

MICHAEL'S ROMANCE.

AYE, LADY, what a balt, lady. I'll stop the car for ye. There, I've given him the bell; he'll stop now, beyan' at the road. Now, lady— Oh, be the tacking' c' smack! I forgot the chil-der?" And, so exclaiming, the great, lumbering, good-natured Irish conductor stepped to the ground, went forward, and taking a child in each arm tenderly carried them to the sidewalk and deposited them beside their mother.

Did she thank him? Not a word of thanks did she utter. It is doubtful if she thought of doing such a thing. Some persons might have felt the want of politeness, but not so that conductor; for, with a "There, get along with ye now" to his motorman, he swung himself under the hood at the rear of the car and began humming "Kathleen Mavourneen" as the car sped along toward the end of the line.

His "bit of a brogue," his actions and manner indicated very clearly that he had left Ireland but a short time ago, and yet he appeared to be thoroughly familiar with his duties as conductor. The reporter began to talk with the mass of Irish good nature. Getting acquainted was easy enough. A few words about the speed at which the car was running and the danger it occasioned, and they were as well acquainted as though they had been through a campaign together.

"It's a fine bit of level country ye have here, but it hasn't the green," the conductor said.

"The green—what green?" he was asked.

"Why, man, the green of home—Ireland—the emerald fields that would rest yer eyes if ye were blind. There's nothing like it in this country, they say."

"Have you been in this country long?"

"Who? I? Can't you see I'm a yankee?" with a chuckle. "But, faith, I guess it's not hard to tell where I came from. Comin' the middle of August I'll be here seven months, and comin' the first of the year, an' the job holds out, there'll be more of me here than there is now."

"More of you; how can that be?"

"True for ye, but, big as I am, the biggest half of me is at home, and she's only a wee bit of a woman at that. But it's her heart that tells, an' it's as big as an ox. It's for her that I'm here, although, God knows, it's little I cared for me job at home when I had it."

"There now, be aisy, please, till I stop the car. I'll have no one hurt if I can help it." He rang the bell, allowed the last passenger but the reporter to step off, rang to go ahead again, and the conversation was continued.

"What part of Ireland did you come from?"

"Ballinamuck, an' me name is Murphy—Michael Murphy, by the grace of Father Gilhooley an' the holy water."

"Were you not doing well at home?" "Aye, in pounds, shillings an' pence."

"Then why did you come here?"

"For the little woman."

"But you left her behind you?"

"Aye, man, but how could I help it?"



CAN THE FLY COME BACK FOR THE CRUMB.

"Twas myself that only knew I was comin' when I came. Ye see, it was this way: I was in the constabulary, an' with the evictions an' what not I was always gettin' poor devil in trouble, for they fight an' raise ructions, an' as I was the biggest man on the force I'd to take every one to prison.

"It was a hard life, an' me that tender-hearted that I couldn't bear to be doin' what I had to do. But I said, 'As long as I'm in it I'm in it, an' it's the law that's to blame, an' not Michael Murphy.' With steeling me heart with such thoughts as that I got along well enough until old man Loughran had the process against him, an' I was sent to put him and his daughter Kitty in the road; an' he an old comrade of me father that fought with him in the Crimea. 'Twas the hardest job I ever did, but, praise God, it was the best one, too.

"When I went to put out the few traps of things that they had, an' tryin' not to care a rap, his bit of a girl, Kitty, threw herself before me an' told me for the sake of me father's memory (God rest him) to leave them alone.

"Would you have me break me oath?" says I.

"Your oath," says she, "an' me in your way?"

"Shure, you're but a sweet little crumb, says I, 'th: a fly could carry

off an' be glad of it, too.' An' with that I picked her up an' put her outside the thatch, with her great eyes streamin' tears.

