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FATHER CONNELL; A TALE.

BY THE O'HARA FAMILY.

CHAPTER XXX.—(Continued.)

Edmund, interrupting her, pleading very hard for one interview more the next evening, after which he would instantly—instantly return to Dublin; and Helen need not fear that it should be known he was in the town so near at hand; he would conceal himself all the following day in private lodgings; and Edmund was interrupted, in his turn, by a yell from one of the windows of the house, embodying these words:—

"Helen! Helen! Where the devil are you, you baggage? Come in this moment out of the night air, wherever you are! Do you want to get the quincy or the rheumatism before your time, you young hussey? Come in, I say, and let me and the moon go to bed, or let her go to the devil if she likes." The young couple could interchange but few words more; but still Edmund pressed his request; and Helen granted it. And the next night Edmund did come to see his young bride; but he saw her not.

Early in the morning Gaby M'Neary rode to the town, to attend the grand jury assizes, the circuit judge having arrived the previous day.

It was late when he was on the road homeward, as he had dined with certain of Dick Wruslam's scholars, and the evening sitting had been very convivial. In fact, night had already begun to fall.

It did not suit Gaby M'Neary's habit of body to have it shaken violently when he rode abroad, so that he now allowed his quiet horse quietly to walk along, picking his steps, in slow progress towards his stable door. Gaby's heavy oaken cudgel was over his shoulder. He had cleared the suburbs about a mile, when the animal he bestrode suddenly stopped, and seemed to wonder very much at something to one side of the road, a few paces in advance; but this was no skittishness on the part of the beast; it was, in fact, just what it has been called, excessive wonder, mixed up, indeed, with grave inquiry. So, he looked, and looked, and having at length decided in his own mind that the object was only a potato-beggar, squatted on her bag, filled with the produce of her day's begging, he soberly proceeded on his journey.

Gaby M'Neary had, like his horse, been studiously observing the figure, and arrived, with him, at the same decision concerning it. Horse and master went on a few paces. The person stood up, deliberately walked into the centre of the way, and as deliberately took hold of the bridle of the former. Again the animal stood still.

"Who the devil are you? And what do you want?" questioned Gaby M'Neary, unshouldering his cudgel and clutching it firmly.

"You ought to know me well enough, Masther Gaby," answered the woman.

"What, you ould bundle of nastiness! Why the devil should I know who you are, or anything about you?"

"An' yet, I tell you again, you ought to know me well enough," she repeated.

"Yes—ay—now I guess. Oh, Gog, you rap! And havn't you the assurance of the mother of Beelzebub herself to come across my road, and stop my horse and me, in this manner? Let the bridle go, or I'll break this cudgel lamb-basting you!"

"It is sixteen years now, Masther Gaby, sence I opened my lips to you afore."

"And let it be seventy-six before you do it again, I advise you;—take away your hand, I tell you!" He made a blow at her knuckles, but missed them, nearly losing his own balance in the saddle at the same time.

"Masther Gaby, that beautiful little child!"

"Ha! Blur-an-fury! And you begin to talk of that now? You jade! Didn't I support the child, and you too, right well? Didn't I love the poor little creature? Didn't I promise, and didn't I intend to provide well for it? And didn't you make away with the innocent child? You did, you fugot!—you did, you unnatural brute, you did!"

"No, Masther Gaby; the child was stole from me."

"The child was murdered, you mean! Murdered by its own mother! You Jezebel! I know it was! I'd swear it was! Leave my path! Quit my sight! Sixteen years ago, I cautioned you never to cross my path again, if you didn't want to be seized upon, and hanged for the murder of that poor infant!"

"I remember your words well, Masther Gaby; an' from that day to this, I never cunn next or near you; but it wasn't the fear of death that kep me away; it was, because I couldn't look in the father's face widout thinkin' of my beautiful darlin' that was taken from me."

"Let go my bridle, or I'll ride over you!"

other daughter—Masther Gaby, look well to your lawful daughter, or you'll lose her."

"What's that you say, you ould hell-hound? What's that you say?"

