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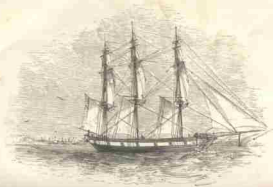
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THE
SHAMROCK FLOWER:

AN IRISH GIRL IN AMERICA.

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THE
SHAMROCK FLOWER.

CHAPTER I.

FORMER MISERY OF IRELAND—JOHN SLANEY'S CHARACTER AND DEATH—EMIGRATION OF HIS FAMILY TO AMERICA.

TWELVE years ago the little village of B., in Ireland, was enjoying more than its usual prosperity. The owner of Castle B., and of the broad estates around it, was absent with his family in a foreign land, and all his affairs were left in the hands of an agent. This man, presenting a striking contrast to those generally forming his class, and

being naturally easy and good-tempered, attended to the little wants of the peasantry around him; and if any were unable to meet their rent on the day of payment, he gave them no trouble but waited their convenience. He was a jolly sort of man, more fond of fox-hunting, horse-racing, and wine drinking than of attending to the business committed to his care. So, for the time being, he made the tenants so happy, that every mouth was filled with his praise. When the people carried in their rents, he always treated them to a glass of punch or Irish whisky, and we presume that few prayers were sent up to the patron-saint for the nobleman's safe return. Thus, even after the surrounding neighborhoods began to complain of diminished crops and increased rents, the humble inhabitants of B. still boasted loudly of their prosperity.

But alas, alas, for poor, beautiful

Ireland! How many a cloud has overshadowed her green fields,—how many a blight has fallen on her shamrock flowers, and withered the hearts of her lowly children in these last sad ten or fifteen years. Nor did the people of B. escape the general desolation. The agent having, by high living and improvidence, wasted much of the money entrusted to him, and hearing of his lordship's anticipated return, became almost distracted. In an evil hour, to escape the wrath of the lord of B., he took his own life. That one pistol shot, which sent him into eternity, scattered horror and dismay throughout all the little town. The people mourned his loss, for agents are in general the curse of Ireland's poor, and this man's place would not likely be filled by one so merciful to them as he had been. Besides this, they now began to look for receipts for money and grain they had

given him. But although he had treated them so kindly, both he and they had been very careless in this respect, and they had few or none to show. Many of the farmers had neglected to get their leases renewed, for the common people can not own their farms as in our happy country; and as the improvements had been great since his lordship's departure, they trembled at the thought of an increase of rent.

Their worst fears were more than realized, when, soon after the agent's death, the nobleman reached home with a long train of French and Italian servants. His poor tenantry flocked round the castle,—not to welcome him home, but to assure him that they had fulfilled their obligations in his absence, and to entreat him not to demand the acknowledgments of the agent. But he coolly replied that he should demand full rent of every man who could not show his

quarterly receipts for the amount. This threw the whole of the tenantry into the deepest distress. Their homes, whether stone cottages or mud hovels, were dear to their hearts, and the thought of banishment was to them worse than death. Then they fled to the priest to ask his intercession; but alas, he was not to be found. While the poor scattered flock were in such distress, the shepherd who had charge of their souls was comfortably seated at the castle, drinking a "welcome home" to the imperious oppressor.

In the height of despair, some heartless men fled to more favored parts, leaving their helpless families to beggary and starvation. Others spent their days and their last shilling at the village inn, while a few old women, who had no earthly helper, went, in their ignorance, many times a day to the open chapel, to count their beads, cross themselves with

holy water, repeat "Ave Marias," and kiss the picture of the Virgin Mother and Holy Child. There was one man, however, wiser than the rest. He occupied one of the largest farms, and many of the poorer class were employed by him as laborers. He was sober, honest, and industrious, and they, acknowledging his superior wisdom, now fled to him for counsel. They hinted that perhaps a *huge riot*, the burning of his lordship's out-buildings, or the poisoning of his carriage horses, might bring him to terms. Then a dark frown gathered on the brow of honest John Slaney, and he asked, "And where do ye think, neighbors, is the Almighty gone that he wouldn't see yer fearful wickedness? Because ye have lost yer homes on earth, do ye mane to lose a place for your souls above? Fear God more than man and go home and pray to Him, for the heart

o' this tyrant is in His hands." And he went in and closed his cottage door.