"Then in for the old man, who was moanin' and weepin' in the corner, I went. 'Leave me alone,' says he. 'Take the bits of things out, an' when they're gone I'll go too; it's little trouble they'll ever give ye, an' ye the son of the man I saved from the Roosians, now forty years gone. Take them all; it's well the old woman's gone, or her heart would be broke; an' me, with lead in me shoulder that I got at Malakoff, too poor to pay twenty-two shillin's.'

"Twas little trouble I had to get the things out, save for me heart that was frettin' me soul; but what could I do? The process was on them an' I had to do it.

"Every time I passed over the sill I saw the lass cryin' an' raisin' her big, swollen eyes to me, an' before I was through I was like to put them all back an' throw up me job.

"As I went back for the last few bits, an' was turnin' my head away, that I wouldn't see Kitty, she says: 'Michael Murphy, that's the meanest day's work ye ever did, an' may ye never forget it till the day of yer death. There's not another in the County of Longford that would do what ye have done this day.'

"Then she got up an' followed me under the thatch, took her old father by the hand, an' said: 'Come, father, the son of yer old comrade has turned ye out in the world. Ask no more of him; I'll find bed for ye with someone.' An' they walked out, while I gathered up what was left and placed them on the pile of old traps outside.

"By the time I was through the neighbors had learned of the eviction, an' began to gather as I was nailin' the rickety old door that wouldn't keep out a cat. I didn't get many blessings for me day's work, an' only me size an' reputation for fightin' qualities saved me from a beatin'."

"I went back to report to the agent, an' my heart smote me. As I was passin' the barracks I thought of the small sum they were evicted for, and said to myself: 'Mike, it's a dirty trick ye did the day, to put old Loughran and Kitty out in the world, an' now that yer duty's done, ye'd better put them under the thatch again, an' not have yer father's curse on ye.' An' with that I went to me room an' got the price of the rent to take to the agent.

"When I walked in he says: 'Well, Murphy, did ye put them out?' I did that, says I, 'an' I never did a worse job in me life.' 'How's that?' says he.

"Never mind, says I; 'an' with that he laughed, an' says in a knowin' way: 'Kitty's a fine bit of a girl—a sweetheart, maybe.' 'Not a bit, sir,' says I, for the members of the constabulary can't marry, do ye mind, an' I never thought of Kitty for a sweetheart, but I did then, an' her big eyes, an' rosy cheeks, an' sweet voice came between me an' the agent, an' I couldn't see him for a time, an' before I thought of payin' in the rent he spoke:

"'Well,' says he, 'I'll be hard findin' another tenant for the old place, but I had to make an example of some one.'

"'Maybe I could find ye a tenant,' says I, 'if ye'd tell me the rent ye expect, thinkin' quick.'

"There's little land, an' it's not worth much, an' tenants are scarce, so if ye can get me £5 a year for it it will do,' says he.

"It might be long before ye get a tenant," says I. "True," says he. "An' if I can get ye one at once, would £4 do?" says I.

"He thought for a moment, an' then says: 'Yes, if it's a good tenant.' Then says I: 'I've a friend that wants me to get him a place, an' if ye'll rent it to me for him, I'll take it at £4 an' hold it till he come.'

"Will ye be surety for the rent," says he. "Aye," says I, "make it in me name, an' before I left I had the old place rented, an' the papers signed an' in me pocket, an' so he could not object I paid him down the money I had in me pocket before I left.

"I went back an' found Kitty an' the old man sittin' on their traps, an' ev'ryone cursing me an' the agent an' the lord that owned the place. It was some time before I could make them understand that I had rented the place, and when I drew the nails from the door, an' asked them to help me carry the things in again, they let out a shout that the agent could hear, an' with the things in they went.

"When everything was in, I went to Kitty, an' says I: 'I carried ye out the first thing, an' now I'll carry ye in the last thing, that scripture may be fulfilled as Father Gilhooley used to say.'

"She was for gettin' away from me, but the women wouldn't let her, so I picked her up in me arms, while they all laughed and shouted, an' as I passed over the sill again with her I stooped me head to get in the door, an' it was then I whispered, 'Can the fly come back for the crumb again?' If he don't wait till the law sends him," says she, openin' her great eyes, an' as she looked at me I knew I'd have to get out of the constabulary, the precious burthen that she was.