"I tell you," replied she, now letting go the horse's bridle, and stepping a little to one side of the road, while her voice lost its submissive-ness, and became daring—"I tell you, Masther Gaby, that if you don't guard Miss Helen M'Neary like a jailor, you'll lose her."

"Curses on your bones! What do you mean?"

"I tell you that you'll lose her, if you dont guard her well; them were my words; an' I tell you now, into the bargain, that if you don't guard her well, she'll be very likely to take the road that I took whin I was a colleen, about her very age at present."

"Oh, you screech-owl! Oh, you damn'd liar!" and Gaby thumped his horse's sides with his heels, while he also smote them with his heavy stick, turning the animal's head towards Nelly Carty—"Oh, by the big Gog, I'll charge through you, you soothsayer! Oh, you prognosticator!"

"Let your horse stand where it is," she exclaimed. "It's fittier fur you to listen to all I have to say, than fly into that passion, and curse down curses that's enough to make the sky fall an' cover us; there, your poor horse has more sense nor yourself; see, he won't stir a step to hurt me. Listen now. What I'm goin' to say is as thrue as that I'm spakin', an' that you are there to hearken to me. Last night, your daughter—Miss Helen M'Neary, I mane—held a lonely meeting outside or your house, in the country, wid a young man you know well—Ned Fennell by name."

"You are a liar!" roared Gaby M'Neary—"a liar! a liar!"

"I am not a liar—I spake the blessed truth—she met him last night, in the little shrubbery, at the left side of the house—an' his arms war round your daughter—an' wid a kiss they parted from each other—ay—ay—roar out at me again if you like—but all this is thrue—you thought he was in Dublin, far away from her—but that's the way they de-sure you."

"Nelly Carty, I will not roar out at you now," Gaby M'Neary's voice, and Gaby M'Neary's self, trembled as he spoke. "How did you come to know all this?"

"I watched them. I watched them close, close—I seen them wid my livin' eyes, in the shrubbery together. Watch your daughter yourself, as close as I did, and your own eyes 'll witness for you."

Gaby M'Neary sat for an instant silent and motionless in his saddle. The furious working of his nerves were not, at all events, visible to the eye of Nelly Carty.

"An' I have a little more to tell you," she resumed.

"Well, go on."

"Sure he's to meet her agen, this very night, an' in the very same place."

"And how do you know that too?"

"I had 'em settin' it wid ache other."

"Very good," said Gaby M'Neary.

At this period of the conference, a man with a wallet on his back, hobbled up the road, and passed very close to Nelly Carty; a something like a boy trotted at his heels. The potato-beggar started, peered after him for an instant, flew after him the next, seized him by the shoulders, turned him suddenly round, and stared into his very eyes.

"Help! give help here!" she cried, in frantic accents. "Help, Masther Gaby! I hould the man that stole the child sixteen years ago—an' that's come back here now to kill her, kill her! I know id, I know id! Nothing else brings him back. Help, help! to hould the murderer!"

Robin Costigan exerted all his remaining strength to free himself, but his old friend held him firmly. Gaby M'Neary, overwhelmed as he was, by the tidings he had just heard, did not attend to Nelly's call. Impatient to be at home, that he might confront his daughter, he cudgelled his sober horse, until the poor animal's sides resounded under his blows. But the Babby, who for a moment had been only an observant looker-on, sprang to the assistance of his rovers tutor. Seizing the arms of the beggar-woman from behind, while Robin Costigan still struggled his best with her in front, the vulture gripe of her fingers was soon loosed, while, at the same instant, her youthful assaulter adroitly tripped up her heels, and then dragged and flung her into a ditch, half filled with water, by the road-side. Before she could recover herself, and contrive to scramble and splash out of it, the old robber had wound himself through a contiguous fence in the neighboring fields, and, closely followed by his helper, hobbled, with marvellous speed, in the direction of the river, which flowed through the valley, below the road, at some distance from him.

Nelly Carty gazed around her, in every direction, still feeling somewhat stunned and stupefied from her late harsh treatment. Robin Costigan was nowhere to be seen. Gaby M'Neary was also out of view. She held her head tightly between her hands, as if her

thoughts were material, and that she could thereby compress them.