John Slaney, although a catholic in name, feared God, and as far as he knew the way, strove to obey Him. He was an honest man and the son of an honest man, and it was his boast that none who belonged to him was ever accused of a mean action. He was stern in his view of right, and often gave the village priest no little trouble on this account. He did not hesitate to avow his opinion that priests were bound to be as moral as other men, and to declare that were he a priest, "with such a power upon his head, he'd soon throw out the company at the inn, and drive the people to work." John and his father and grandfather, had all been born and reared on the same spot. The poor man's heart had grown to the place, and could not be torn away without many a bleeding wound. He looked abroad from the cot-

tage door upon his home, so beautiful and prosperous. Having been in the possession of such men for nearly a century, it was small wonder that it looked so unlike the farms around it. While others had spent their holidays and leisure hours in begging, poaching, or lounging round the inn, he and his ancestors were planting trees, trimming hedges, or training vines. Just before this great affliction he had trimmed anew the hedge-row, which in Ireland sometimes takes the place of fences. Roses, honeysuckles, and many trees and shrubs of ancient planting, now cast their shade, and sent their fragrance around the place. The potato field was in full bloom, promising a plentiful harvest,—his sheep, heavy with their snowy fleece, grazed in full view, beside his cattle, and on them he was gazing when intruded on by his riotous neighbors. He entered his cottage. True it had only the earth

for its floor, and four panes composed its largest window. The uncovered beams were dark and low, and the roof was only a thatching of straw. But oh, it was *home*, and now its real defects seemed beauties in the eyes of those who dwelt there.

The farmer hung his hat on its accustomed peg, and sat down, striving to look brave and unconcerned. But the sobs and groans of his wife and eldest daughter increased when they saw him. They filled the air with such howlings and wailings as Ireland's excitable daughters only raise over the beloved dead. But little Kathleen, or "our Shamrock flower," as John was wont to call her, sat on a low stool beside her mother, pale and tearless. Her grief was as deep as theirs, but it sprang from a cause less earthly.

"Nelly, woman," asked John, "where is your heart gone? ye that always had

full and plenty when yer neighbors were starving,—ye that never asked a thing from God in yer life but ye got it,—does it become the like o' ye, to fly thus in the face o' the Almighty when yer own day of adversity comes? It is aisy for the like o' ye," he continued, holding aloft his brawny arm, "ye that's got such an arm to lane upon, and such a sthrong heart as this"—and he struck his breast—"to care for ye and yer childer. What think ye will come o' poor Nora Phalan with her sick child, and himself run away? Sure it was hard luck for a dacent girl to live *with* the likes o' Mike, but it's harder still to live *without* him. Do ye think yer husband will let ye stharve, Nelly?"

"No, indade," said Nelly Slaney, "if hard work will kape us from stharvation; but what good is a sthrong arm if a man has no land to work on? Ye can't stay here ye know, John."

"Nor do I want to stay," replied he. "No, I'll never be the tenant o' a villain and a tyrant. Sure, Nelly dear, my seed would rot in his earth before it would come up. Ye can't get a crop without God's blessing, and I don't believe his sun will shine nor his rain fall here as in other days. Sure, I'll sell every thing we own but our beds, and I'll take ye to *Ameriky*. Oh! but that's the free land where there's justice for the poor. I wouldn't stay in B. now if his lordship would give me the farm. No! I'd never more hear the mass nor take the sacrament from a priest who strikes hands with the oppressor, and forsakes his flock in the hour of need."

"Holy Mother," exclaimed Nelly Slaney, "wasn't it only the *manest* o' the people here as wint to *Ameriky*? wasn't it mostly workhouse paupers and beggars? and more nor that, *dacent* man that ye are, John, ye have nothing to

sell, for sure Biddy Roach told me all the cattle and sheep is to be driven to the castle to-night. Blessed Mary, help us!" muttered the poor woman. John sprang to his feet, and reaching to a huge beam over head took down a heavy hammer and a box of nails. "His lordship will not stale my *crathers*, for I'll dthrive them in and nail the doors. I'll sell them to the best advantage, and then, if he's not *afeared* o' God, he may *stale* part o' the money, and I'll pay our passages with the rest."

Again Nelly and Maggie sent forth another howling lamentation. "Oh, poor lamby," cried Nelly, stroking the yellow hair of her youngest born, "how will ye with yer faint heart *iver* cross the angry sea? Och, och, but I'm awful *afeared* o' the tempest on the ocean."

