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THE LAST OF THE CATHOLIC O'MALLEYS.

A TALE. BY M. TAUNTON.

CHAPTER I.

In a darkened room, from which the bright July's evening sun had been excluded, lay a man, hardly in his fortieth year, dying of a broken heart. His wife sat by his side, whose countenance showed the effects of the trials and sorrows she had passed through, by its stern and unbending expression; and although she knew that in a few hours at most she should have to part with her husband, yet no tear dimmed her eye, nor nervous tremor prevented her attending fully and ably to the duties of the sick room. She was not alone with the object of her solicitude; his old nurse was quietly moving about, fixing this thing and that, in the apartment, but sensitively alive to the least motion of the invalid. Therefore, when he turned his head, and said, in a low voice, "Norah," she was at his side in a moment. "And what is it, allannah,\* that you would have?" "Norah, where is Grace? Send for her." His wife said, "I sent her, Tom, into the garden. The poor child wanted air. What do you want her for?" "I want to see her once more, Ann. I am going fast, and I must speak with our child before I die."

and wiped the death dew from her husband's forehead. Stimulated by the strengthening draught, he said to his child, in feeble accents: "Oh, Gracey, my only pain is that you are not a boy; that I might tell you never to forget that your father died of a broken heart, caused by the wicked laws of the country; that I might leave you the only legacy I have to leave—that of revenging me on the wicked robber of my home." The voice of the dying man became loud and clear, from excitement, as he said, "As you value my blessing, child, promise that you will never marry, but on the condition that he you marry will act a son's part, and revenge me on the foul robber of my rights." "Stop, my son," said the venerable grey-headed priest. "Stop, my son, that impious injunction on your child! 'Vengeance is mine, said the Lord; I will repay!' Leave it in His hands, and learn to imitate Him, who prayed for his enemies; let better thoughts occupy you now. Remember in whose presence you soon will stand, and think of asking mercy for yourself, not vengeance on others!" The sick man's energy was gone; but he muttered, "Tis true, Father Joe; it is true; and may I be forgiven the impious wish, as you say; let us pray, that I may obtain mercy. I thought that I had freely forgiven my enemies when you were with me last; but the thought of leaving these two so badly provided for, roused within me the sinful desire. Pray with me." "We will, Tom, we will; and don't fear to leave your widow and orphan in His care, who feeds even the birds of the air! Now, Mrs. O'Malley, and Grace, kneel down, and let us say the prayers for the departing." They did so, and hardly had he got to that beautiful portion of the prayer for the dying, "Depart, Christian brother," than the dying man cast a fond look on his wife and child, and, closing his eyes, the spirit of the last of the Catholic O'Malleys was gone to its Maker. Mrs. O'Malley rose up, her face still un- tearstained, closed her husband's eyes, and left the room. Not so Grace. With all the abandonment to grief natural in so young a girl (she was only between thirteen and fourteen), she threw herself on her father's corpse, screaming with agony and calling on him to come back. The gentle old priest was deeply moved himself—for he had known Tom O'Malley all his life, being cousin to the deceased man's father. He had also acted as tutor to Tom; and therefore, to his tender heart, it was as if he had parted with a dear son. Still, he had learnt the lesson of self-control, and was able to forget his own feelings, and occupy himself with poor Grace, whom he took in his arms and carried from the room, giving her to the care of a servant, whilst he returned and gave directions to Norah, the faithful old nurse, about the last sad offices, which she would not permit any one to help her in the performance of.

CHAPTER II.

