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THE STUDENT.

A TALE.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Daly was a butter-merchant in the important mercantile city of Cork. He lived, ten years ago, in a neat and pretty house on the Upper Glanville-road, — a house that may be seen any day from the 'New Wall,' lying cosily amongst a knot of trees. He was a man who, though then rich, had yet known poverty, and, therefore, he was fond of his money, and looked up to wealth and position, and had the greatest possible anxiety to be permitted to act as train-bearer to the aristocracy. A Catholic, he loved his faith fondly, respected its ministers, gave rather liberally to its charitable institutions, and was one, I must say, proud of his religion. — The good teachings of Father James, the priest of the parish near Macroom, where he lived when a boy, were not lost upon him; and, though not by any means a young man at the time of which I speak, still he remembered with grateful love the kindness and large-heartedness of the good man who had baptized him, and prepared him for his first Communion, and to whose ear he had confided the first secrets of his young life. He never lost the remembrance of Father James's blessing when, upon the morning he was leaving the green fields and the thatched cottage, or rather cabin, in which he had spent seventeen years, going to the house in which the priest lived with an antiquated housekeeper, he met him just at the door, and, kneeling down, heard the rich tones of that familiar voice imploring God to look with mercy and love upon the young man, who was going out into the world to seek his fortune — a search in which Father James knew there lay much peril and danger. But, though Mr. Daly had naturally a good heart and excellent dispositions, he could not help paying court, and a good deal of it too, to the world. — He declared himself to be a liberal man, and in that character he thought he would be recognized by every one. He did not possess a particle of sectarian spirit; he loved all men and all creeds alike; he knew no distinctions of party. Such were the phrases he was always ready to discharge at any person who ventured to insinuate that he was a hanger on after Protestants, or that his name was too frequently seen heading subscription-lists for Protestant purposes.

Ten years ago, Mr. Daly's son, an only child, was about sixteen, a lad of much promise, well made, well featured, possessed of much rudimentary knowledge, and altogether a charming young fellow. The sunshine of God's smile was in his heart and it lit up his manly face, and shone out from his dark eye. It was a refreshing sight that young man's face, so refreshing that, as he passed, old men raised their heads and looked at him, and travelled back in thought to the days when they too were young and joyous and light-hearted; so refreshing, that the poor apple women, sitting next their stalls, said 'God bless him,' even though he did not purchase from them; so refreshing, that little children, looking up at him, laughed, and crowded, and clapped their hands with joy. Mr. Daly was fond of his boy, — ay, and proud of him, too. He looked forward with pleasure to the time when he would make a name for himself, for he was expected by every one who knew him to cut a figure in the world; and Mr. Daly, knowing his son was talented, intended him as a member of some learned profession. Joe Daly himself was conscious that he possessed abilities of no mean order; so he was perhaps a little proud, too; and it was with great joy that he heard of his father's determination to send him to the Queen's College. When Mrs. Daly was made aware of her husband's intentions, she offered mildly a few suggestions concerning the danger which she conceived her son would incur by going to such a place; but her objections were immediately over-ruled; so she had to subside, and remain in a state of neutrality, while the arrangements were making for what she firmly believed would be the ruin of her only child. Poor woman, she could not talk, for she never was in the habit of doing so, as Mr. Daly had long ago usurped that woman's right; so she only prayed and wept when alone, and warned Joe privately of the perils she was sure he would have to encounter. She confided her fears to some friends, but they all declared that the College was an excellent place for Joe, seeing that he need not, if he wished, make acquaintance with those whose example or conversation could be prejudicial to him; as also his religious instruction could be continued at home, attendance at college being necessary but for a few hours in the day. Yet, with a mother's instinct, she feared and sorrowed and many times she thought of asserting her privilege as a wife, to keep her son at home, or send him to some Catholic place of education; but she had remained too long under subjection, and was obliged from want of courage, to give up all idea of opposition.

So, in the spring of 1851, she saw her son matriculate, and bear off a prize at the same time, — a prize which did not in any way give her pleasure.