"Och, mother, dear," replied the little girl, "sure it's not the sea that I *dthread*. Sure that can niver swallow us without

* God's *lave*. Oh, it's the *dthreadful Protestants* that I fear; it must be an awful thing to live among a people cursed o' God."

"Holy Mother, *kape* the Protestants from murdering my children, or ruining their souls!" exclaimed poor Nelly, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to Heaven.

Now, sensible and well-meaning as these people were, they really believed that of all foes they could meet this side of the infernal regions, the Protestants were most to be dreaded. The cause of this belief was ignorance. They had been told that all out of the Catholic church were a God-forgetting, a God-defying people, all doomed to endless perdition; and having never been acquainted with a Protestant, how should they know to the contrary?

Oh, how little they knew of the true Gospel; how little of the vast gulf which

lies between the churches of Christ and Anti-Christ. How differently would they have felt in that hour of anguish, could they have only known how many kind hearts on this side the water were waiting to welcome Ireland's exiled poor; how many sacrifices were made here to send bread to her hungry children; and how many prayers followed the ships that bore it; prayers, that they might also receive that bread which cometh down from Heaven, which if a man eat, he shall no more hunger. But they were ignorant of all this, and looked to this happy land as to a place of spiritual night.

John had disposed of all his little property, and made arrangements for his voyage. But his grain was ripe and waving brightly over the field, and, heart-sick and weary though he was, he must gather it in. He engaged ten reapers and began his last day's harvesting. But

ere the sun had risen high in the heavens, he began to feel that the last week's anguish of heart had weakened his arm. He left the field, entered his cottage, handed his purse to his wife, saying, "Nelly, I'm ill; when the men have done, pay them; pay them well, too, and don't let the cry o' the poor enter God's ear against us. Let me go to my bed, and if it's God's will to take *me* as well as the home, from ye, mind, Nelly, *that ye* don't speak back to the Almighty, for he has a right to do as he will with his own. Bring up the children to fear God, and to love their fellow *crathers*."

It was in vain that Nelly begged to send for the priest. "No, poor woman," he replied. "God will hear me as loves and trusts him sooner than he will him as fears neither God nor man. Trust alone in Jesus Christ and ye'll all be safe, Nelly"—and he sunk upon his pillow.

At nightfall the laborers came in; but a mightier reaper than they had been there before them, and the shadow of his dark wing still rested on the cottage. The fond and faithful man was gone,—his heart was broken,—and those he loved were now desolate indeed.

Just as the sun was sinking, poor Nelly, affectionate though unreconciled, had softly opened the door of the room in which her husband was lying. “John, dear heart,” she said, “if *yer* head still aches so fearful, ye would better sit up on the side o’ the bed, drink a good draught o’ warm tea, and then take off *yer* clothes for the night—don’t *ye* fail now, or we’ll all be dead entirely.”

“Ye’ll have the *widdy’s* God left ye, if I *goes*, Nelly; *kape* near to Him; and may the blessing of the Almighty be iver upon ye, my beloved wife, and upon the two *darlins* he has *sint* us. Amen.”

These last words the good man uttered

as he raised himself in bed according to his wife's request. His eyes were lifted to the Heavens whence cometh help, and his hands tightly clasped as if in earnest and trustful prayer. It was his dying admonition, his parting blessing. When Nelly returned with his toast and tea he had fallen back on his pillow. "I'm faint, jewel," he said, "lift me up." The agonized wife bent down to aid him, when he clasped her neck with the strength of death. He was gone beyond the power of the tyrant to molest or oppress.

The sudden death of his best tenant put a check on the outrages of the cruel nobleman. When told that Slaney's grain was gathered, he said to his cruel agent, "Let it be now; the poor creatures have no protector; they will need it all."

Their passage to America was paid, and why should they remain in B. when the only heart that had beat for them lay

low and cold in the little church-yard? They raised a simple stone cross on his grave, planted a myrtle vine, and said their last prayers beside it. They left their homes in the darkness of night, for Nelly said, "Sure, it would wring the blood afresh oot o' our hearts to see John's grave as we passed, and know that we were *lavin'* it forever. Oeh, but he was the best friend that ever we had."



CHAPTER II.

VOYAGE—ARRIVAL—FRIENDS IN A STRANGE LAND.

