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THE LAST OF THE CATHOLIC O'MALLEYS.

A TALE. BY M. TAUNTON.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

She related how they had left Seely's Lane, as we know, and how they had got to Achill. I think you will remember Grace's power of listening, without interrupting the person relating anything in which she was deeply interested, fearing to break the thread of the story; as she gave evidence when the old butler tried her so sorely. Had she not this invaluable quality (and a rare one, too), she must have betrayed the inward start she felt when she heard that her child had been so near her as Achill, whilst they were looking for him elsewhere. Then Katey told her how she had wondered not to see her (Grace) arrive, or send for the child; and the cunning ("betwixt me and all wrong for saying the word of my mother!") of nurse in giving Katey to understand that Grace was going to marry, and did not wish the boy to be seen by the new husband, and that that was why she was to keep him dark. Katey did not mind telling how cold-hearted she thought it of his mother, and how she never seemed to care for her any more, "Saving your presence, and axing your pardon for telling you that same, mam."

seen the big drops of sweat as stood like beads on her forehead; and it was as much as she could do to sit it out" (Grace could not help thinking serve her right). "Fortunately, Tim soon went away. When he was fairly out of sight, my mother got up from her seat, and tottered out into the open air. I went to her, but she pushed me back, and sat, or almost fell on the grass, and there she remained for ever so long: at last she called me, and said—" "You see, Katey, if you don't hold your tongue, you'll get me hanged; but I'll take the boy, and leave him at her door some night, when there is no fear I'll be seen. But you be silent; keep dark, unless you want to hang me!" She made me swear by everything sacred that I would leave it to her, and never even to my own John tell what she had done. And then, mam, I knew that it was none of your doing the hiding Master Teddie, but all my mother's work. But, please, what could I do? Would you have told, and got your mother hanged? "Go on," said Grace.
CHAPTER XXXIX.
"From that time my mother was miserable —nor would she let the boy out of her sight, especially if any strangers came — either on business or to the neighbors. She kept him with her."
"Then he never learnt to read or write?" enquired Grace.
"Then, indeed, he did, mam! "You know how mother was set upon that for me even, for she had me taught—for she said, she knew how bad it was not to have a bit of learning."
"But if she never let him off the island, how could he learn?" asked Grace.
"Why, you see, mam, one of the neighbors had a son, who kept a bit of a school at Castlebar, and he used to come home now and then, and generally on a Sunday morning, and mother paid him to teach Master Teddie, and wasn't it he that was the good scholar? He beat all for the good writing! He was so fond of his book, that mother got Barney Cogan to bring him a new book once in a way; and he would sit, the poor soul, as quiet as a mouse, spelling the words, until he could read quite well."
"After we had been about three years at Achill, I received a letter from John, to say that his ship, the 'Kelpie,' had come into Plymouth; and he sent me the money to take myself and the boy there to him. I only returned to Achill two years ago with my husband and the three children we now have, saving your presence. It was too much for me to have charge of so many by myself, and the reason why I returned there was, that mother sent word that she was growing weak and ill, and wanted to see me, and I'd best come and take care of things, or they'd go to rack and ruin.— You see, mam, our cousin Mary was dead some time, and had left mother the place, and the bits of things she had; and she had saved a good penny, which mother found in an old tin mug under her bed in a corner."
"So mother said that she would pay my expenses if I'd come. So, as I said, we went, as to be sure we ought to do that same, not only because mother was growing old, but as John said, says he, we ought not to let the property go to strangers, and we got children, you see, mam."
"Well, I found Master Teddie still with mother, and grew ever so fine a boy! I know that he was thirteen, because he was the same age as my Johnnie; so says I, 'mother, have you never let Mrs. O'Donnell, the creature—saving your presence, mam—know about her boy?"