CHAPTER II.

'By Jove, I did not think that Joe Daly was a religious fellow. Did you see how he rose from his seat to-day in the lecture hall, and went out, because Professor Jones said something or other about the papists?'

'Yes, indeed; but don't mind what he did to-day, for it was a feeling of pride, or bravado, that made him leave. He was a Catholic, and that Jones thought well to introduce Catholicity and its superstitions into his discourse upon the Institutions of the Middle Ages; so Daly thought he was insulted, and he left, to show every one he would not bear a slight. Believe me, Harry, when he is as long at the college as I am, he won't mind such things; but at present he's green, just entering his second year.'

'Why, Bill, you must know nothing about my friend Joe when you say he's green; I wish he heard you. It was but this morning I had the pleasure of seeing him home, for we both called into Juke's last night to have a game of billiards, and, of course, we got so interested, we remained there till two in the morning. However, I was pretty steady, what Joe wasn't; so I gave him my arm, and we both walked along pretty quietly, doing no greater damage than awaking some good people by ringing their door bells, until we came to Joe's home, and then I saw some one putting out her head from one of the drawing-room windows; but, whoever it was, she drew it in as quickly as she put it out, and in a second the door was opened. I think it was his mother opened it; for I believe she tries to hide from old Daly that his son is living so fast, and 'tis she waiting up for him every night he's out late; so I think if she ever kept early hours, she doesn't now.'

'Well, I never saw any one get into our habits so quickly as Joe. What a demure sort of fellow he was at first. He wouldn't play a game of billiards, he wouldn't drink, he should be home at eleven o'clock; and, now he's only entering his second year, and he's the jolliest student in the college. No end to the money he spends at play, and no end, either, to his drinking bouts.'

'I wonder very much that his governor does not grumble at so much expense. I suppose he expects something great from him in time. In deed every one must own that Joe Daly is as clever a young fellow as any in Cork; and I expect he'll bear off great honors when he goes to Dublin. I'd wish to know what profession he intends to follow; for certainly he won't think of carrying on his father's business.'

'He think of being a butter-merchant. Why, he couldn't entertain such an idea for an instant. But, Harry, old boy, you must introduce me to him. I only met him once at a cigar divan, and then we were like strangers, though so often meeting to college. You can tell him I'm a great hand at games of chance, and, as money is rather slack with me, I'd like to have a turn at his pocket, as it happens to be a full one. Don't tell him I have any design upon his money though, for it may frighten him, and then I'd lose the prize. Of course, we won't play for anything very high at first.'

'Let us come in to Juke's; we are likely to meet him at the billiard-table, and any friend of mine is agreeable to him. He's a regular jolly fellow; the only thing is, he's not quite rid of the priestly influence yet. But who knows what you and I can do?'

'Who knows? so let us come on to Juke's.'

'They did go to that well known house of Juke's, those two young men, William Moston and Harry Crone, and they met Joe Daly there, and spent what they called a pleasant night, drinking, and gambling, and cursing. They thought it was a fine thing, that it showed high breeding, that it proved them to be gentlemen — to talk so wildly and wickedly. And Joe Daly, the only son, the pride of his mother, the hope of his father, the handsome young man from whom so much of good was expected by so many — he was not certainly as bad or unblushing as others of that gay company, though he tried to be so.

'Yes, it must be told. Joe Daly wished with all his heart to cast off that robe of godliness which had surrounded him before he went to the Queen's College, — or, I should rather say, he strove to forget that he had ever worn it. He strove to forget that there was a God above him, who could and would punish his offences; he worked on unceasingly, and with an obstinate tenacity, in the service of the Evil One; and yet, to keep up appearances, he called himself a Catholic.'

CHAPTER III.

'Bravo! Well done! I always said you'd get your A. B. at the end of the third season.'

