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FATHER CONNELL; A TALE.

BY THE O'HARA FAMILY.

CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued.)

"And the—a—the—a—poor Boxer, sir. What did he do, to deserve being hanged?" asked Mr. Stanton.

"He did enough, and more than enough, damn his blood—he turned his coat, the rascal."

"The—a—turned his coat, sir?"

"Yes, went to mass last Sunday, with that half-starved, whistling, popish cur there," meaning Tom Naddy, "but I'll have none of them that are reared up, in my house on good Protestant aching and drinking do that—those that are brought up by old Popish priests may go to their masses, if they like, and to the devil afterwards; but I'll have none of my bringing up, cross themselves in a mass-house—ha! Mither Boxer, you know as much now, I believe? Why, Dick Stanton, what are you about? There are the deacons with you again."

Dick Stanton hastened to push them home; his host filled, and drank a bumper, and then resumed, after a moment's cogitation:—

"Dick Stanton, I wouldn't have lost that poor dog for any money. He was worth his weight in gold; oh, I wish you could have seen him muzzle a rat! And then, he was so fond of me; I'd give ten, twenty, ay, thirty pounds, to have him back—go down stairs out of that, you unlucky hangman," to Tom Naddy, "you're laughing at me, you scoundrel, though you don't let me see it—go down stairs, or I'll knock your brains out, where you stand, with this decanter."

Tom Naddy accordingly lounged off, and Gaby readdressed Mr. Q. O. unexpounded.

"Our two bottles are now nearly out between us, my good fellow, and so, I'll take my after-dinner nap, while you go up to Helen. And, do you hear me? none of your arm's length work any longer—have you kissed her yet?"

"Sir—the—a—kissed her, sir?"

"Yes, you long bamboo! didn't you hear me? Kissed her, I say."

"The—the—a—I declare, sir, never."

"Pah—I thought as much; off with you then, and do it this moment—stop—Blur-an-ages! what's this? Why, Boxer, my poor boy, is it you? Bug-a-bouns! my poor old dog, I'm glad to see you!" and Gaby McNeary hugged Boxer with delight, as the animal jumped up on him, whining, and licking his hands.

"I'm not for being too hard on you, sir," said Tom Naddy, cautiously introducing merely his head at the door, "so, I won't be keepin' you up to your full word, by axin' the thirty pounds, that you said you'd give to get Boxer home again; but I'm sure I'm in reason when I say I'll take the bare twenty that—"

"By Gog! you snooking thief," interrupted Gaby McNeary, "I'll make you laugh with t'other side of your mouth when I lay hands on you! Get out of my house in five minutes, or I'll—be off, you rascal!"

Tom a second time withdrew. Gaby finished at one fell swoop the wine before him, and patting Boxer—who laid his nose on his knee, looked up into his eyes, and described segments of circles with the whole length of his tail on the carpet—spoke again to Q. O. unexpounded.

"Now, I'll take my nap, at last, Dick; and so you mind your points above stairs; or if you don't, I hope that some one who has more in him than yourself, may carry off Helen from you, body and bones."

Thus admonished, Q. O. unexpounded stood up, lifted his cane from the floor, where it had lain at his feet, since before dinner, smoothed his powdered and pomatumed hair, felt his queue behind, to ascertain that it was directly between his shoulders, and uttering a preparatory "hem," accompanied his creaking shoes, in search of his mistress.

Having reached the drawing-room door, he tapped at it with the head of his cane; and then, seizing that badge of gentility in the middle, held it before his face, a favorite action of his—for in this position, its golden head and eyes, and gold thread tassel, were displayed to the best advantage.

Helen had been but a few moments at home from Miss Lanigan's, and the command which gave him the right to enter was therefore uttered in a discomposed voice; she was able, however, to take a seat, near her tea-table, in perfect composure, before the door opened; so respectfully tedious were Mr. Stanton's motions.

Having got inside the door, he made a profound reverence, striking it with the most remote part of his person, as he did so, and then, his features wearing a lugubrious simper, by dint of Gaby McNeary's good old wine, he advanced, and to Helen's great surprise, drew a chair much closer to her than ever he had drawn chair before. He held up the cane still, and tapped its gold head against his yellow teeth, while his huge eyes gorged themselves on the young lady.