"Ay, ay," she despairingly muttered, "he is come back here, sure enough, to shed the blood of my own beautiful darlin'! Bud I'll stop his murdering hand, if there's a one born can do id!" And abandoning the potato-bag, which that day had cost her so much toil and trouble, she raced along the road, in the direction of the town.

"I'll be there afore him," she continued constantly to mutter, "I'll be there afore him, or death will strike me into a coward hope on my road there!"

Not an instant did she slacken her great speed, until she arrived in the suburbs of the town, and stood before Father Connell's residence. The entrance-door being open, she rushed into the little yard, screaming out for her daughter—"Mary Carty, her daughter! Mary Carty, her own colleen beg, her own beautiful darlin'! her own *chorra-mu-chree!*"

The house-door was also open, and her screams increasing, she broke into the quiet dwelling. Father Connell met her in the passage. She was not disrespectful to him—but she called on him to produce her child, and place her before her eyes. She wanted no more, she would ask no more; and let him only give her a sight of her child, safe and sound, and she would quit his house the moment after.

Astonished at her claiming Mary Cooney, as her daughter, but also greatly affected by her agony of grief, the priest soothingly assured her that Mary should immediately stand before her, and he sent Mrs. Molloy into her bedroom, to summon her forth—the housekeeper informing him that it was there she was to be found, as, one or two hours before, she had retired thither with her book and her work. But Mary Cooney was not now in the bedroom. The potato-beggar shrieking high, in terror and anguish, ran to search the bedroom herself, then through and through the house, from top to bottom, she searched, but did not see her daughter.

She ran into the yard, the garden, the stable—she examined every corner—still without success. With outstretched arms, she fled from the priest's premises into the neighboring streets, hurrying from house to house, and questioning all she met for her "own colleen beg—her ould heart's darlin'!"—but still and still the distraught mother found not her child.

And Father Connell and his housekeeper, also greatly alarmed for their poor young inmate, made vain search in every direction for her.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Mercilessly belaboring his poor phlegmatic horse, with his heavy cudgel—fury in his eyes, and threats and curses on his frothy lips—Gaby M'Neary pushed on for his country-house. Arrived there, he thundered at its door, with his cudgel as well as with the knocker, so loudly, that the interior of the structure, from roof to cellar, rang and echoed again.

His very first peal had not concluded, when the door was pulled open by the boding and anxious Tom Naddy.

"Why have you kept me waiting so long, you unchristened whelp?" he asked, with lungs that filled the house, even more fearfully than his knocking had done, and at the same time, he dealt Tom Naddy a blow with his clenched fist, that spun him round as if he had been a cork.

Not pausing for an instant, he then went up stairs, punching down his stick, at every step he took, with a violence that might seem to say he would wound, and hurt even the insensible timber he walked upon. He almost burst open the drawing-room door. Having let fall a book from her hands, his daughter, pale, and trembling very much, sat before him. She had heard the lion's roar, she had anticipated its meaning, and she awaited, in terror and confusion, his approach.

He hastened straight on to her. He fiercely seized her arm; she winced and wretched under the pain of his tight grasp.

"Soh! soh!—my lady—madam—you have disgraced your father!"

He chucked her upward on her feet; and shook her so violently that she must have fallen, but that the enraged man held her tottering figure partly erect by the arm, round which he still tightened his grip, with a pressure such as the jaws of a vice might have inflicted. Helen screamed from pain and terror.

"Oh, father!" she cried, "have pity!"

"Pity on you! pity on such a creature as you! Have you not disgraced me? Answer me that question! Will you—will you answer me? Am I the father of a base daughter? Answer me!"

"Oh, father! Oh, sir! I can scarcely utter a word, you so frighten me, and hurt me—oh, father, you will kill me!"

"Still, I say, answer me! Is your mother's daughter a degraded—a self-degraded wretch?"

"No, father, she is not!"

"Is she the vile refuse of the beggar's brat, Fennell? Is she?" his roar rose to a scream.

"No, father, she is not," Helen was now able to stand upright, without tottering, and

her tears were fast drying on her blazing cheeks.