Egad, you must be a surprising clever fellow to pass that examination. It was frightful; I can't conceive how you stood it. Well, the Cork boys are clever; no mistake about it. I myself heard one of the professors saying you were very clever. I suppose you'll write off now to inform them at home of your success: for it is a thing you may be proud of, to gain your A. B. at such an early age, and after such a short attendance at the Cork College.'

'Well, certainly, James, I am glad at coming off so well. However, I can't see what use the honor is to me, after all. I don't exactly know what I'll study for now — law, or medicine; though, to speak truly, I care for neither profession, nor for anything in the world. Sometimes I feel that life is a burthen to me, and I wish to be rid of it, I wish to get back into that state of nothingness in which I was before my birth. Yes; when I pass a churchyard, I long for the time when I shall lie as quietly and calmly as do those lifeless forms which once stood erect and proud in the consciousness of their power as men and women.'

'Tush, man, don't speak so. Why should you be sick or tired of life? Has it not been to you one day of sunshine — bright sunshine, no cloud, no sorrow? You have had all that you could wish for. Your father is rich, and you are his only child. You possess talents and ability far above others. After some years of freedom, you can settle down and marry. You are strong and healthy — no likelihood at all of your melancholic wish being fulfilled. So I say to you, cheer up, and don't be sad when there is no need to be so.'

'Ab, yes, 'Cheer up.' That is what I have often said to myself — 'Cheer up, for the world is bright before you, and your path is tracked by flowers.' And I have been the gayest of the gay; I have laughed, and sung, and danced; I have made merry when others were asleep; I have thrown off all restraints; I have done what others could not, would not, dare not do; for I was rich, and gold buys pardon from the world. Yet I am not happy. Why it is so I cannot tell. Why I am so weary of existence I know not.'

'The fact is, Joe, you have overworked your self. You have studied very hard. Of course, you had to do so, more especially of late. There is nothing necessary to bring you back to your self but change of scene. Travel on the Continent, spend a month or two in Paris. Don't live so fast as you have done lately, or you may find the consequences anything but agreeable. — Learn to restrain yourself a little, and you will by that means be enabled to enjoy more. — It is said that you drink deeply, and I believe it. To tell the truth, we all drink enough — perhaps too much. Since I entered the college I have been led into many excesses, and I find it a difficult matter to curb my inclinations. But you are young, much younger than I am, and it is wrong of you not to make an effort to do so.'

'Indeed, I must, James. I don't think I'll go back to Cork for some time. I don't know many here in Dublin, and I hope to make no new acquaintances.'

'Have you given up gambling?'

'Well, I don't play as high as I did, but still I do something in that way. I have lost much through my desire for play; so much that I have often had rows with my governor, as he would sometimes refuse the cash. Come on with me now, and we can dine at Gresham's, where I am stopping. I feel weak, and my head is a little dizzy. Come, take my arm.'

Joe Daly and a friend of his, James Canning, walked out from the Queen's University, Dublin, where this conversation took place, and strolled along till they came to the Gresham Hotel. Entering one of the coffee-rooms, they found it full of people, so they went up stairs to Joe's apartment, where they dined. It was about seven in the evening, and the street lamps were just lit, when, rising from table, James proposed that they should take a walk; but Joe complained of the dizziness in his head, and said that he would take a sleep; so the other left him alone. A decanter filled with spirits stood upon a side table near the window, and after James Canning left the room Joe got up, and, seizing the decanter, filled a glass of the liquor and drank lustily, then two more in succession. In a few moments the effect was visible in his face, and the veins in his temples became dark and swollen.

Standing at one of the windows, he looked down upon the passers by, and strove to fasten his attention upon some particular individuals, and to follow them with his glance as far as the street would allow.

Then, getting tired of that, darting into the centre of the room, he commenced to gesticulate vehemently, to clench his fists, to stamp the floor, to tear his hair, to recite passages from Greek and Latin authors. Again he went to the table where the spirits were, and, raising the decanter to his mouth, he took a long draught;

and, as he laid it down, he sank himself upon a chair, muttering and babbling like a child.