Helen suddenly looked him straight in the face, and, in features, manner, and action, he underwent an immediate collapse. The cane was lowered, he rested his hands on his knees, and his glance wandered round the

apartment. A long silence ensued. At length he said—

"The—a—hem! The—a—don't you think, Miss Helen, the—a—don't you think that Hessian boots are handsome wear!"

"You pay me a vast compliment, sir, by consulting me; but I really cannot say."

"Well—that's curious. The—a—you know New York, Miss Helen?"

"Upon my word, sir, I do not know New York."

"'Tis a nice place, then, Miss—just when the ship was sailing into New York, we ran short of grog."

"A very graphic description of New York, sir," said Helen's austerity of face now relaxed into a smile.

The wretched creature misinterpreted the smile's meaning, and he felt his courage remount into his heart, whence, a moment before, it had retreated like cold water.

"Miss Helen?"

"Mr. Stanton?"

"Do you know what your most worthy father is after telling me to do?"

"How should I know, Mr. Stanton?"

"Well, I won't tell you, Miss Helen—only I'll show you."

And with a desperate plunge of resolution, before Helen could be at all aware of his abominable intention, he flung his arms around her neck. She started from her seat, and struggled, and screamed, while Q. O. unexpounded held her firmly in his bear's gripe, panting and blowing, as he endeavored awkwardly to effect his purpose. The young girl's neck and face were hurt with his odious, vice-like pressure. But she soon freed herself, and still screaming loudly, fled to her own room, and locked, and bolted herself in.

In the mean time Gaby McNeary's bell rang violently, and his voice was heard through the house, shouting for Tom Naddy, totally forgetful that, only a few moments before, he had issued a thundering fiat for his quitting the premises. So he shouted lustily, and rang, rang his bell, so as to make it quite a little tocsin, his restored friend, Boxer, snarling and barking at every shout, and every tug at the bell-pull. Gaby McNeary was in fact the picture of a very angry man, suddenly awakened out of his after-dinner nap.

"Why did you keep me waiting on you, you brat? Why did you let me call and ring so often? And what the devil is this racket in my house?" he demanded of Tom Naddy, as that person made his appearance.

"Oh, sir, Mither Stanton—I'm beginnin' to be sore afeard he's a very wicked gentleman."

"Wicked, you scoundrel—he wicked? Is that all you can say in answer to my question? Wicked! Why anything of a sizeable fly would make him beg his life. What's this uproar in my house, I say again?"

"Mither Stanton, sir, is aither half-chokin' the young mistress."

"You infernal monkey! Is it making game of me you are?"

"No sir—no such thing. They was wrastling fur an hour, and then Miss Helen ran fur her life."

"Where's Mr. Stanton now?"

"The hall-door was open, sir, and he made his escape through id, as I ken up."

"Bug-a-bouns! Will no one tell me the reason of all this? Where's Miss McNeary at present?"

"She's hidin' under the bed in her own room, sir, half-kilt."

"Is she, you lying vagabond?"

Gaby scrambled up from his arm-chair, seized his stick, and stumped might and main, towards Tom Naddy, who, however, by no means waited to be charged by his angry master, but walking pretty slowly through the doorway, went down the kitchen stairs. After him came Gaby's stick, bounding and rattling, while its owner roared forth—

"Take that, you meagre whelp! I'll teach you how you'll humbug me in my own house."

Without the slightest hurry or flurry of manner, Tom did take up the stick, placed it against the wall, and then cracking his fingers, and whistling melodiously, descended to his lower regions.

"Give it to me back again, you young rascal! do you hear? give me back my stick, I tell you!" But Tom was out of sight, and remained so; while his master, being out of a fit of gout only a few days, clung helplessly to the balustrade, not daring to venture down stairs, either after the stick or the person who had so much irritated him. He then raised his voice for "Helen! Helen!" she quickly answered her father's summons.

"What happened to make you frighten me out of my sleep, madam?"

"I have been grossly insulted, father."

"You have, have you? Be pleased to tell me where, and when, and how, and by whom."

