

THE RETURN OF MARY O'MURROUGH

BY ROSA MULHOLLAND
Author of "The Tragedy of Chris," "Nanno," "Onora," etc.

CHAPTER XVI
I'M NOT THE WIFE FOR HIM

Mary was in O'wry's field attending to the newly weaned lambs and their mothers, white clouds sailing in the blue overhead, and a wooden bowl of primroses lying on the young green grass beside her.

The fresh wind had brought a tinge of rose to her cheek, and loosened the dark hair into little rings about her face. Anyone looking on would have questioned whether some afternoon, and others who had no recognized business made it their pleasure to drop in at the proper moment for gossip or argument or for mere lounging, while the qualified talkers of the neighborhood told the latest news or spoke their minds. A few of the better off among them subscribed for one copy of a leading Dublin weekly journal, which was forwarded to Mr. Tom Donohoe, at the forge, Killelagh, and its arrival was looked on as the event of the week.

On a memorable Saturday evening, the usual gathering at the forge was taking place, and a group of the most ardent local political characters stood in front of the flamed doorway to watch the approach of the postboy on his bicycle, the messenger of the gods, bearing gifts.

"There's news in that worth carryin'!" said the boy, springing from his wheel and tossing a bulky paper to the blacksmith. "Killelagh for ever! The band from Anamotte in Ballyorglin, playin' Hervey Duff before the barrack; an' Hourigan's bolter! I darn't stop, for I have to bring the news to Father Fahy, long life to him!"

Tom put the paper in his leather apron jacket, in defiance of the swarm of eager faces pressing round him.

"Wait a minute till I settle this fella, for the iron's hot!" he said; and nobody ventured to gainsay him while he finished his job of the shoeing of a neighbor's "jinnel."

"That done, the hammer was flung on the anvil with a resounding bang, and the paper was unfolded.

"It's thrus, boys, sure enough! A ruction in Parliament. Here's the paragraph—

"A question has been asked in the House of Commons concerning the affair of the maiming of the cattle of a man named Rorke, at Killelagh, Co. Kerry, an outrage for which Shan Sullivan, a small farmer in the neighborhood, has been many months in prison. It now appears from evidence recently obtained, that the outrage was telegraphed to Dublin Castle by the police at Ballyorglin several hours before it was committed, and Sergeant Hourigan is accused of being the perpetrator. Our report of the proceedings in the House of Commons will be found in another column."

"The report of a 'ruction' at Westminstere over the affairs of Killelagh was read and re-read, and the probable outcome of it was the argument of the evening. All the evidence worked up by Father Fahy had been put before the House, including the sworn statement of Rorke and his servant that the cattle were unharmed in the field an hour before the perpetration of the crime. Judging by the report of the reception of the matter in Parliament, very little attention had been paid to it."

"For all that," said Miles Donohoe, "they'll have to release Shan, an' put Hourigan on his trial."

"No, my boy, that isn't their way of workin', said Tom. "Hourigan 'll be kep' hidin' for a while, an' Shan 'll be let out, when his year's up, on the score of good conduct in prison. They'll be terrible generous to him an' forgive him the other two years, on condition he behaves himself and houghs no more cattle."

"Aye, an' Hourigan 'll be brought back some day and promoted," said old Rorke. "Wasn't there plenty of the same rascalidly done in the old time, twenty year ago. Was the telegraph ever aisy a minute sendin' up outrages that nobody ever seen anybody doin'?"

"Thrus for you," said another man, "an' it was all to stop Home Rule. An' now when they think Home Rule's gettin' its head up, want me to be the man to put a spoke in the wheel again. Didn't the polis tell Jake Finucane that outrages was lookin' up, and there was want of a bigger force in Ballyorglin?"

"God knows, I don't see what way Ireland's goin' to steer her ship at all, at all," said another; "between big rents an' emigration, an' government that hides criminals an' punishes innocent men, an' pays polis to cut the legs an' tails o' dumb beasts—"

"It's a pity they didn't hear y'," said old Rorke. "I knew a man that died in prison in the eighties for sayin' not half as much."

"Things is better than that now," said Tom Donohoe. "We're not goin' back, if we aren't runnin' forward faster than the snails."

"Maybe we're not goin' forward at all, said Rorke. "I was in the Fenians myself. I was always in wan thing or another. But there's nothin' to be in now."

"We are goin' forward, maintained Tom. "We've got a good many things since the Fenian days, thanks to them, an' some that came after them. Thanks to Parnell, an' thanks to Dillon an' O'Brien, the two that did Parnell's heaviest work; and thanks to great John Mandeville, that put his big shoulder to the wheel, left his young wife an' child, and his good home an' means, an' got his death out o' what he suffered in prison. Little we'd had got, even o' what we have got, only for them an' the likes of them—God rest them that's gone, and spare the remaind'ers!"