The room was dark, except where the light from the opposite house fell, and the chair in which the young man sat was back in the darkness. It was terrifying to see his eyes shining with a lurid glare, and to hear his moans and curses, his blasphemous, his wild ravings, his imprecations against God, his friends, himself, his very mother, whom he cursed for having brought him into the world.

Gradually the sound of his voice became less distinct, and nothing could be heard but a dull murmur; and at length he fell into a heavy, lethargic sleep. A servant coming in shortly afterwards, and seeing his condition, with the assistance of another carried him off to bed. Such was the end of the day upon which Joe Daly received the honor of A. B. at the Queen's University.

It may be said in extenuation that the joy of winning the honor had made him excited, and that that was the cause of his overstepping the bounds of prudence in drinking and making a beast of himself, as far as it lay in his power to do so. But even that poor excuse cannot be offered, as it was no rare occurrence for him to be stupidly drunk. Poor young man, scarce twenty, and yet the prey of many passions.

It was ten o'clock of a bleak, cold, foggy night in February. The lamps shone with a dead light in the Cork terminus of the Great Southern and Western Railway. A few persons were walking up and down the platform, awaiting the arrival of the train. Porters were lounging on every one's luggage, with their eyes half open, and looking asleep, though in reality half awake. Indeed, it was such a heavy, dull night, that it caused two or three commercial travellers sitting in the first class waiting room to forget completely their usual vivacity.

They were sitting opposite the fire, snoring a solemn snore, suitable enough, as far as the weather was concerned, but not at all suitable to their character as commercial men, who, representing an institution of the nineteenth century coeval with steam and electric telegraphs, should not have so far forgotten themselves as to think of being asleep before the public.

The train was to arrive at a quarter past ten. Five minutes before that time the warning bell sounded, and the porters rose from their impromptu couches, and looked in a second the very quintessence of business, in anticipation. Then the train that was to go from the station at twenty minutes to eleven was got in readiness, and a few more passengers came into the waiting rooms. Then a shriek was heard, and every one looked attention, and in a moment in came the engine, with four or five carriages attached. — Each individual jumped out from his or her carriage, as people always leap when they arrive at a station, and ran to look after their luggage, and conducted themselves in the usual manner upon such occasions — attacking every one, and asking them questions, generally needless ones.

But amidst all that bustle and confusion stood two men who had just arrived from Dublin, apparently heedless of everything and every one around them. One was a stout red-faced little man, with a button nose, and sharp intelligent eyes. Some grey hairs were to be seen escaping from under his hat, and though he had a face, every feature of which seemed to be made for the purpose of expressing fun and humor, still there was something, as he looked at the young man leaning upon his arm, that told that he was not happy. No, Mr. Daly was not happy — how could he be so? There was his son hanging upon his arm, a confirmed idiot. Joe Daly, the Bachelor of Arts, the young man of genius, of great promise, there he was a weak, foolish, silly being — what a change! He who had gloried in his mind, in his mighty intellect, in his ability to grasp all knowledge — he now possessed no will of his own, but was totally dependant upon others. Mr. Daly, waiting till the crowd would disperse, remained at the far end of the platform with his son. He feared meeting with anyone he knew, for he could not bear the idea to tell that his boy's senses were gone. Soon he got out by a side-gate, and getting into a car with Joe, they arrived in a few moments at their house, on the upper road. Mrs. Daly ran to the door and welcomed her son, but he only returned an unmeaning laugh. To any question put to him as to what he wished for, his only reply would be, 'Anything.' Had he been a wild maniac there would have been hope for him; but the Dublin doctors had declared that he could not hold out longer than a month or two, for that all his strength was wasted. It was dreadful news for his father, and when Mrs. Daly heard it, she was almost bewildered, but it was no difficult matter to see that they were right.

Slowly ebbed his life away; slowly and darkly did death advance, yet not less surely. Many were the efforts made to bring back the light of reason into those lustreless eyes, to restore ani-

mation to that reasoning-looking face, to infuse the torpid mind with renovating hope, but every attempt was fruitless, and in three months after his arrival in Cork, Joe Daly died.

