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The Mission of Kitty Malone.

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My poverty, but not my will, consents.

SHAKESPEARE.

I had a nestful once of my own,
Ah, happy, happy I!
Right d'ary I loved them, but when they were
grown,
They spread out their wings to fly!

JEAN INGELOW.



It was the Tuesday before Thanksgiving Day. "Tis goin' out ye are, Kitty?" There was nothing in the weak old voice to make Kitty start as she did. She hesitated in her

task of pinning her rusty shawl around her thin shoulders.

"I was that same," she admitted cheerfully. "Tis a beautiful day entirely. The—walk 'ud do me good," she supplemented hastily.

"Faith, no doubt of that. Ye've been kep' in the house pretty close with that long pneumony of mine. Will ye be gone long, alanna?"

There was apprehension in the look Mrs. Malone bent on the white head stooping towards the little sheet-iron stove. When she spoke it was in a manner at once airy and reassuring. "Sur, 'tis quite a step to market, Dennis. I think I'll be goin' to the farthest wan. They do be havin' things there more reasonable-like. It," she paused, the thought of a sin to

be confessed at her Christmas "duty" flashing across in her mind, "it's our Thanksgivin' dinner I'm goin' to—get!" she concluded.

"I wouldn't be after buyin' anythin' extravagant, Kitty," counseled Dennis Malone. He sat huddled forward in the pitiful inertia of age and physical lassitude. "The docther an' medicines must have took a heap of our savin's. I—wouldn't buy what might be called luxuriant, so to spake."

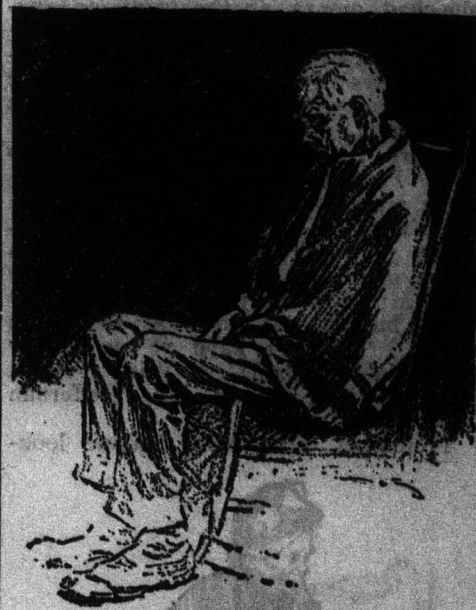
"I won't, Dennis" promised Kitty. She was tying the plain little bonnet on her sleek old head. "You can thrust me for that!" she added with what seemed unnecessary favor. "I—I won't."

She did not leave the room at once. She stood behind him, trembling, cowering, irresolute, a queer agitation convulsing her worn and wrinkled countenance. She looked with blinking eyes at the stooped form in the

vibrant with anxiety. "Is Mary Ellen sick?"

"Not to mention," Mrs. Malone hastened to assert. She was wishing she had not chosen his favorite grandchild to afflict. Only a little—a weeny bit quare-like." She picked up a basket near, and edged towards the door. There she paused, gripping the basket until her knuckles showed white, a slow, distressed flush staining the pale saffron of her cheek. "So—you won't mind if I don't get home for a couple of hours—eh, Dennis?" She broke off. She was swallowing hard. Dennis looked up—met full the eager, penetrating intensity of her gaze. He forced a valiant smile to his bloodless lips. His eyes narrowed into an expression of quizzical leniency. The unflinching courage of his race rang in the kind old voice.

"Tis fine I'll be goin' on, plaze God. Do be steppin' along now, Kitty



"It's like I'll dthrop asleep."

woman! Don't be after givin' me airy a thought. Sure, the stren'th is comin' back in me to bate anythin' ye ever dreamed of. An' what with this illigant lunch—the bit o' bacon, an' the cheese, an' the crackers—not to talk of the tay on the stove fernist me—why it's good enough for the President, Kitty. With the ould blanket on me shouldthers, an' all an' all, it's like I'll dthrop asleep after I've said my decade. I won't be lookin' for ye till past noon. Now don't stand triffin' woman, dear. Gwan! But," his piping voice followed her out of the door, "I wouldn't be gettin' a—luxuriant dinner, so to spake, Kitty!"

Mrs. Malone, skurrying along one of the poor streets that lie south of Van Buren and east of Blue Island Avenue, almost fell over the tattered figure of a boy who seemed to have sprung from the ground at her feet.

"Wisha, where are ye hurryin' to, Mrs. Malone? Is it worse himself is?"

"No—no, Patsy Heffernan. 'Tis—'tis goin' to my juty I am—"

"An' lavin' the church behind ye!" he cried incredulously. "Father Flynn ain't a-hearin' on the river, I'm thinkin'!" Patsy was a merciless inquisitor. Mrs. Malone withered under his frank doubt of her veracity.

"Patsy," she entreated, "you run to the house—do now! I wouldn't inconvenience ye, but it's ye's the most accomadatin' bye in the parish. If ye'd but be waitin' around kind of dis-



"That long pneumony."

rocker, then around the room—the barest, poorest, shabbiest, cleanest little room! The grime of a generation of objectionable tenants had been scrubbed out of the rough boards by Kitty's energetic hands. These same busy hands had polished the few chairs, and made shining the one small window, and kept immaculate the furnishings of the bed in the corner, and fashioned the bright patchwork spread thereon, and prepared the little luncheon—plain and meager enough for a convalescent—which was set forth on a little table drawn beside the old man's chair.

"It may happen," she declared, speaking hurriedly, as though the possibility had just occurred to her, "that I mayn't be back for a—rale good bit, Dennis. 'Tis thinkin' I am of goin' over to see Nora, if 'twould be safe to lave you that long." Then, as she felt his eyes turn slowly in her direction with a sort of questioning surprise. "I—I'm after hearin' Mary Ellen ain't as well as she might be, an'—"

"Eh—Mary Ellen!" His tone was



"Himself."



"What'll ye give me if I do?"