"By that vulgar fool, and I will now say, ruffian, sir—that man Stanton."

"Why, what did he do to you? Did he knock you down?"

"I can't father, I can't answer you."

"That is to say you won't. Gog's Blur-anges! Isn't this a poor case! No satisfaction

for me, no matter who I ask—the next thing is to turn me out of the house between you, I suppose—will you speak to me, madam?"

"Dear, dear father, what shall I say?"

"How the devil do I know? Do you want me to tell you a story that you're to repeat to myself?"

"Sir, he had the insolence to seize me round the neck—and to hurt me—and to attempt to salute me, as if—"

"To salute you! you mean to kiss you? Bug-a-bouns! what else would you have him do?"

"Sir!"

"Sir! the man is going to be married to you, and he musn't kiss you? And was it for that you bawled out?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Certainly, sir! and wakened me out of my sound sleep. Isn't Dick Stanton to be married to you? Tell me that."

"No, sir," cried Helen, starting back, and holding up her head, while she spoke almost as loud as her father, and all but frowned on him.

"What do you say?"

Recollecting herself, Helen now repeated her "No, sir," in a more gentle and respectful tone, though not in a less determined one.

"No, sir? By the great Gog! he is, though! And he shall, and he must be! By the mother that bore you, he shall and must!"

"Oh, father, father! Oh, horrible!"

"Or you may walk out of that hall-door! Do you hear me?"

"Oh, God help me, sir, I do."

"I'll make you know he's to be married to you. I'll make you know it before you're seven days older. Blood-an-thunder-an-fury! to my very face the young hussey says this! But—I'll—have—my—way—in—my—own—house—or—" (you are now going to be guilty of bathos, Gaby) "or I'll make the devil box punch. Go out of my sight, you young—woman," added Gaby, gulping down a very different word—"go out of my sight—go to your own room! By the Hokey father, I'll make every one of ye dance from the top of the house to the bottom. In seven days you'll marry Dick Stanton, my lady, or you may go marry t'ould blind man on the bridge. Quit my sight, I say!"

Helen accordingly went up stairs, almost despairing.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The next day, by dint of unusual gravity and suavity of deportment, Tom Naddy succeeded in making his master forget all his disrespectful conduct of the preceding evening, and once more they were tolerable friends.

In the course of the day, there came a great knocking and ringing at the hall-door. Tom answered it, and remained for some time talking earnestly with the visitor, a country-looking man of rather a respectable appearance. Gaby McNeary saw them together on the steps leading to his hall-door, and loudly and angrily called Tom in. To his surprise, the curious fellow was weeping, and enacting to perfection the part of one trying to suppress a sudden and great grief. Gaby McNeary inquired the cause of his affliction, and was informed that the man was a relation of his from a village about fifteen miles off, and that he had come to announce to him the death of his father, and to summon him to the funeral; and Tom implored to be permitted to go. After many characteristic demurs on the part of Gaby, his prayer was granted.

We come to the next day, and are in Dublin, arriving at Edmund Fennell's lodgings, in that city, just as he himself returns to them, late in the day, to dinner.

Going up stairs, and entering his sitting-room, Edmund started back, as if he had seen a spectre. In the middle of the apartment, whistling a very favorite air, stood Tom Naddy.

"The devil!" cried Edmund.

"No, Mather Neddy, nor any of his blood relations."

"What on earth brought you here?—any bad news?"

"Myself doesn't know what news there's from the Hague to-day, nor it's n't much I care, to be plain wid you, sir; but we have fine news at home."

"What is it, Tom, what is it?"

"Heugh—a—sure you don't care an ould crooked thuraween what it is, an' you so grand a gentleman, here in Dublin now, an' never comin' next or near us, for I don't know how long ago?"

"Do answer me, Tom, what brings you up from the country? Out with it at once."

"Why thin I will," said Tom very quietly.

"Miss Helen McNeary is to be married next week, please God."

"Married! Come, Tom, don't attempt to play off any of your old jokes on me."

"Ould jokes, sir? Sure it's you know well I'm no great hand at a joke, young or ould."

"And you are not trifling with me now?"