"What ha' we got?" asked Rorke sullenly.

"A good few small things, goin' before the big thing that's comin'." Did y' iver watch the gulls in a long frost when they do come in to land-

ward from the big rivers, lookin' for meat? First y'll see one, high up in the air with his wings spread like sails, an' movin' grand, as if the heavens belonged to him. Then there folls another, then two, by an' by three, an' next half a dozen together. Whatever sign the first fella makes to the others, accordin' to what he sees, the flock moves cautiously after him, this way—and when all's found encouragin', y'll see the big swarm floatin' up like a rain cloud spreadin' an' darkenin' the sky—an' a mighty sight it is, nobody denyin' it to the glory of the Maker."

"It's thrus for you!" said several voices, struck by the homely and familiar illustration.

"Well then, haven't we got the County Councils? Did the Grand Juries ever mend the roads for us, set up the gates an' fences? Haven't we the manes o' sendin' our own members into Parliament in a sacreyty between ourselves an' God? We've more votes, an' more power; an' them that suffers for thryin' to put spirit into us can wear their own clothes when they're in prison. That's a small thing in itself, maybe, but it's a sign o' the times."

"An' about the gulls, Father, said Miles, laughing; "do y' see the swarm comin'?"

"I do," said Tom; "slow enough, to be sure, but comin'."

"It'll be always comin'," cried Rorke contemptuously. "Who will ever see it come?"

"You're an old Fenian!" cried Tom cheerily. "It's a pity that men like you won't believe in anything they didn't do their own way. You done enough man, in your time, an' y' must let other times do for themselves in their turn."

"When you were talkin, o' what we goy," said one of the listeners, "why didn't you put it into the emigration that we got lave to wear the shamrogs?"

"Well, if we did, sure we could wear it as always done? Didn't they make it the fashion, an' the little girshas earnin' a small penny here an' there pickin' it out o' the grass an' sendin' it across the water?"

"Sure they put it on the same shatram as our Drizly-ey's primroses!" said another listener.

"Ather that, why would we be talkin' about sich thrifles as the likes o' Home Rule?"

"None of us here 'll ever see it," grumbled Rorke.

"Speak for yourself, man!" said Tom. "An' even if we don't, isn't there other men nor us to be livin' in Killelagh in many's the year to come?"

"Faith an' then, 'll be English or Scotchmen, they'll be the big emigration is puttin' sentence o' death on the old Irish race. Where's the childer to come from, I wonder? When was there a young woman's weddin' in Killelagh?"

Mary shrank behind Bees, who fixed her gaze on the speaker with two angry tears standing large in her hazel eyes. Meg hugged her babe and rocked it while she listened, as if fearing that the exigencies of such a time would rise up and snatch it away from her.

"I done my part," said Tom, glancing at the odd half dozen gambolling on the outskirts of the gathering.

"You're always boastin'," growled Rorke; and after that the discussion became too general and a little too clamorous to be easily reported.

The next day, being Sunday, Father Fahy spoke from the altar of the event of the hour, to wit, the asking of a question about Killelagh in the English House of Parliament. He thanked Providence that we had men to bring our wrongs and our difficulties before the world, which was such a mighty place compared with our little hillside in Kerry. A hateful act had been done among us, and a man respected and honored by his neighbors had been accused of the crime. If that evil deed had been done by a Killelagh man, all of us as Killelagh men would have shared in the disgrace. But it was not done by a Killelagh man. The identity of the criminal had been surely pointed out, but as Christians we were not going to cry for vengeance. This man who had offended his God more than his fellow-men would be dealt with by God. The thing we have to rejoice over now is that our own Killelagh man is cleared before the world, and that we may expect to have him back among us soon.

"Now boys," continued the Father, "some of you will be going off to Ballyorglin today, to take your part in some kind of a demonstration of joy and triumph over this affair, and I can't blame you. But I give you a warning not to make a riot. If anyone is hurt or knocked about through your excitement, you and I and all belonging to us will be put in the wrong. Remember it is God's holy day, and don't be swallowin' strong drink and taking leave of your senses. Oh, and if that same drink could all be put in one big cask and sunk to the bottom of the sea, it would be well for Ireland. We have good hearts and good will, and we have the faith, and Satan would have to give up his chance of our souls as a bad job, if he hadn't got the drink to fool us."