OH, the agony of fear, and helplessness of sickness, which these poor people endured on the sea! Nelly and Meggie gave voice to their woe whenever the tempests rocked the ship in their fury.

"Oh, Kathleen, jewel," the mother would say to her younger daughter, "how can ye sit there with *yer* little fingers clasped and *yer* swate eyes looking downlike, just as ye used to do at home on *yer* blessed father's knee? Don't ye know, honey, that ye are like to go to the bottom o' the sea, just now?"

"If it would be God's will I'd like to go down there afore I loses my

soul, mother dear; may be I'd go to my father then. But *och!* this going among a people accursed o' God to *arn yer bread*, is a fearful thing. Didn't father Murphy tell us a *hoondered* times that one half our *paple* as *wint* to Ameriky, left the *Hooly Church* and lost their *sowls!* Oh Holy Mother, *keape* us from the hour o' *timptation!*"

"Father Murphy *indade!*" exclaimed poor Nelly, forgetting her fear of the storm in her contempt of the man: "I'd trust *me soul* sooner in the hand o' the Protestants themselves, than in his. *Och!* but he was the *mane* and wicked *writch* as forsook the poor as had half *stharved* themsilves to make a *gintleman* o' him, and ladies of his two sisters and six *naces!* He saw *yer father*—God rest his *sowl*—pay the agent the last half year's rent, and he would no *tistify* to it for fear o' losing favor with the wicked lord!"

“Mother dear, don’t be *callin’* hard names,” replied the child, “nor be *re-mimberin’* other *paple’s* sins. Sure we have *eno’ o’* our own. Mind what father said, and trust Christ alone, and all will go well with us. He can *kape* us from poverty, *stharvation* and the Protestants too.”

Thus amid hopes and fears wore away six weary weeks on the sea, before the shores of a free land blessed their longing eyes. They laughed for joy, and also wept for fear, as the brave ship moored itself beside the crowded dock.

Some children, reared in Christian families, may have gazed in thoughtless wonder at the broad-frilled cap of the widow, and the outlandish garments of the girls, or smiled to hear their broken English. Could they have known their sorrow, how soon would the smile of contempt have been changed for the tear of sympathy. They stood on the

wharf watching their chests and boxes, looking up and down the the long street filled with confusion. Crowds of people pushed past them and gazed in their faces, but none asked, "Are you strangers?—can we do you any good?" They looked in vain for a familiar face, and at last went, they knew not whither, with a cartman, who promised to find them decent lodgings.

Could they but have had the husband and father, were he ever so poor, he would have found some way to earn their bread. But they were strangers in a strange land, with no earthly helper, and their money nearly gone. Nelly took a room where she could take in work, and then inquired her way by advice to the Intelligence office, to secure a place for Meggie. John had earnestly desired that Kathleen should go to school; and although Nelly herself could not read, she resolved to fulfill his wishes, no matter

how much sacrifice and toil it might cost her. The poor are often forced to struggle hard to send their little ones to school, and all the benevolent should aid them in their efforts, if only by an approving smile, or a word of welcome, in the school-room. Many an emigrant child has been driven to the streets and to destruction by the ridicule of his schoolmates. But a brighter lot was little Kathleen's. The widow's God had watched over poor Nelly, and the father of the fatherless had taken her children by the hand.

With beating hearts they made their way through a crowd of boys toward the school-room door. A few gazed rudely at them, and one boy said aloud, "A new scholar fresh from Ireland,"—but there was one little girl watching them as they came near. She stepped up with a bright smile and said, "I will take your little girl into school

with me. My mother told Meggie that I would watch for her, because she was a stranger."

Nelly was very timid, and had really dreaded making an application for Kathleen's admission, and therefore she felt greatly relieved by this delicate act of kindness. It was so unlooked for, that she could scarcely restrain her tears.

"God grant," she said, with a courtesy, "that the two roses may never wither on yer cheeks, nor the light o' heaven fade out o' yer sweet eyes, Miss;" and she returned home feeling quite easy about Kathleen.

When the teacher rose to pray, Kathleen looked amazed.

"Do Protestants pray?" she asked softly of her little friend.

"Oh, yes," replied the child smiling, "to the same God you pray to. But we must not talk now."