Even a glimmering of intelligence was not seen in his face before death, though it was expected by every one, that like many others, his senses might return before that awful time. But, no; as far as men could judge, he was not able to reconcile himself to the great Being whose very existence he had dared to question; ay, even to deny. It was heartrending to witness the grief of his father and mother; the hopeless, despairing sorrow with which they mourned him.

It was a warm sunny morning in summer as his body was carried to the cemetery, followed by many of his college friends. A lovely place at all seasons is our cemetery, but of course more so in summer.

Formerly a botanic garden, there still remained many beautiful shrubs and flowers to deck the graves of the dead. Chaste and elegant monuments mark the spot where the lifeless clay of once proud and wealthy citizens mingle with the common mould. Crosses of painted wood are to be seen there too, not cut or carved in quaint form, but made generally by a journeyman carpenter during his leisure hours, to gratify the desire of a poor mourner, to have something to mark the place where his friend or relative lies. Indeed, these crosses are, perhaps, more interesting than the elaborate and highly-sculptured testimonials of regardful memory, raised to the rich. Of course, the latter are not to be spoken against, being proofs of esteem for the deceased. Yet, somehow, the wooden crosses speak to the heart more forcibly; they tell of love unmixt with any touch of family pride — the love that, deep and warm on earth, is still continued, though the object of the affections has gone to a far off land, for these crosses are never without some one praying at them for the eternal happiness of those who rest beneath.

As I have already said, it was a warm sunny morning that upon which the funeral procession that followed Joe Daly's dead body entered this really beautiful burying ground.

Everything combined in adding to its loveliness; the richly-leaved trees, the delicately tinted roses, the long dark grass, the birds singing joyously, the musical buzz of bright coloured insects, that were beginning their day's work. — Off in adjoining fields, too, were busy labourers working, and when they could, talking and laughing. But the joyful scene did not bring healing or consolation to the sorrow-stricken heart of the lonely father. On the contrary, he felt his grief more keenly when he saw all things around him looking so gladsome. Leaning his head against a tree, he waited the conclusion of the prayers for the dead which the priests were reciting as they stood round Joe Daly's coffin.

No one went near him, none made any attempt to console him, for they knew it would be futile, because that his hope, his joy, was gone, and nothing remained to cheer him but the thought that they should meet where all suffering and heart-burning would be exchanged for delights unnumbered and peace unimagined. Yet, no; Mr. Daly could not comfort himself with that thought, for he knew that before his son became an idiot, which idiocy was the effect of delirium tremens, that he was an infidel.

Many of Joe Daly's companions attended his funeral, and were sorry for him, too, and spoke highly of his talents, but not one (a good number of them, too, called themselves 'Catholics') said one prayer for his soul; not one repeated that old yet beautiful sentence so often repeated by the poor — 'God have mercy on him.'

No, they were ashamed of one another to do anything so foolish, and they went from the graveyard, not like Christians who had witnessed the burial of a friend, not as men who believed in a creating and justice-seeking King, but as if they believed their birth an accident — their death an inevitable consequence. How sickening to think that the 'glorified' system of mixed education should bear such fruit.

How wicked it is of men to support or countenance an institution which depraves the young mind, dries up the blessed springs of life, destroys all the poetry of the soul, and leaves nothing but dull materialism.

About eleven o'clock on the night after the day upon which Mr. Daly buried his son he walked up the western road until he came opposite the Queen's College. The moon was shining clear and bright upon its Gothic turrets, and shone in the stream below, and bathed the trees with its soft light. With a slow step did the childless old man walk along the avenue which leads to the gateway. Arrived at the entrance where his son had so often stood, Mr. Daly knelt, and there, with the lovely Night-Maiden looking down upon him, calm and serene, looking upon him like an angel of charity, he, the sorrow-stricken and grief-bowed man, spoke, in a deep yet distinct voice words which, in