I need not describe the next few mournful days, nor the funeral rites: suffice it to say, that all the peasantry from Mallerina who could come, came to show respect "to the Master" (as they still called him), although some had to walk twelve Irish miles; and, although, as was customary in those days, the hired keepers (as they were called) were there, they need not have attended, for there were real and heartfelt mourners enough on the occasion. A few days after the last duty had been performed to Tom O'Malley, and that Father Joe had announced that now he must no longer stay with them, Grace, perceiving him walking in the garden alone, went out to him; for the words her father had addressed to her were fresh in her memory; and as she had not understood to what he had alluded, she was determined to ascertain from his old friend and relative, before he left, what was the history of that vengeance to which her father had alluded so strongly, and with so much feeling. You will, perhaps, think that Grace was too young for such a thing to have so much impression; but, hearing such words on so solemn an occasion, and their being almost her father's last words to her, of course they made a very strong and indelible impression. Moreover, in Ireland, in those days, as on the Continent, girls became mature much sooner than now, or at least than they are considered to do now-a-days; and being an only child, she had been the constant companion of her parents. "Dear Father Joe, tell me what revenge was it, my dear father was urging on me? I do not like to speak to my mother on the subject, but thought that I would ask you." "For what purpose do you wish to know, Grace? Surely you do not mean to notice a few words, said in excitement by a dying man, and which he repented of as soon as he had said them?" "Oh, no, Father Joe! surely you do not think that I forget, or that I shall ever forget the beautiful words you said about it? More-

over, what could a girl do, even were I to wish to do as he said? I have never heard of my father's troubles. I can remember for the last four years, in fact ever since we came here to Galway, that my parents have been in sorrow and trouble. They have never touched upon the subject; but, Father Joe, I want you to tell me all about it." "Yes, my child, I will; I think that it is right you should know what provocation your poor father had had to make him, even for a moment, forget his religious teaching the last sacrament, forgive those who had so deeply injured him—and deeply injured poor Tom has been; however, you shall judge for yourself. "I must begin at the beginning. Your father, at the age of eighteen, inherited, from his father, the large and ancient estate called Mallerina; the largest in Ireland, extending for sixty Irish miles, and one also of the most flourishing and richest. "As the agent whom his father had employed was old, and wished on the death of his patron to retire, Tom (for so I will call your father—it is more familiar to me) appointed a cousin, who solicited the office, to the management of the estate, as an assistance he much needed; and as, also, if your father had had no heir, Robin O'Malley would be his heir, Tom thought that it would be a judicious choice. I remember his telling me about it, and how I had my misgivings on the subject; for I knew Robin to be of a grasping, ambitious, and irreligious character; so I made my objections to Tom, but not very warmly; for I thought that perhaps it was prejudice on my part. Well, Tom was at that time engaged to your mother—as lovely and fine a girl as was to be seen in the countryside, and a Lynch to boot. She was very young—merely sixteen; so it was decided that Tom should travel—make the grand tour, as was usual for young men of station to do—and then return and marry Ann Lynch. Having settled everything with his agent, Robin O'Malley, and taken a tender farewell of the girl he loved; your father volunteered into a regiment of the line, and started on his travels. "Everything went on at first as it should; that is, did so for two or three years. Remittances were duly sent as required; and Tom began to write to his fiancée how soon he should be turning his steps to where his heart always was, namely, to her; but that, as the regiment had received fresh orders to march for \*\*\*, he could not just fix his time for returning to Ireland. "All of a sudden, whether Tom had been led into racing or gambling, we knew not, but demands for heavy sums were made by him to his agent; and, after a due delay, they were sent to him, but accompanied by the avowal that, to meet his demands, sundry houses on the estate—different farms—had had to be sold to realize the sum required. "At length, after another four or five years had passed, the agent had to write that he could no longer remit these extra moneys—that every available piece of land had been either sold or mortgaged. "Extremely annoyed and indignant, Tom left the regiment and hastened home. He found that the wily Robin had been the purchaser of each piece of land that had been sold, and that, at such low figures as to be almost nominal sales. Indignant at being thus robbed, and also that it had been done without the sanction of his guardians (I was one), by our advice Tom threw the whole affair into Chancery. "In the meantime I must tell you of another disappointment that awaited your father on his return home; and that was, that during his absence, Ann Lynch had had the smallpox, which had so disfigured her that all her beauty was gone. She did not hold him to his promise; but Tom was too honorable to allow such an affliction to his betrothed to alter his feelings towards her, or to allow her to think that his love had been solely for the handsome face. "Hang it, Ann!" said he, when he went to see her, (as she told me afterwards,) "I did not think that it was so bad as this; but a bargain is a bargain, and I suppose that your heart is still all right!" "There was little doubt of that, and they married at once; and he took her home at once to Castle Joanna. "The lawsuit dragged on, as Chancery suits always do, for ten or eleven years. At last, worn out with waiting so long, your father went up to Dublin, and succeeded in obtaining a commission to come down to Mallerina and settle the disputed points. "All was going on well in Tom's favor, and Robin was expected to have to disgorge his ill-gotten wealth, when I was seen one morning leaving the castle at an early hour. Notice was given by a spy who had been set on to watch the castle (to notice those who went in or out), that a priest had been seen one Sunday morning coming away from saying Mass for Mr. O'Malley. On hearing this, the commission gave notice that, by harboring a priest and