A special prayer was then offered for peace, and after the service the Father went out into the chapel yard, in his shabby old soutane and cap, and walked about among the men, chatting with them and hearing their views on the latest movements of "the politics."

"Oh, then, Father Fahy may say what he likes," said Mrs. Dermody,

as she took the bacon out of the pot for dinner, "but there'll be ructions in Ballyorglin to-night. Sure it isn't in flesh and blood to see such things goin on an' not make a row about it? If I was there myself, I think I wouldn't be too sorry to see the polis gettin' a broken head or two out of the business."

"It would only get them that did it into trouble," said Meg Donohoe, who had stopped at Mrs. Dermody's to rest on her way home from the chapel, Tom having gone off to Ballyorglin with the rest of the men.

Here's Mary that has most of the reason to be mad about it all, an' not a word is she sayin' while the whole of us is talkin'."

"She's that glad about Shan, she can't speak," said Anne Bridget, emptying the pot of potatoes into a wooden dish.

"What would y' say, Mary, if you were to speak?" asked Bees laughing. "Many a one would be clappin' her hands with joy to think of him gettin' out."

"Shan'll never be content if he's let out in the way they talked about last night," said Mary—"on condition he behaves himself and houghs no more cattle. That won't be clearin' his character."

"Oh, he'll have to take what he gets an' be thankful," said Mrs. Dermody. "It's better to be outside a gaol than in it, any way you look at it."

The "ruction" anticipated by a good many, including Father Fahy, did not fail to take place that evening in Ballyorglin. The band from Anamotte, with harp and green ribbons flying on top of its band staff, was drawn up in front of the police barrack, playing every tune ever set to words contemptuous of the force, from "The Peeler and the Goat" to "Hervey Duff."

At every pause in the fitting and drumming there were cries for Hourigan. At last the crowd around the barrack included nearly everyone in the town, the insulting merriment became every moment more fast and furious, and the derided "polis" issued forth with their batons and battered their tormentors.

Father Fahy's warning had been much needed, but without avail. The fiers and drummers, the jibers and jesters, were decidedly put in the wrong, and Killelagh and Ballyorglin got a particularly bad mark from the newspaper organs of law and order next morning.

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Little by little, as I visited the sick man, she told me of his history. They had been sweethearts in Ireland over fifty years ago. James was a laborer and the countryside looked forward to the wedding. But a business man came from Belfast to settle in the village of James and Mary. He took charge of an establishment which employed twenty men. He had means and position, and he looked at Mary with longing eyes. And Mary cast off James and married the business man. Then James moved away to another village miles distant.

Twenty two years Mary lived with her husband and then he died. Three years after the death James reappeared in the village and paid court to Mary. James was now a farmer, owning his own land. He had never married. So Mary accepted of him.

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"Was he much of a drinker?" I asked.

Mrs. Fitz looked annoyed. "He lived here thirteen years," she said; "maybe he took drink, but I never saw him, and never heard his voice raised in this house. Everyone in this house would do anything for him. But for her."

"That day when I entered the sick man's room, I found a man of my own age sitting there. He greeted me pleasantly, and introduced himself as the employer of James. When I had ended my visit, the man accompanied me to the street. There he spoke, to ask if anything could be done to restore James to health. I answered that it was unfortunate, but true, that nothing could be done by mortal means. James was soon to die. The man shook his head sadly. Again he inquired if anything might be tried to ameliorate the condition of the sick man. Would a trained nurse help? Would removal to a private hospital be useful? Could James endure a journey to a better climate?"

I admitted that, perhaps, removal to a hospital, where the sick man would not be subjected to the incessant complaining of his nagging wife would benefit the patient, but I thought James would not leave his home—nor her. He loves her too much to leave her. I said; "He knows he has to die, and the only thing that would make him part from her would be to ease her, to make her days more comfortable. That I am convinced he would do, even though it meant additional suffering for him. But I'll never suggest his going out of that room. There is where he wants to die."

The employer walked along with me and told me that anything I could suggest to relieve the sick man would be cheerfully paid for by him, the speaker. When I said it was unusual to find so great consideration for an employee, the gentleman stood still for a moment, and then said: "Doctor, let me tell you about this man, James Acheson."

And as we walked, he told me how James came to work for the speaker's father, the first and only employment of Acheson in America. A faithful workman, never late, never complaining, always reliable, such was James. Year in and year out he worked and never took a vacation; was never sick, and never shirked. In time came the big panic of 1893, when the savings banks shut off immediate payments, compelling depositors to wait sixty days, when free soup houses were established in many parts of the city, and coal was sold in scores of relief stations, at twenty-five pounds for five cents. Men with money in business banks who wished to have their own checks cashed had to draw a check for 2% above the amount of cash they wished, in order to have their own money given to them. There was increasing disaster, day by day. There were failures upon failures. The country was full of idle and needy men.

