

THE BLAKES AND FLANAGANS.

BY MRS. JAS. A. SADDLER.

CHAPTER XX.

MR. PEARSON'S IDEA OF CONSCIENCE—TOM REILLY'S SHERIDAN—A RECONCILIATION—MIKE SHERIDAN'S MARRIAGE.

In the course of the next week, Henry Blake happened to hear that there was to be a grand celebration of some kind in St. Peter's Church, on the following Sunday. He, accordingly, went round amongst his friends and made up a party...

Sunday came, and our party set out in good time for St. Peter's, so as to be in for the opening ceremonies, as Henry said. Zach Thomson and his sister were located in Tim Flanagan's pew, to the great annoyance of Ellie, who sat next them.

They were all very attentive during the sermon, but when it was over, and the music had again commenced, great was Ellie's distress and vexation to see Zach turn his back to the altar so as to face the music.

"Well! what do you think of that sermon, Mr. Thomson?" said Henry, as they walked along together after leaving the church.

"Yes, he is considerable of a preacher," said Thomson, with a sagacious shake of the head; "but I don't altogether like his way of talking. He seems to assume too much authority."

Henry laughed, and was about to make some humorous reply, when Edward Flanagan and his father-in-law came up. Margaret was not with them, as she had been to an earlier Mass.

"And why not?" said Edward, quickly. "He is really our master—our master in the science of salvation, and we Catholics are proud to acknowledge our submission to such masters."

"Never mind, father," said Ellie, with a mischievous smile. "John and I will go instead. It is something new," she added, glancing at Mike's blushing face.

"I think I can partly guess what you have to say to us, Mike. Tom Reilly told us of a certain little matter that would all go on swimmingly, only for a certain little difficulty that stands in the way."

"The ice thus broken, Mike became quite resolute all of a sudden, and dashed into his subject with a sort of desperation. You're quite right, Mr. Flanagan, that's just what brought me here."

"Yes, indeed, Mike, we know them all—root and branch," said Tim, "for they're from our own parish at home, and we never knew anything but what was good of them. They belong to the real old stock."

"So Mrs. Reilly tells me," said Mike with a smile. "She seems well acquainted with the family-tree, and thinks highly of it."

"And as for Alice herself," observed Mrs. Flanagan, "she's a nice modest, sensible girl, and I'm sure will make a good wife. One thing is greatly in her favor, she was brought up by a pious, virtuous mother."

"I'm glad to find that you both think so well of Alice, but, unfortunately, our people are altogether opposed to the Byrnes, and, of course, I could never think of marrying Alice without their consent. It seems my father and Mr. Byrne had a sort of falling-out long ago, when both of them used

many eminent men, whose conscience tells them from day to day what the old Quaker said to his son, by way of a parting advice: 'Make money, Obadiah—honestly, if thee can—but be sure thee make it.'

"You may laugh as you will, gentlemen," said Pearson, testily, "but I say again, that all religion is founded on conscience. Conscience is the divine law written on the table of the heart."

"Why, my dear sir," said Edward, "that is just what you told us before, though in different words. Conscience, according to you, the divine law—the law and the Gospel—and the divine law is—conscience. Some other time I shall be happy to renew this interesting subject, but, for the present, we part here. Henry, could you not furnish Mr. Pearson, at your leisure, with some useful hints on conscience? For instance, what manner of conscience poor Hugh Dillon had, and how he came by it. I fear the Common Schools, and your favorite system of mixed education 'could a tale unfold' regarding the peculiar bent of many a conscience. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen!"

"So he took the old gentleman's arm and walked away, with a bow and a smile leaving the others to think and say what they pleased about himself and his peculiar opinions."

"Of whom do you speak, pa?" inquired Jane. "Why, of that young Flanagan, to be sure. His conscience won't allow him to say meat on Friday, and it makes him kneel to a fellow-man to ask pardon for his sins. Now, I have not the slightest doubt but he prays to the Virgin, and all the other old Saints that Papists make so much to do about. Do you really think he does, Henry?"

"I'm quite sure of it," said Henry, laughing. "You could never understand the mysteries of Edward Flanagan's conscience—it is a perfect labyrinth, my dear sir. Only think of his believing it a grievous sin, I might almost say, an unpardonable sin, to miss Mass on Sunday. You couldn't get him to stay outside the church-door five minutes before service commenced, on any conceivable account. No matter how interesting the subject on which he was conversing, the minute he reaches the church door, in he goes. And as for entering a Protestant place of worship, his conscience would denounce that as *totum*. It is just the same with the whole family of the Flanagans. They are a good sort of people in their way, but so precise in their notions of religion, so exceedingly conscientious, if you will, that you cannot get one of them an inch from the track."

A little later in the afternoon, Mike Sheridan called at Tim Flanagan's, and, after some preliminary conversation, asked Tim, in a low voice, if he couldn't have a word with him and Mrs. Flanagan in private.

"Certainly," said Tim, standing up. "Nelly dear," to his wife, "Mike wants to speak to us. Come into the next room a minute."

"Never mind, father," said Ellie, with a mischievous smile. "John and I will go instead. It is something new," she added, glancing at Mike's blushing face.