"I got a letter last winter from Con Ryan, that's in New York, tellin' me all about the strike on the cars in Brooklyn, an' says, 'Mike Murphy, now's your chance. Go to America; ye can get work at once, an' then ye send for Kitty an' the old man.' I thought it over for a day, and then, says I, 'If they won't accept me resignation, I'll accept it myself.' So I called myself into executive session, presented the resignation, accepted it unanimously, an' that night, bein' a free man, I cut for Dublin. From there I went to Southampton, shipped as a stoker and reached New York while the strike was on. I came over to Brooklyn, was put on a car, an' there, thank God, I've been ever since, and sendin' money to Kitty to pay the rent.

THE CAGE MAKER.

In the town of the ancient kingdom of Castile there lived, in former ages, a youth called Bartolo, who tried to eke out a living by making cages for birds, and taking them around to sell at the neighboring villages. But his trade was a poor one, and he judged himself in luck if he sold one cage in the day, and, as may be supposed, he knew what sorrow and privation were.

One day as he was proceeding to a village he heard the sounds of revelry, the buzz of many people, and the strains of a band of music. This merrymaking was a procession of children dressed in white, carrying in their midst a beautiful child crowned with roses, in a chariot covered with white satin, and ornamented with acacia and myrtle.

This procession was in honor of Maya, the personification of spring, and took place to announce the entry of spring. In front of the little chariot some children danced and held in their hands tin platters for contributions, and, as may be imagined, all, or nearly all, the spectators dropped their coins into them.

Bartolo moved away in a desponding mood, saying to himself as he walked on: "Is this the justice of the world? There they are, flinging their money into these platters just because these children come in procession to announce to them that it is the month of May, as though they could not know it by looking at the almanac. They barter and grind me down to the lowest price for my cages, even when I chance to sell one!"

Full of these bitter thoughts, he walked on sadly, for the voices of two impudent enemies were making themselves heard within him—these were hunger and thirst: the one clamored for food and the other for drink.

Bartolo had nothing in his wallet but his clasp knife, and had had naught for his breakfast but hopes, and these made him sharp and active.

He had reached a plantation, when he perceived a well-dressed individual coming toward him. Pressed by hunger, Bartolo, taking his cap off respectfully, approached and said: "Excuse me, sir, but could you kindly give me a trifle? I promise I will return it as soon as I earn some money."

"Don't you think that it is a shameful thing for a man like you, young and with a good, healthy appearance, to be demanding charity of people? Does it not strike you that you have a duty to earn your living by working at your trade?"

"Yes, sir, certainly, but my trade does not fulfill its own duty. Most people like to see the birds flying about free rather than in cages, and therefore, day by day, I find myself poorer than before."

At first the stranger doubted what he heard, but the bird-cage maker gave him so detailed an account of his work and the small profits he derived that he became interested and sympathized with his ill-fortune. Bartolo was a

man who always knew how to excite great interest in himself.

"Come, come," the stranger said, smiling, "I will do something for you. As I cannot find customers for your cages, I will afford you a powerful means by which you shall never more be in want."

He then blew a whistle, and Bartolo saw flying before him a bird blue as the sky, which came and perched on one of his cages.

"See here," added the stranger, "what will compensate for all your past misery. From this day forward you have only to formulate a wish and say slowly and distinctly: 'Bluest of blue birds, do your duty!' and your wish will be granted to you."

"And what if he be Satan himself?"

"I will give you a piece of blessed candle, and he will have no power over you," replied the unrelenting father.

Taking her hand, he led her to the stranger, who was already on his horse, and assisted her to mount behind her future husband. Taking the cage with the bluest of the birds, he watched the retreating forms of the pair as the horse carried them swifter than the wind, and when out of sight, he proceeded to join his guests. The company were all gathered in knots discussing the extraordinary powers of the bird, and all the events which had taken place.