"'Tis far from my notion, Mather Neddy; I tell you over again, that Miss Helen will be married next week, as sure as I won't; an' I'll give you my book oath, if you like, that I'd be long sorry to make such a fool o' myself."

"You starlie me, Tom—frighten me terribly."

"I guessed that ud come to pass."

"And the bridegroom?"

"Do you remember Mither Dick Stanton, sir, that come home from America, just before you left us?"

"Yes—and is it he?"

"'Tis indeed—Mither Dick Stanton, that frolickin' young rogue."

"Phoh! phoh!" said Edmund, as if speaking to himself, "it can never be—Helen has never mentioned it in her letters—Phoh, Tom, impossible!"

"Well, have id your own way, Mather Neddy; but I hard th'ould had swarin' oath upon oath, not a great many hours ago, up to Miss Helen's face, that she was to marry Mither Stanton, within a week's time; an' ould Gaby isn't the boy to go out of his road, for any man born of a woman neither; an' I just tell you that for your comfort, Mather Ned."

"Thank you, sir," said Edmund bowing to him.

"Kindly welcome, sir," answered Tom, bowing in return.

"But he cannot force his daughter to marry against her will?"

"Bud can't he force her into the street, an' shet the door in her face! Faith an' he can; an' tis himself is the very ould boy to do it."

"No, Tom, no. Helen shall not be forced."

"All very fine talk, pou my conscience."

"What do you say?"

"Don't get cross wid me now, Mather Ned, if you please: sure it isn't me that's going to be married to Miss Helen?"

Edmund had been walking about the room, with bent brows, repeating his opinion that Helen should not be married against her will, and he scarcely heeded Tom.

"You'll be thyrin' to put a bar to id, Mather Ned?"

"Trying?—I will put a bar to it."

"Would it be doin' any harm to ask how?"

"How, how—I cannot see that, yet; but I tell you that I will put a bar to it."

"Faith, an' fur all myself can see, you'd want some one, wid a little share of brains to help you. Is id a 'orney or a counsellor you're to be, Mather Ned, when your time is out?"

"Stop the marriage I will, were it by twistin' the neck of that disgusting fool," continued Edmund, still only half attending to Tom, as he walked about.

"Faix, I wouldn't like to be in his coat.—Will you promise not to strike me fur what I'm going to say, sir?"

"Get out, you idiot!"

"Bud will you promise me?"

"Phoh! to be sure I will."

"You say Miss Helen isn't to be married next week?"

"She shall not, by—"

"Well, and that's a thumper iv an oath; I tell you what I'll do with you. See here; there's two shillings—all I'm worth in money, on the face of the living earth, after coming off of my long road this evening; they say you have a houseful of old gold; I'll lay these two shillings agen two of your old guineas, that Miss Helen will be married next week. Any now, Mather Ned—don't be coming so close to me, that way. Sure you promised not to strike me?"

"Yes, but I did not promise that I would not take neck and heels, and pitch you out of that window into the street."

"Faith, and of the two, myself would rather be struck decently—keep off, sir, if you please."

A servant entered the room with Edmund's dinner.

"Well, well, Tom, you may sit down yonder; and while I dine, we will talk more of this business."

But Edmund did not keep his word; he remained either quite taciturn, or, after attacking his food with every appearance of a ravenous appetite, pushed away his plate, and muttered to himself, not addressing a word to Tom Naddy. This did not answer either the purpose or the temperament of Tom. After glancing scrutinizingly around the nicely furnished apartment, he broke through a whistle so low that it might be called a whispered whistle, and spoke, "Nate lodgings entirely we're in here, Mather Neddy."

He got no answer. His next remark was—

"Why, then, may the saints rowl a blanket o' glory round the poor old man that left us?"

Ned understood the smothered slyness of Tom's allusion, and perplexed as he was, suddenly glanced at him and laughed.

"Well, Tom; and had you no business in Dublin, but to bring me this news?"

"What other business would I have, sir?"

"Your young mistress sent you?"

"Never a seed, then."

"And you have a letter?" cried Edmund, starting up.

"No, I have not; and no message either.—And not a word from the young mistress to you, good or bad."

"What! She would not write to me?"