The father of the speaker laid off some men, then some more men. Money was tight, orders shrank, cancellations increased, and debts were uncollectible. Failure was looming up. Cessation of business was inevitable. His money and credit was exhausted. He called in the four men remaining at work, and informed them that the plant would close on Saturday. They must seek work, if obtainable, elsewhere. The end was in sight.

One of the four men was James Acheson. He spoke up and told his employer that all the money he had ever earned in America had come from that employer, that there were \$3,000 of it saved up in the bank and that the employer was welcome to it, as a gift or a loan, it would help or save the gentleman from ruin. The employer was momentarily stunned. The generosity of the offer was magnificent, but he shrank from taking the earnings of his workman and risking them. James said that and argued with his employer. He persuaded the gentleman to accept the offer of the money as a loan, but the employer told James that he could not get the money from the savings bank, because the banks were not paying out money on immediate presentation of drafts, and sixty days would be too late.

But James said he would try to get the money, and get it he did. The bank officials questioned him. He had never drawn a dollar, and now he wanted \$3,000. Was it fear of the bank's soundness? Did he desire to hoard the money?

James told the truth, and because the bank officials correctly estimated the man, the bank paid him the \$3,000, waiving the sixty day rule. The loan saved the employer from failure. And said the speaker: "Of course, my father repaid James the money. But he could never properly repay the debt or reward James for the risk he took or the affection that prompted the offer. James has been a watchman, not a laborer, for some years, but my father told me, three years ago, before his death, to keep James always on the payroll, sick or well, to see that neither he nor his wife ever came to want. I am paying him his salary every week now, but that is nothing. Can't I do something more for James Acheson?"

No, he could not. The old man declined to have a nurse brought into the small apartment. He looked at Mary when he said to me: "Doctor, I don't want to go to the hospital. I want to die here, where Mary is."

For once the old woman was silent. But she came out in the hallway with me, as I left, and lamented her

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I admitted that, perhaps, removal to a hospital, where the sick man would not be subjected to the incessant complaining of his nagging wife would benefit the patient, but I thought James would not leave his home—nor her. He loves her too much to leave her. I said; "He knows he has to die, and the only thing that would make him part from her would be to ease her, to make her days more comfortable. That I am convinced he would do, even though it meant additional suffering for him. But I'll never suggest his going out of that room. There is where he wants to die."

The employer walked along with me and told me that anything I could suggest to relieve the sick man would be cheerfully paid for by him, the speaker. When I said it was unusual to find so great consideration for an employee, the gentleman stood still for a moment, and then said: "Doctor, let me tell you about this man, James Acheson."

And as we walked, he told me how James came to work for the speaker's father, the first and only employment of Acheson in America. A faithful workman, never late, never complaining, always reliable, such was James. Year in and year out he worked and never took a vacation; was never sick, and never shirked. In time came the big panic of 1893, when the savings banks shut off immediate payments, compelling depositors to wait sixty days, when free soup houses were established in many parts of the city, and coal was sold in scores of relief stations, at twenty-five pounds for five cents. Men with money in business banks who wished to have their own checks cashed had to draw a check for 2% above the amount of cash they wished, in order to have their own money given to them. There was increasing disaster, day by day. There were failures upon failures. The country was full of idle and needy men.

The father of the speaker laid off some men, then some more men. Money was tight, orders shrank, cancellations increased, and debts were uncollectible. Failure was looming up. Cessation of business was inevitable. His money and credit was exhausted. He called in the four men remaining at work, and informed them that the plant would close on Saturday. They must seek work, if obtainable, elsewhere. The end was in sight.

One of the four men was James Acheson. He spoke up and told his employer that all the money he had ever earned in America had come from that employer, that there were \$3,000 of it saved up in the bank and that the employer was welcome to it, as a gift or a loan, it would help or save the gentleman from ruin. The employer was momentarily stunned. The generosity of the offer was magnificent, but he shrank from taking the earnings of his workman and risking them. James said that and argued with his employer. He persuaded the gentleman to accept the offer of the money as a loan, but the employer told James that he could not get the money from the savings bank, because the banks were not paying out money on immediate presentation of drafts, and sixty days would be too late.

But James said he would try to get the money, and get it he did. The bank officials questioned him. He had never drawn a dollar, and now he wanted \$3,000. Was it fear of the bank's soundness? Did he desire to hoard the money?

James told the truth, and because the bank