"Why, you see, Katey," says she, 'I did once go to Galway, and found that she had gone to Dublin, or somewhere else. No one knew where she was; so, sure, I could not go travelling the world over to find her, and maybe get myself hanged, drawn and quartered!— And then, you see, it would have gone hard with me to part with Master Edward's boy—who I loved almost, yes, sure as much, as his own father! And then to be sure, how could I get on without him, now you was gone? He did everything for me; and a stronger, kinder boy isn't to be met this side of Mullerina—if I'm ill he tends me—he does the bit of work like a girl!—" At this part of the recital poor Grace could not conceal a look of indignation, which Katey, sharp-witted as she was, perceived. "Well, mam, you're thinking that's not the work his father's son ought to have been put to, and I won't say but that it's true for you; but she's gone, and, please, you'll forgive her, as I trust the Lord has this day. Well, mam, my John used to amuse the young lads—that's my Johnnie and Master Teddie—with stories of what he had seen, and where he had been, and how he had fought the French, until Master Teddie got to love it so much, that he began to wish that he too could go to sea!"
"My mother was not pleased, but the more she scolded the more it seemed to fix it in the boy's mind, and he more than once said to

John, 'Take me with you, daddie John. I must go. I can't stay here no more.'
" 'Well, mam, the long and the short of it is, that we persuaded mother to let the boy have his own way. For, says John to her, says he, 'Now you've got Katey and the young children with you, you don't want him so much; and if you don't let him go with me, he'll go without me, he will, for he's as good as told me so.' And then, mam, I told mother when I was alone with her that that would be a way of getting him off her hands, in case it should be found out the thing she had done, for if he's not here, he can't be proved, says I. So by going on at her in that way, we got her to let John take him with our boy, when he returned to England in about six weeks time."
" 'And where did your husband take him to?"
" 'Well, mam, you see he went back to Plymouth, and then he found the same boatswain that he had gone to sea with before, and who was a good friend to him, so he, up and he told him how he had got two boys with him, and that he wanted to get them to sea; that they was both about thirteen, and very slightly lads, too, and both able to read and write. 'Why,' says he, 'if that's true, ye are in the nick of time, for there's wanting midshipmen, and there are posters put up asking for them.— Take your boys,' says he, 'or I will for you to the office, and I'll be bound I'll get them passed as midshipmen. Worse nor them has got in.'
CHAPTER XL.
" 'Well, mam, so he did, bless him this day, and the Lord be good to him, for Master Teddie and my Johnnie had as good a chance of being captain as the best of them, if the Lord spare them, the creatures!"
" 'And in what ship did they go out?" For it immediately struck Grace that Robert would find out all the rest for her.
" 'Well, mam, it is the 'Mercury.' This is the writing I am to put on when I send a letter," and Katey took out of her pocket a piece of brown paper, folded several times and in the middle of these folds was a piece of white paper, on which was written—
" 'His Majesty's sloop of war 'Mercury,' one of the fleet on the coast of Italy. 'Ibi ubi.'"
" 'Please, mam, when last John wrote he said that both of the boys was doing well, and Master Teddie was the bravest boy in the fleet, and a great favorite with all the sailors. Every one had a good word for O'Birn. Oh!" said Katey, reddening to the very roots of her hair, covered with confusion, wondering how the missis would like it—"oh, bedad! I forgot to tell you that he always was known by my mother's name, and was put on the books as Edward O'Birn."
" 'And what has made you at last come to me after so many years of silence? and how did you find out where I was?"
" 'Sure, mam, from the day John took away Master Edward, my mother never held up her head, she fretted that much. She was always fancying that now the whole business would come out, and she would get the punishment. Well, it told on her that much that she had to take to her bed, and could not eat or drink. This went on for three or four months, and at last she got so bad that I had to get a doctor from Castlebar, for you see, mam, I could well pay him out of my mother's panican."
" 'He told me that she was just wasting away, and that she would not last long.'
CHAPTER XLII.
" 'Oh, mam, if you knew the trouble it was to her, and to me, that she could not see the priest. There had been a kind old man, who had come three year ago to the Island, but mother would not then go to her duty. You see she had Master Teddie on her mind, and was afeared to tell, because she knew that he would; (the priest, I mean) would tell her that she must make it known before she could be received to the absolution, and tell it she would not. Now, how frightened she was to die, like a dog, as she said. No priest!—no confession! I did my best for her; and said the rosary by her bedside every night."