"No; because she couldn't."

"Couldn't, why?"

Tom put his hand in his pocket, took out

the key of his sleeping loft over his stable at home, and gave it a sudden twist, as if shooting a lock with it, accompanying the act by an explanatory nod of his head.

"What!" cried Edmund, understanding him, "have matters really grown so serious? And so, Tom, you have come to Dublin of your own accord?"

"O' my own accord."

"And the road so long! How did you travel? On the top of the coach?"

"Faix no Mather Edmund; on the top of shank's mare; walked it, or raced it, every inch of the way; and in the night time, as in the day time, more betoken."

"The distance was upwards of sixty miles."

"Well, then, Tom, I see you are a faithful kind of fellow after all; and you shall have something to make up your road expenses, Tom."

"Never fear that.—I'll have your two old guineas honestly won, by my wager, as sure as little apples."

Edmund Fennell again began to look annoyed, and Tom thought dangerous.

"Stop now, Mather Ned. Whisht, wid yourself, and come here, as far from the door as ever we can; would it be any harm to lock it? I won't spake another word till it is locked."

Edmund turned the key. In two hours afterwards, he and Tom Naddy were on the road from Dublin homeward, together.

CHAPTER XXV.

The next day still, and we have returned with them to their native city.

Tom Naddy is re-installed in all his former offices in Gaby McNeary's household, and enjoys something more of his master's favor than ever he did. With an unusual degree of interest, Gaby questioned Tom concerning his father's death, and Tom gave him a full account of the nature and suddenness of his fatal disorder—"a smothering up all over," he described it to have been; then of the wake, and then of the funeral, adding a list of how many little brothers and sisters were now almost wholly dependent upon him "for the bit and the sup."

Edmund Fennell, not making his return known, even to Father Connell, hastened to Miss Lanigan's genteel little house. He had long been acquainted with her, had often met her at Gaby McNeary's, and quite as often met Helen McNeary under her roof. Miss Lanigan received him, as was her wont, with great good-nature and sympathy. She either knew or guessed all the circumstances which caused his present uneasiness; nay, she could supply him with a few more, to add to his comfort, as Tom Naddy would remark. Helen had continued under lock and key, ever since her father had informed her that she should become the wife of Mr. Stanton. And the mantuamakers—she had it from themselves—were in and out every moment in the day, preparing her dresses for the awful occasion.

"But it is not possible," said Edmund, "that Helen ever will consent to marry that stolid fellow, in the teeth of her promises, often and often, and most solemnly repeated, in the presence of Heaven, to be mine—my own—oh, Miss Lanigan, you have yourself witnessed, over and over, the interchange of our vows to each other—can you do nothing now to assist us in keeping them unbroken?"

"I declare and protest, my dear, I am ready and willing to do anything—but I declare I do not see, for the present, what is to be done."

"Miss Lanigan, I am distracted—and I shall act as a desperate man, I fear, if some means are not devised to prevent a breach of Helen's engagements with me."

"I vow and protest, my dear, I sincerely sympathise with you and commiserate you.—You love, and are beloved—and the situation you are placed in, is most interesting and absorbing—and my poor Helen too! What must be her feelings?"

"With the man that I love, were I destined to dwell On a mountain, a moor, in a cot, in a cell! I should think myself supremely happy. But still, I ask, what is to be done? I would not be for lacerating your tender feelings by rudely separating you. But be not over-hasty, my dear; you have still three or four days to consider; hope for the best—"

"Hope, thou source of every blessing, Parent of each joy divine!"

Edmund Fennell suddenly interrupted the waving of her little hand by seizing it, and her quotation, by breaking in upon it, and speaking very rapidly.

"The case is this, Miss Lanigan. Helen McNeary is mine, by every vow and pledge that could bind her to me—and if I had a thousand lives to lose, one after the other, I would lay them down, sooner than be separated from her—I am no blasphemer, but I deliberately swear by—"

"Hush, dear youth!" interrupted Miss Lanigan in return, placing her disengaged hand on Edmund's lips—"be calm—swear not—neither scare me—by your terrible threats—gracious goodness me! what is to become of us all? I protest and vow—"