men who would force him to drink!
Poor young wife! she did really lay the blame (poor loving heart) upon those who enticed him.
CHAPTER VIII.
The demon taken back, or I should have said the door once more opened to the demon, he was not so easy to get rid of; and another unexpected offence, in about three weeks after the scene we have described, made Grace tremble for the consequences. This time she knew better than to go near him, although he was shouting her name as loud as he could, as he came up the stairs. She was so terrified at the noise he made that she crept under the bed; and after he had looked for her all about as well as an intoxicated man could look, he threw himself, dressed as he was, on the bed, still shouting for Grace, and swearing at her for not coming.
By degrees the shouts became fainter and fainter, and she knew that he had fallen asleep by his thick stertorous breathing.
Can you picture to yourself that poor young thing, as she lay huddled up under the bed; trembling at every shout; shuddering at every awful oath he uttered. Although she felt sure that he slept, yet she dared not move. Towards morning she actually fell asleep lying there.
What a cold she caught lying all night under the bed! but it was ten times better than what she had before experienced; and she told me that she adopted that plan of escaping his violence when he came home sufficiently sober to walk. But, alas! sometimes he was even carried home in a state of insensibility, and it did not matter where she was then.
The second year of their marriage a son was born to them, but she went to her mother's house for her confinement, so afraid was she to run the risk of a scene with her husband, for now he was giving way two or three times a week to the debasing vice of insobriety.
When sober, his love for Grace was as ardent as ever, and his delight in his little boy was extreme. Grace would have wished to have her infant nursed at home; but as was the custom in those days, even more than at present, no lady nursed her own child, her husband wished it to go to the house of his own foster-mother, where the woman's daughter would undertake the nursing. So Grace was obliged to give in, both to the natural custom and her husband's wish. It seemed unreasonable to object, as the nurse only lived a mile from the town.
You may imagine what a delight this babe was to the young mother. Oh, how she prayed that she might know how to preserve him from his father's deadly sin;—how, when she was keeping one of her vigils under the bed, she would promise herself the comfort of going to see her tiny Edward next morning to make up for the present grief.
She did not particularly like the old nurse (the foster-mother), for the old woman did not take to her. She had not thought Grace half good enough for her darling foster-son. "She knew that even if she did come of the best stock, sure she had not brought him a penny!"
But I think it was as much jealousy which made her not like Grace, because taken up with his wife (in his sober moments) he did not go so often to see her, nor so often take her little presents as he had formerly done. So she almost disliked Grace, and was very touchy if she noticed anything about the child, and fancied that her going so often to see it was because she did not trust her. Still the boy thrived, and was the delight and joy of his mother's heart, and perhaps I ought to say of his father's also.
CHAPTER IX.
When they had been married about three years and nine months, Edward came home one day and told Grace that he had been invited to Mr. Kelly's annual dinner.
As it was one of those houses where the host placed so much wine in the room, locked the door, and then declared that they should not move until it was all consumed, Grace implored her husband not to accept the invitation.
"Nonsense! did she think that he did not know how to avoid taking more than was good for him? (Alas, the usual boast and presumption of the habitual drunkard!) It was true

that he had very often allowed himself to be induced to take a bottle more than was good for him; but he had now found out the way to deceive them, and not take more than was good for him. She should see how he could and would keep his promise. It would be so affronting to Mr. Kelly if, for the first time, he failed to be present at his annual entertainment; he could not do it."
So he kissed her, telling her not to sit up. "But, upon his word, now that he thought of it, he need not have said that, for he should come home quite early." Alas! poor Grace knew the value to attach to such grand promises.
She went to bed early, thinking that she had better get as much sleep as she could before he came home.
She was awake about three in the morning by the heavy trampling of steps coming up the stairs. She had just time to throw on her dressing-gown when a knock came to her door.
On opening it she saw what she never forgot in her life—her husband lying as pale as death on a shutter, the blood flowing out of his mouth!
She had always great presence of mind, nor did it fail her on this trying occasion; so her first words were, "The doctor!"
"Plaze, my lady, Tim Burke ran for him whilst we came on."
She helped to lay him, shutter and all, on the bed, and breathlessly awaited the doctor's arrival, not being sure whether he was alive or dead. Oh! the dreadful suspense awaiting the doctor! Who that has lived to middle life but can appreciate her suffering?
After a minute examination, the doctor told her that it was a vessel on the lungs that Mr. O'Donnell had ruptured; he stayed some hours by his side to watch the case, to the great comfort of our heroine.
As soon as she could, Grace slipped out of the room, and questioned the servant of Mr. Kelly, who still remained in the house in order to hear the doctor's opinion and to take word to his master how Mr. O'Donnell progressed.
She found, by dint of cross-questioning the man, who was at first unwilling to speak, that it was when they were all in a sad state of inebriety, that some of the party had proposed, for a bet, that they should try who could lift a heavy marble pillar that stood in a corner of the room, and at the same time be able to cry out "Ireland for ever!" sufficiently loud to be heard at the end of the lawn, where he, the man-servant was stationed to listen, and to say when he heard the words.
He heard poor Edward O'Donnell; but, alas! as he lifted the heavy weight, and shouted in stentorian tones the words, he suddenly let the weight fall from his hands, and fell to the ground, the blood pouring from his mouth.
The fright sobered some of the less intoxicated, and they hastily placed him on a shutter and sent him home, as we have seen.
What need to dilate on the five or six weeks poor Edward lasted! for, indeed, that was as long as he held out. What need to speak of the bitter repentance he felt for his young life so ruthlessly wasted! Why speak of his anguish at the thought of leaving his young wife; and to think what scenes of sorrow and fear he had made her pass through, when he had so faithfully promised to make her a happy and joyous home!
"Oh! he often cried, the tears rolling down his poor sunken cheeks: "Oh! Grace, my angel, I don't deserve all the care you are bestowing on me; how can you bear to look at me? Will God ever forgive me?"
She tried to comfort him; and, oh! how she wished she knew where Father Joe was, to send for him to prepare her poor Edward to appear before his Maker; to show him how he was to obtain sincere sorrow, not for the leaving her, but for the sins he had committed in his misspent life!
She did her best to remember all that she had heard Father Joe say to her own father. She prayed constantly for and with him. She sent everywhere to try and find a priest, but, alas! they were so hiding about that it was impossible to find them. There had been more chance in the country places than in towns. Alas! alas! but Grace excited him all she could to contrition, and we must hope that her prayers were heard for him, as he died quietly, holding her hand in his, and praying for forgiveness with his last breath.
Yes, Edward O'Donnell died just a few months over twenty-one years of age, another victim of that cruel infatuation—a love of drink. For it surely is an infatuation for the time being. How dearly do those who allow it to enslave them pay for giving way to its false pleasures! The pain and distress of mind that makes a man so ashamed of having been so weak and unmanly, not to speak of the remorse of conscience, to one even commonly well brought up, surely these feelings must well counterbalance any sort of satisfaction of boasting of being able to drink more than others.