hearing Mass, Mr. O'Malley had forfeited all rights of citizenship; nor could the law recognize him. "Luckily, one of the commission was a friend of Tom's, so he urged the others to make this matter known to Mr. O'Malley, who was able to prove that no Mass had been said on that day; nor was he cognizant of my visit to the castle. Through the intervention of the friendly commissioner, things were allowed to go on as before the interruption, and now we were all hope again; nay, even felt a certainty of success, when, oh! how shall I tell you the thunder-clap we received by poor Tom's receiving a notice that, as Mr. Robin O'Malley had been to the magistrate's and recanted, and moreover had received at the church the Lord's Supper, he had become entitled, as next heir, to all the lands, tenements, &c., &c., commonly known as Mallerina; and that the recusant Papist was called upon to give up the same on such a day to our trusty and well-beloved Robin O'Malley," &c., &c. CHAPTER III. "You cannot realize our feelings, dear child! The horror that Robin could sell his soul in such a base manner, and defraud the man who had been his benefactor, befriending him when he wanted assistance, as I said, 'who could believe in such depravity?' "Of course, at the first moment, poor Tom swore that he would raise the country rather than submit to such injustice; and such was the state of feeling among the tenants and the peasantry, that it would have been an easy matter; for the wretched Robin did not dare to show himself on the land; and he had to petition the government to send a guard of a regiment quartered in Galway to force the people to submit to his orders. "I flew to your father's side immediately, as did other friends. "When we had well looked into the affair, and seen how hopeless was resistance, we urged him to leave Mallerina, and by showing a due submission to government and the law, he might petition, and hope to have the sentence revoked. I had the comfort of seeing that not for one moment did it enter your father's head or heart to imitate or circumvent his base cousin by a counter recantation, a thing which was being done every day. "The weeping and despoiled family removed to this house, living on the fortune your mother brought with her on her marriage, and which, of course, had nothing to do with Mallerina. "This happened four years ago, and I cannot tell you how often, in that interval, poor Tom has petitioned, nor how often he has gone to Dublin to present the petition himself. Once he even went to London, and succeeded in thrusting his petition into the King's hand itself, but all was of no avail—he was a recusant Papist, and his petition could not be entertained when against a good and loyal Protestant. "Robin had married since his successful wickedness; and had, with great parade, his son and heir christened at the Protestant church. "I never left your poor father's side; I felt how dangerous it would be to leave him to himself, after his unsuccessful endeavor to obtain justice in London; for he returned to Dublin, vowing vengeance, and declaring that the traitor should not enjoy his ill-gotten riches. "Oh! how I prayed that Providence would interfere to prevent his making matters worse by useless, as well as sinful, attempts at revenge. In vain I said, 'leave it to God, Tom; be sure He will punish the traitor;' but no, at that moment, I might as well have spoken to a stone wall. However, my prayers were heard in another and a different way to the one I asked. "A messenger had been sent, to inform you in Dublin to say that you were dying. Had your poor father one tender spot left in his poor tried heart it was for you. "Assuring me that his vengeance was only deferred, he hastened back to Galway, to find you despaired of. For several nights we watched with your mother, your young life; and how thankful I was on the night when the doctor had told us that the crisis had come, and that the next few hours would decide life or death for you. I was, as I said, so thankful to hear him whisper to me, "Oh, cousin Joe, I will forego my revenge if the Lord, in His mercy, spare my child." "Repeat that," said I; and I pulled him on his knees, and held a crucifix before him; and humbly and fervently he did so, and kissed the image of his Redeemer. "What a weight was removed from my heart! But shall I ever forget the agony of that night, as we watched each breath you drew? nor the sigh of relief we simultaneously gave when your feverish restlessness gradually subsided into a gentle sleep, which lasted three hours at least? Then you opened your eyes, and—as if to reward your loving father for the vow he had made—your first look was on him; and you smiled, as it seemed to me, a heavenly, peaceful smile. From that time you went on improv-