" 'One night she woke up in a great hurry. 'Katey,' says she to me, says she, 'I'm going fast; promise me on your sacred oath that you'll find Mrs. Edward out, wherever she may be, and tell her about Teddie, the darling! and ask her to forgive me, for I shall never rest in my grave until she does forgive me. I know that I shall walk until she gets her boy; and she clutched my hand, and held it so tight that she frightened me. I did not answer, because you see, mam, I did not know where you was; and how was I to leave my children? But she held me fast, and said, 'Swear, Katey, swear! I'll never leave you quiet if you don't. I'll curse you with a mother's sorrowful curse, if you won't promise to go to all parts of the earth's end, till you find her or her part, and ask for the forgiveness!'"
" 'What could I do, but promise; for sure a mother's curse is worse than having to leave

one's children for a time. So, mam, I swore, as she wanted me. 'And now,' says she, 'you can't forego your swearing, Katey, for anybody, or anything. Sure, now, I'll bless you.' And then she let go my hand, and fell quite tired out, on her pillow, and I thought that she was going to die, for the excitement was great for her, you see, mam. However, I got up and gave her something out of the bottle the doctor had given me for her, and it quieted her.
" 'But what is the use of telling you more, mam? She died that next night. She had been in a sort of doze all day, and never spoke any more to me.
" 'I felt very lonesome; for, hard woman as she had been to others, she had a soft spot in her heart for me. You see, mam, she had only me," and Katey's eyes filled up with tears; "but now," she resumed, after wiping the tears away with the corner of her apron, "but now, I had no peace night or day about my swearing, mam. I was always fancying that mother was looking at me, with the black look she could put on when she was angered. So I went into Galway, and looked out my aunt's daughter, Joan; and I found that she was married, and had two children, but her husband was 'listed; and, as she was all alone, I asked, her would she come to Achill, and take charge of my things, and my children, whilst I had to go a journey. 'To be sure I will,' says she, 'and thank you, for Galway does not particularly agree with me, nor the children.' (You see, mam, my mother's people came from the other side of Limerick, so they never much warmed to Galway, though there's many a one likes it, and lives well there). So, as she consented, that was off my mind, for she was ready to come when I wanted her; so I agreed that she might as well come at once, to learn my ways.
" 'I then went about Galway a bit, asking questions about you; and there was one Mrs. Maloney, they said, could tell me a good deal. I went to her at once.
" 'You mean Mrs. Maloney in Claddagh Street?" inquired Grace.
" 'Yes, mam, that same. Well, she's a good woman, is that same Mrs. Maloney; and didn't she talk of you, mam, and the kind friend you'd always been to her, when she wanted a friend. 'And what do you want with her?' says she. But you know, mam, I could not let on for fear of angering my mother's spirit if I told her the bad deed that had been done; and then always for the shame, I would not tell. So I thought of Maruth, who used to live with you, and I asked whether she knew was Maruth still with you, for I knew she was friends with Maruth's friends.
" 'Indeed, then, she is,' says she, 'and a good steady girl she is, and a credit to her people, to stick by her missis,' says she. 'You may say that same, Widow Maloney,' says I; 'she comes of a good stock, you see,' says I. 'And so she does,' says she. 'And where will I get her directions?' says I. 'At her sister's,' says she; 'and where else?' says she. 'Then be good enough to have the kindness to tell me,' says I, 'and in what street is her sister living in, if you please?' 'Owen Street,' says she; 'but perhaps you'll stop for a cup of tea,' says she; 'for I'm thankful that I am doing that well that I can give you that same, the Lord be praised, and Mrs. Edward who helped me to the bit of a shop when I was a widow, and got some of the quality to buy their cottons of me.' 'No thank you, kindly, Mrs. Maloney,' says I, 'and its myself that is obliged to you, this day, for your kind offer, but I want to get back to Achill—will you believe me, mam, I let it slip out unthinking, and I felt frightened when I had, for I had been accustomed you see, mam, never to let on where mother and I lived; but I need not have minded, for there was no reason now the poor mother was gone—rest her soul.
" 'I need not tell what passed between Maruth's sister and me; she gave me the directions, and Maruth's last letter to see, and I copied the words on to a bit of paper.
" 'That night I took my cousin and her children home with me, for she was only in lodgings and earned her bread the best she could. I stayed to the home until I thought she knew all my ways, and one of my neighbors promised to see she did all right by my children, and then I began my journey.
CHAPTER XLIII.
