

MYLES O'HANLON.

A TRUE STORY OF ST. PATRICK'S DAY.

It was St. Patrick's day at Ballinacree. The air was crisp and the day bright, and the little church was filled to overflowing with shamrock-bedecked children of Erin.

The good priest delivered an oration on the feast of the day, and when the mass was over and the usual good intentions made the boys cheered, gayly dressed country girls and tall, broad-shouldered young men, all "dressed in their best," streamed out of the village church and crowded the little chapel yard, forming a splendid group of the brown and beauty of the sons and daughters of St. Patrick.

Many passed out through the chapel and congregated the usual string of beggars who haunt the roads that lead to the churches on all holidays, but particularly on this one.

Among those who made such speedy exit was Myles O'Hanlon. He was not an exiles' hater, in fact he was unusually good natured and ill-tempered, and he passed quickly through the throng and entered the public house of Terence Murphy. In the "parlor" there he met no one, but the lady of the house, and when Myles entered she looked at him searchingly.

"What's Myles, is he going to break your pledges, ye say?" she asked him.

"Ye, ma'am," replied her visitor.

"I'll take a small bit of whisky," she said.

The old lady was not in a particular hurry to serve her customer; she was rather inclined for the moment to an appearance. The committee could not understand it. They had seen him at mass.

What had become of him? Boys were sent to his home at Garretstown, about a mile away, and through the village, and one member of the committee, knowing of Myles' infatuation for pretty Kate Connell, tried to see her father's cottage with the hope of finding there the missing man. But all were disappointed, and the meeting broke and ended without the presence of their popular president.

In the afternoon Myles goes to the athletic sports on the beautiful strand at Garretstown. All the country side was to be there. But St. Patrick's day and Myles, and he was still absent from his duties. His friends began to feel uneasy, and his old father, who came to the strand to see his boy in some of the press, was particularly anxious about him.

These sports are held in Kinsale and Kilmacoe and other towns and villages, and on the sandy beach, beside the flowing cliffs of Kilmacoe, sheltered by the picturesque wooded hills of Garretstown, and facing the open sea, thousands of Ireland's prettiest daughters and finest sons. There were people of all ages, and more than the popular landlord to the laboring man, from the parson to the priest's altar boy.

But where was Myles O'Hanlon? The question was on a thousand tongues, but it seems to be unanswerable. He was considered to be the best runner and hurdler in the parish, and on him the neighbors relied to keep the laurels in Connors; but this day he was nowhere; not one prize remained in the parish of Connors, and so were the hearts of the good people of Garretstown and Garretstown. But now that day is over, the friends of Myles gathered together in little groups and discussed the strangeness of his absence.

Father Dunlop was as anxiously nervous about him as was his old father, and in reply to a query from some uncharitable rival, he said indignantly:

"Myles O'Hanlon is not drinking. He has the pledge since he was a child, and early this morning, when the dew was upon the grass, he picked this shamrock I'm wearing and said to me: 'Father, I'm thinking I'll keep the association open in Connors today.' But what has happened the boy I can't understand."

This silence? The well thinking ones, and proved that at least it was the intention of Myles to be at the sports.

Something must have happened to him. So thought everybody. But no one could suggest a solution of the mystery. Suddenly old Tim O'Hanlon, Myles' father, went to Father Dunlop and said to him:

"Begor, yer reverence, I'm thinking that maybe old Dan Connell's daughter has something to say to it."

"Why?" inquired the priest.

"Because, yer reverence, she refused him last night. There was a dance up at Moll Dally's, the match maker's, and my presence—as I hear that old Connell gave Moll in shillin' to make a match for Kate will Johnny Hurley, the butcher."

This did not throw much light on the subject. But Father Dunlop knew well that Myles had a tender spot in his heart for Kate; he was looking forward to have a fine wedding at Shrove-tide, and although Connell did not like to give his daughter to a man who had not a farm, he believed that this breach could be filled up, and he had decided to use his good goodness towards that end. Turning to old O'Hanlon he said:

"Tim, when did you hear that Kate refused him?"

"I didn't hear it at all, yer reverence; but the signs of Myles' face last night of this morning I guessed it. But 'twas himself told me that the old fellow gave Moll Dally the shillin'."

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