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to take a little drop, and they never altogether made it up. I know my mother thinks well enough of Alice, but she doesn't like to say against my father. Now you know, Mr. Flanagan, it is not very hard to bring my dear father to reason—his heart is so good—so I just want you to put in a word for me. He may speak a little hard or so, at first, against the Byrnes, but you know as well as I do that he has no malice or wickedness in him against any human being, and if all falls you, you can bring him round at once on the score of religion. He'll not go beyond that. You may tell him, too, that it would make me so happy if he'd only give his consent, for I'm sure Alice Byrne is just the girl that would suit me."

"Well! and how does her pulse beat?" asked Tim, slyly. "I hope you have no dislike to the Sheridan's—oh! Mike?"

"Mike reached over the table for his hat, and the smile that brightened his handsome features was more expressive than any words."

"Oh! as to that," said he, twirling his hat between his hands, "as to that, I must only take my chance. I'm willing to try my luck with Alice."

"But why don't you get Father Power to talk to your father," said Tim. "I'll do what I can, and I have great hopes of succeeding; but you know yourself that one word from the priest would do more than if any one else was preaching for a year to him."

"I know that well enough," replied Mike; "but if I can help it, I don't want to speak my father's consent. I'm leaving that for the last chance."

"And why so, Mike?" said Mrs. Flanagan. "Why, because, ma'am I don't want to let Father Power know anything about the coolness—at least, if I can help it. He might think ill of father, on account of it, and I'd be sorry for that, for he's a good, kind father as any in New York."

"God bless you, Mike," said Mrs. Flanagan, "you were always a good son, and your luck will be the better for it."

Tim said nothing, but he shook Mike's hand so warmly at parting, that Mike went away with the full consciousness of his approbation.

Mike had hardly turned the corner of the street when he came Mrs. Reilly, brimful of the news. Mrs. Flanagan would have persuaded her to take off her bonnet and stay a while, but no! she was on her way to Vespers, and just came out a little before Tom to step in and see how they all were.

"But that's true, says Mrs. Reilly, as if suddenly remembering something, 'did you hear of the match that's on foot?'"

"What match?" said Tim, evasively. "Why, Mike Sheridan and Alice Byrne. They say it's going to be, for certain. What are you laughing at, Ellie—you and John?"

"We were thinking of poor Tom," said John. "Isn't it too bad that Mike should out him out, and be the first in the field?"

Mrs. Flanagan looked reproachfully at the young people, but it was too late. Mrs. Reilly's dignity was already up in arms. "You're under a great mistake, John," said she, sharply. "Tom Reilly has no such notions in his head. If every one thought as little of marriage as he does, it might be well for them—'ye hear that now?'"

"And, another thing, John, if Tom Reilly thought fit to look after Alice Byrne, it isn't Mike Sheridan she'd be taking, though I have nothing to say to Mike—he's a very good lad—in his own way."

"But he isn't Tom Reilly, Sally dear!" said Tim, with his usual smile. "You've just said it, Tim. I'll say that for Tom Reilly—though I am his mother, and by right shouldn't say it—that there's not many girls in New York city good enough for him. No body knows his goodness as well as I do," added the mother, with a flushed cheek, and a moistened eye.

The smiles were all banished in an instant, and there was no irony, only all sincerity in the general assurance that Tom's virtues were known and appreciated by all who knew him.

"It is, mother, and it shall have a plain answer," said Tom, though he was evidently unprepared for such a question. "We didn't exactly keep company—that is—he hesitated."

"That is," said his mother, taking him up, "you didn't exactly go courting to Alice, but there was a sort of a liking between you—eh, Tom?"

Thus driven into a corner, Tom turned sharp round and put the best face he could on the matter. "As for Alice, mother, I can't say; the poor fellow's voice quivered, for he could say, if he liked, 'but as for myself, I can't deny that I once had a liking for her.'"

"And I suppose you have still," said the mother, with more petulance than she had ever before shown; "I see it as plain as can be. I suppose if Alice had consented, I'd have had a daughter-in-law in on me before now. That's my thanks for staying as I am, and all on your account, Tom, when I might have had a comfortable home of my own. It's just the way you ought to serve me."

Tom appeared greatly distressed. He pushed away his cup and saucer from before him, drew his chair back from the table, and appeared altogether like one who was making a desperate effort. "Mother," said he, "you do me wrong—indeed, you do! I never thought of giving you a daughter-in-law—upon my word, I did not."

"Well, and how was it that people got a talking about it?" "I'll just tell you the plain truth, mother, as you can hear something of it, though I'd just as soon you had not. There was a time when I took a great notion of Alice Byrne, and I said to myself that I was sure you'd be well pleased to have her for a daughter-in-law, but when I came to turn the matter over in my mind, I thought you'd just as soon I'd marry any one, and that as we were so quiet and so happy now, it would be wise for me to run the risk of disturbing that peace. Tom spoke out, and I said to myself that I was sure you'd be well pleased to have her for a daughter-in-law, but when I came to turn the matter over in my mind, I thought you'd just as soon I'd marry any one, and that as we were so quiet and so happy now, it would be wise for me to run the risk of disturbing that peace. 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