ing; but not so your father. The excitement over—both of your illness and his endeavors to regain his lost inheritance, and to punish the traitor Robin—he gradually failed in health; and you know the rest—how the last nine months he has been getting weaker and weaker, without any specific complaint; as he said himself, 'He was dying of a broken heart!'" CHAPTER IV. Grace's eyes, more than once, showed how deeply she sympathized in her father's and mother's trials! And after Father Joe had finished his recital, they both remained silent for some time. At length she broke the silence by saying, "Father Joe, how can it be possible that such a shameful and outrageously wicked deed could be allowed—and by law, too? Who made this law? Was it this king?" "No, Grace; this law was made by Elizabeth in order to exterminate the Catholics. It is a part of what is called the penal law, which makes me unable to preach or teach publicly the Catholic religion, though it is well known that it is the religion dear to the people of Ireland. It makes any Protestant able if they meet a Catholic on horseback, and they take a fancy to that horse which he is riding, it enables him, I say, to tender the Catholic five pounds, and require him to dismount there and then, and hand it over to him, however averse he may be to part with the animal." "But, Father Joe, I have often wondered how we Irish have ever allowed ourselves to be conquered by the English. Are we not ten times braver than they are?" "I will tell you why we were conquered. It was by not holding together. We were always quarrelling among ourselves—I mean our petty kings were—so that when Henry the Second came over to subdue us, he found it an easy task to discover a traitor; who, to revenge himself on his own brother, paved the way for the ruin of his country, and let in an enemy whom it was impossible to dislodge. "As in Elizabeth's time they, to exterminate and dis-Irishize (so to say) the people, enacted the penal laws, so Henry the Second, finding that the bards, who were the only depositories of the people's history, and sang the warlike deeds of their ancestors to excite them to imitate their brave forefathers—so Henry, fearing to keep alive the love for the bards, and thus the love of country, ordered the long-flowing locks of the bards to be cut off, and thus did away with their distinctive mark and their glory. Some even left the country rather than submit, for it was the glory of the race of bards that, like the Nazareans of old, their hair had never been cut!" "Oh," said the old priest, "how short-sighted are these kings and statesmen who make such laws! They will not allow the peasant to be taught his religion, which would make him a good and peaceful subject (for although we Irish may not love our conquerors, still we are taught by St. Paul 'to respect the powers that be'), and by preventing their having the means of learning to become practical Catholics, they destroy in them all religious feeling, they breed up a set of savages who have no restraint put on their evil passions, who will give way to revenge, nay, even look upon the destruction of their oppressors as lawful!" "Oh, my country!" cried the old man, raising his hands towards heaven in a supplicatory manner. "Oh, my country! I foresee all the evils attending thee in the future. At present your altars are thrown down—your priests are skulking in the bye-ways—they must not show themselves!" "How, then, can men reverence religion, when they see its ministers degraded and proscribed? It is true a few of the old faithful Catholics will love their holy religion the more for the persecutions it undergoes; but the rising generation—it is for them that I grieve.—What will they know about their faith? It is true that they will have learnt from their fathers that they are Catholics—that they must never give that faith up; they will stick to that name as something by which to thwart their conquerors, their hated oppressors! But, practically, what good will that be? Will calling themselves Catholics teach them its sublime truths? make them patient under provocation and trial? You, Grace, may live to see the day when the Irish will force their masters to remove these oppressive laws. I shall be long before that in my grave; but, as I said, you may live to see the day when the people will rise with one accord and force the English to restore their altars and give them their just and natural position! But, oh! I fear that my countrymen will have gone through a baptism of blood, will have been degraded to the very lowest depth of irreligion, ere they rise again!" "But they will rise, and the faith that they have kept but in name will raise them to their former condition. Ireland will be again the nursery of sanctity and learning!" "Oh that I might see the day! But yet I should have first to endure all the previous sor-

\* A term of endearment.