Then Kathleen thought in her heart

that these could not all be such wicked people as she had imagined. She was sure, at least, that her teacher and Mrs. Bell, with whom Meggie lived, and little Sallie, must be good and love God. As weeks wore away, and Meggie saw the lovely fruits of their religion in the family, she began to listen to their devotions, and almost before she was aware that they were heretics, she found her desolate heart seeking comfort in these means of grace. The lonely widow, too, was just in the state to be benefitted by Christian sympathy. "Surely," she thought, "these are not the same Protestants I used to hear about at home, and from these I could have nothing to fear." She yielded herself to their gentle influence. No bitter invectives against her priests, no ridicule of the Romish church reached her ears to steel her heart against the truth. These new friends dealt with her and her children

as with any other souls in error, and the strangers found just what they needed, in the fullness which is in Christ Jesus. Oh, what a solemn responsibility rests upon us in regard to these poor exiles, who seek for rest beneath the shadow of our vine. One harsh word, one unjust act, may drive them away from the truth, while gentleness and love may win their souls to Christ.

God had been leading Nelly and her children by a way they knew not. They are no longer widow and fatherless. God has adopted them into his own family, giving them a place in his house better than that of sons and daughters. Let us then, dear children, walk kindly in presence of such as these. Let us deal tenderly with them, whether we meet them in the kitchen, in the school-room, or in the highways of life. Who knows but God may honor some of us as instruments of leading them into the way of truth?

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT OF KATHLEEN—HER PEACEFUL DEATH—PRECIOUS MEMORY.

YEARS passed, and Kathleen had made such advances in knowledge that she was really well educated when compared with her mother and her sister. She could read well, write a correct letter, cipher in all the simple rules, and give some account of the earth with its countries, rivers, mountains, and cities. Her mother and Meggie had toiled so hard and so long to send her to school, that the good girl grew impatient to repay them. She found a place at service in a minister's family, and began her duties with great delight. She soon created for herself a deep interest

in every heart, and many efforts were made for her spiritual benefit. Her Bible was her daily companion, and her seat beside the family altar was never vacant. She listened with earnest attention to all she heard, and her friends rejoiced in the hope that she was already a child of God. A year thus wore away, when it became evident to her mistress that she was not long for earth. A slight cough, then cold chills, a sore throat and a hectic fever, told her early doom. With the greatest tenderness it was hinted to Kathleen that these symptoms, which seemed to give her no alarm, were considered almost fatal. No trembling seized her frail form, no tear dimmed her meek eye.

"I have known this for weeks in my own heart, ma'am," she said calmly, "and if now is God's time, I'm sure I wouldn't wish to live beyond it. I've never feared death since I saw how peacefully my

father met it, and I've niver forgotten his dying counsel. It's *God alone through Jesus Christ* that I hope in for pardon; and I wouldn't be putting off death only for my poor old mother. But my father's blessing that has ever followed us in the strange land is not *run out yet*. He will see to her and Meggie when I'm gone from them."

Three months from that time this humble but lovely girl was borne to her long home. Her faith failed not in the trying hour, and she departed with words of peace half-spoken on her tongue.

This sketch is no fiction, but true in all its particulars. The name of her whom we have here called Kathleen, is a household word among the affectionate little children of a minister's family in New England. Her example is still bright before the servants in that community, and held up before those who

have taken up the toil she left when she entered into rest. Her memory is precious to her mistress, who will seek long before she find another such servant to share her midnight watchings beside the little couch of pain, or to follow up her holy teachings with such a lovely life before her children. The blessed Jesus has said: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

BENEFIT OF THE SCRIPTURES.

In an Irish school, the children were allowed to take the New Testament home with them at night, to learn from it their lessons for the next day. One

of the boys read his Testament to his father and mother, who were Roman Catholics, and they felt much interested in what they heard from it. The wife was soon after taken dangerously ill, and the husband requested a Protestant clergyman to visit her; whom he told, that in consequence of hearing the child read the Scriptures, they had renounced popery, and regularly attended his ministry. "I have reason to thank God and you, sir," said the man, "for teaching my son in the school. I have been all my lifetime in ignorance, sin, and misery, until I heard that book. Now, I am taught to put my trust in Christ alone for salvation." The woman, too, gave evidence in life and death of her dependence on the merits and intercession of Jesus for eternal life. Her husband and son solemnly determined, by the Divine help, to make

the Scriptures the only rule of faith
and practice.

"This is the judge that ends the strife,
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