" 'I got a passage over to Liverpool, and I've walked all the way from Liverpool to this, for I thought it was more like doing penance for my mother if I walked it, and now, mam," said Katey, throwing herself suddenly on her knees, and clasping her hands together, "now, mam say that you forgive my poor mother the wrong she did you, that her poor soul may rest in peace. Oh! mam, do not refuse me, as you hope to be forgiven."
Grace knelt down for a moment, covering her face with her hands, praying her heavenly father to help her to forgive the dead woman the injury she had done her, and not only her,

but the injury such a bringing up might have done to her son.
After a few minutes she rose up, and laying her hand on Katey's shoulder, she said—"Yes, good daughter, I do forgive, as I hope to be forgiven; and now let us say a 'de profundis' for her poor soul.
With what devotion poor Katey joined in that prayer, and what a calm—what a peace Grace felt as the sweet words of that psalm fell from her lips!
Oh! what a grace; what a blessing comes with that divine and entire forgiveness of injuries. The heart which has throbbled with painful emotion whilst enduring the wrong, as had Grace's so many years; every time that she thought of Nurse O'Birn; now seemed eased of some deadly thing, and as if peace and love took full possession of it. What a weight had been removed! The constant keeping down unkind thoughts, bad wishes for the punishment of the offender, is a most wearisome task, and one which makes "life a pedlar's pack which one would fain put down."
Yes; those heartfelt words, "forgive" and the mountain is removed! Beat on, poor tried heart, all now is peaceful; no more uncertain or subdued throbs of indignation. The heavenly messenger has come with his "peace on earth to men of good will." Oh! cherish your guest, and reap the rich reward of the effort you have made to imitate your model.
After a few minutes Grace rang the bell. "Tell Nurse to come to me! I shall send you with Maruth, Katey, to get some refreshment; I must be alone. However you must stay here with Maruth. I will speak with you again tomorrow!"
What an evening Grace passed! She hardly realized all she had heard; she could hardly put it in order. How much she wished her dear husband was with her—how tiresome that no mail would go out for another week or ten days! How odd that Robert should be in the same fleet as her long lost boy, but yet how lucky; for would it not facilitate the meeting him?
And then she could not help thinking what a strange bringing up for an O'Donnell! So different from what she had anticipated or intended; no teaching but in the desultory manner described! With such an ignorant person as Nurse O'Birn, it was well that he had got even the little he had. Then she began to build castles; that if he was clever, as she was sure he must be, she should soon make up for lost time by having a tutor for him; and then it did not require a very learned man for the sea. It was true that Robert had received a college education—his mother having intended him for the Church, though he had chosen the sea after all. Still Grace had met plenty of naval men who were gentlemanly but not learned, so it did not signify about her Edward; the great point was she should see him again.
Then Grace wondered what the lad himself would think when he found that nurse was not his mother, as Katey had admitted he had always called her. What would he be like?—like poor Edward! would he be fond of her? What would he think of his brothers and sisters, would they be kind and loving to each other? And so Grace would have gone on for hours thinking and wondering forgetful of time, had not her faithful maid, Maruth, come in with some slight refreshment, which she always took at night, and roused her to reality.
" 'Oh! Maruth, has she told you? What a strange story!"
" 'Well, no, mam, I did not encourage her to talk, for the poor thing seemed quite broken down and done up with fatigue. She tells me that she walked all the way from Liverpool; sometimes twenty miles a-day, never less than ten; and her poor feet are in such a dreadful state with blisters that I bathed them, put her to bed, and then gave her a sup of tea in bed! Now she is fast asleep, the poor thing. God help her!"
CHAPTER XLIII.
Grace bade Maruth sit down, and then she told her the pith of Katey's communication. You may be sure that there were plentiful ejaculations of "Oh, dear me! now think of that's!"—Nor must you be astonished that Grace so far unbent to her maid, as to talk of such an event with her; but remember how many years Maruth had been with her! and that this humble but trustworthy friend had been with her when she first lost her child; and knew and took part in all that trouble. So she felt it was a sort of duty to tell Maruth all about it. She knew full well how entire would be her sympathy with her, and what a tender feeling heart beat in her honest, though homely breast.
I may as well finish about Katey, as we shall not want to hear of her again, though I cannot help wishing her well.
She stayed at Heath Cottage for two or three weeks; until, in fact, she was not only rested, but felt vigorous enough to undertake the journey home. Nor, you may be sure, did