"Peace! peace!" cried the lord of the castle, as he entered; "I will perform more marvelous things than ever he did. I have given him my daughter to wed in exchange for the bird, and this blue bird will render me more wealthy than the King of Aragon. Approach, and see the wonders I will work with it."

He took the cage, and lifting it up to look at the bird, was astonished to find it was not a blue bird at all, but a large gray bird, which turned to stare at him in an insolent manner, gave a fierce peck at the door of the cage with its beak, flung it open and flew out of the window, uttering a terrible screech.

The lord of the castle stood with open mouth, not knowing what to do or say. His guests broke out in peals of laughter at his discomfiture and the well-deserved punishment for his unseemly avowal of exchanging his beautiful daughter for a worthless bird.

Meanwhile, Bartolo was galloping with his bride to the nearest town to be married, and when he arrived at the first hostelry he wished to dismount and engage the most splendid suite of apartments for his intended bride, but he found himself utterly penniless. He had not calculated that in parting with the bird he had parted with his luck, and therefore, as soon as he dismounted the horse disappeared, and his elegant dress became changed for the shabby one he had worn before he met the kind individual who had wished to befriend him. When the beautiful daughter of the lord of the castle beheld the transformation which had taken place, she ran back to her father as fast as she could, right lending wings to her feet.

Bartolo had to return to his old life of making cages and to his miserable existence.

"I am the good genius of the honest workingmen of Castile. Sit down and eat without fear. Take advantage of your lucky star," and then suddenly disappeared.

Bartolo reverently bent down and kissed the spot on which he had stood, unable to find adequate expression of

his gratitude. He then sat down and ate his breakfast.

After his meal, Bartolo judged that a man who had feasted in such an elegant manner ought to have better clothing than his well-worn suit; and, lifting his staff, he cried to the bird:

"Bluest of blue birds, do your duty!" In an instant his old suit became transformed into one of richest velvet, embroidered in gold and silver, and his rough staff into a splendid horse fully caparisoned, and having around his neck a collar of silver bells.

More astonished than ever, Bartolo suspended to the saddle the cage with the blue bird, leaped on the horse and went his way as proud of his dress as a donkey of its ears.

Setting spurs to his horse, he soon reached the gates of a splendid castle. Some feast was taking place within. The guests were all seated under a shady bower, deplored that they had been disappointed of the minstrels who were to have played.

Bartolo, on learning this, advanced to the bower, and, after elegantly saluting the lord and lady of the castle, in a most refined way said:

"If it be right for a simple knight to offer his services in such a distinguished company of rank and beauty, I think I could promise to provide what you are requiring."

"Oh, do! at once, please!" cried all the ladies, who were longing for a dance.

"Bluest of blue birds, do your duty!" said Bartolo.

Suddenly, in the distance, was heard the noise of many feet, and a troop of musicians with their instruments appeared, to the great delight of the company.

The lord of the castle, who knew how all this had been done through the agency of the bird, and being himself of an inordinately avaricious nature, thought he might do a fine stroke of business were he to purchase the bird. Hence, calling his unknown guest away to his study, he proposed to him to purchase the bird for what price he should quote.

"You would never give me my price," replied Bartolo.

"For it I would give my castle, with its nine forests," said the lord of the castle.

"It is not enough!"

"Very well, I will add my olive plantations and vineyards."

"That is still insufficient," cried Bartolo.

"I will add the orchards, gardens and houses."

"I want something else!"

"What! still more? Why, man, you must want Paradise itself!"

"Not so; I want what you can give me this very moment. I want your daughter with whom I danced just now! Let her be my bride."

"What! my daughter?" cried the old miser, in an ecstasy of joy; "by my faith, we shall soon conclude the bargain. Why did you not say so before?"

He went to seek the girl, and told her of the engagement he had entered into. But his daughter, in utter amazement, cried out:

"But what if he is a wicked elf, and all he does