"Did the beggar's brat, Fennell, meet you outside my house last night? And were his arms around you? And did ye meet with a kiss, and with a kiss did ye part? Answer me!"

"Father, dear father, I will not, I cannot tell you an untruth—I—"

"Then it is true! then ye did meet in secret—outside my house, and in the night-time? And ye met with a kiss, and with a kiss ye parted? Get from me, jade!"

He flung her to the floor, smiting her violently on the cheek, as she dropped down. Outrageous passion is, for the time, outrageous madness.

He ground and gnashed his teeth—his eyes glared with insane fury; he hurried about, totally bereft of reason. He seized several of the frail little ornaments of the drawing-room, and pelted them against the wall, shivering them in pieces; he bellowed, imprecated, and cursed, like a veritable maniac.

His daughter lay motionless, upon her face, on the floor, and she was nearly as insensible as she was motionless. She heard his terrible voice, but knew not what he said. She felt a sense of immediate danger—of almost present death; but now understood nothing distinctly.

"Get up on your feet!" resumed her father, after some time. "Get up on your feet, or I'll trample on your disgraced carcass, while the life is in it! Get up this moment!"

With great pain and difficulty, Helen endeavored to obey her frantic parent. She rose, and resting both her hands upon the back of a chair, thus kept herself from again falling.

"And he is to come here again to-night," her father continued, grinning closely into her face, and speaking through his clenched teeth.

"And you'll ask me again to-night, to go out and look at the moon—the chaste moon—as your poets call her—that is so fit for your admiration—and so fit a witness of your stolen meetings with the beggar! You have made another appointment with him for this very night—have you not? Hah! by the great heavens! he is skulking about my house this very moment!"

Thus interrupting himself, Gaby M'Neary started and listened. The gigantic watch-dog without began to bay furiously, setting up the peculiar angry bark, which seemed to denote that he was in almost immediate contact with an intruder.

Gaby M'Neary threw up the window, and looked out.

"Hullo, hullo, Bully! Hold him, boy! Hold him, Bully, until I come! Hullo, hullo, dog!" and his voice almost drowned that of the roaring brute he addressed.

He hurried into his bed-room, off the drawing-room. He issued back from it with a musket in his hands, which was always kept carefully loaded. He quickly descended the stairs, to the hall, bellowed forth, on his way:—

"Hullo, hullo, Bully! Hold him fast! I'm coming! Hold the beggar's brat! Hullo, hullo, dog! Hold him, hold him!"

He flung open the hall-door. At this moment, his daughter rushed staggering down the stairs, her hands clasped and clutched against her throat; her eyes and mouth wide open with terror—her hair dishevelled, and blood streaming over her cheek and neck, into her bosom. She flung herself on her knees before her father.

"Take my life," she said, "and spare his! I am his wedded wife! I am his lawful wife, as sure as my mother was your lawful wife, and he is my wedded husband, and I can die to save him!"

"Hah! his wife? Die then, wife of the beggar! Die then, by the Heavens above me!"

The insane man pressed the muzzle of his musket to his daughter's forehead, and pulled at the trigger; she did not wince; but the piece was only half-cocked, and ere he could snatch back the cock, it was wrenched out of his hands by Tom Naddy, who instantly discharged it through the open hall-door, and then pitched it far into the lawn.

"Cur!—mongrel cur!" shrieked his insane master, now almost inarticulate from hoarseness and passion, while the thick clammy foam upon his lips also helped to make his utterance imperfect. "Mongrel cur! how durst you do that?"

"To save you," answered Tom Naddy, walking backward towards the door from which he had emerged into the hall, while his furious master advanced on him—"to save you, you misfortunate man, from doing a murder upon your own child, that would banish the sleep from your eyes, till the day they would hang you for it;" and Naddy stepped inside the door-way, shut the door in his master's face, and locked it on the inside.

The baffled madman strove to kick it open. Failing in his attempt, he reapproached his daughter. She was still kneeling, now almost stupefied from exhaustion. "Up, up again!" he cried, once more clutching her arm, and forcing her up—"and begone from my house this moment! Quit it, and quit my sight for ever! Go to the beggar that you call your husband! Go, keep your appointment with

him—get away! Begone, begone, jade! out of my house and my sight!"

Speaking thus, in disjointed words, he pushed her with both his hands across the hall, out at the door, and closed it with all his force upon her—the ponderous door, as it banged and clashed to, making a noise to which all the quiet places abroad recoiled. The next instant Gaby M'Neary had fainted on the flags of the hall.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Helen had not spoken a word to her father, while the last shocking circumstances were occurring. With eyes fixed upon his face, not beseechingly, nor yet reproachfully, she only seemed to listen, with the utmost attention, to every word that came from his lips. He placed the barrier of the door between him and her; and though she staggered from the force of his push, ere he had done so, Helen remained standing. Outside the door, she continued listening intently, bending her ear towards it, as closely as possible. She did not hear her father's heavy fall, which was almost simultaneous with the thundering clash that accompanied her expulsion from his roof—and otherwise all was silent. Her father spoke no further words, and, Helen concluded, must have retired from the hall to the parlor. Then she slowly knelt down; raised her clasped hands above her head, and straining her eyes upwards muttered:—

"I give praises and thanks to the God in Heaven! my father has not cursed me!"

She stood up and looked around her. It was a drizzly night, and the moon but imperfectly risen and wholly clouded; and there stood Helen, wearing only her slight evening dress, and bare-headed, and bleeding, and now shivering with cold, as well from utter wretchedness, an' outcast, she thought, from human shelter and sympathy. Again she strained her sight in every direction; the form of him whom her eyes sought, now her only protector, was not anywhere to be seen. She started at a sudden recollection of his seeming to have come in contact with the ferocious watch-dog; perhaps the savage animal had torn him and killed him; and she looked with shrinking horror on and about the spot, where to judge from the dog's position, when he barked and yelled, the evil must have happened. Nothing was to be seen; and she uttered another thanksgiving. She descended the few steps from the hall-door, and again stood still, on the gravel before the lawn; and once more peered round her through the darkness; but still her scrutiny was in vain. Gradually, and almost unconsciously, she walked away from her former home, often timidly stopping, and calling on her husband's name.

Hasty steps sounded coming after her, as if from the house; she turned eagerly round.—Her father might have relented, and sent somebody to bring back to his hearthstone his only child. It was Tom Naddy who approached her. He held a bundle in his hand for the contents of which he had sent her maid into Helen's apartments. He produced from it a bonnet and cloak, and obtained permission from Helen to assist her, in covering her head and person from the night wind, and the penetrating mist. Other things were in the bundle, which he carefully tied up and handed to his young mistress. She passively allowed him to adjust her cloak, and it was almost mechanically that she took the bundle from him.

She inquired for her father.

He had shut himself up in his bed-room, Tom said, after calling for wine, and he would let no one near him, but kept walking up and down the apartment. And this was true; although Tom made no allusion to Gaby M'Neary's having fainted in the hall, nor to his, Tom's, efforts to restore him to his senses.

"An' you'll meet the young masther, mam," said Tom, "afore you go far, please God; an' put all that about the dog and himself out of your head, for no such thing happened, mam. You know the way to the river side, don't you mam?"

Helen answered that she thought she did.

"Well, mam, the moon, God bless her, 'ill soon be up, an' she'll guide you. Isn't id the river-side way the young masther is to come to-night, mam?"

Helen answered that it was.

"Well, mam, sure you can't fail to meet wid him; an' I'd go wid you, mam, to be company to you on the way, only I know I can do better for you and the young masther by staying in the house; besides, if the ould masther was to come to miss me out now, I'd have no chance of getting in agen; but sure God will guard you, and guide you, as well as the moon, mam, and better; and as soon as ever I can folly afther you, I will, mam. An' make straight for the river-side, an' I'll be bail, you'll soon meet with one that will be a comfort to you."

"Naddy!"

"Yis, mam."

"You'll mind every word my father says, and you'll report every word truly to me."

"I will indeed, mam."

"Every syllable he utters, Tom—every