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AILEY MOORE;

A TALE OF THE TIMES.

CHAPTER XI.—THE PRISON, AND THE FORTUNES OF ONE FAMILY.

Next door to a great gloomy archway—the remains of the old city gate—there was a poor shop, kept by a poor man, who sold bread and breast-buttons for shirts, and tapes, and threads, and pipes, and many things besides, which we nave no need to mention. Indeed, we mention these, not from the importance of the things themselves, so much as to give an idea of the poor man's residence. Of course he sold many things of which we make no record, but we are certain we enumerate everything which appeared in the window. 'A Wellington jug,' remarkable for a huge nose, contained the pipes; and perhaps in honor of Waterloo that that not important fact should be mentioned. Whether it be judged important or not, we hereby note it, and leave all discussion regarding it to those who are fond of subtlety.

Well, then, near this door, at early morning, one month after Gerald Moore's arrest, stood the redoubtable Eddy Browne, looking up at the little drawing-room windows. Eddy had changed somewhat—indeed, very much—since the night he succeeded in obtaining a lodging in the prison. Gerald proposed to him on the morning following to procure him a suit of clothes, and, without consulting him, had ordered in even a merchant-tailor. But he had not known Eddy sufficiently well. He had taught him some 'cyphering,' and made him read betimes; he had taken him to hunt, and made him mind the dogs, and bag the snipe and plover. He had heard his catechism, and often given him sound advice, and even alms, for his grandmother. But still, we repeat, he did not know little Eddy Browne himself, as we may see after a few more observations.

'Eddy,' said Gerald, 'give this good man your measure for clothes.'

Eddy looked at the 'good man,' his measures and shears, and then he looked at Gerald; Eddy then looked right before him, and firmly answered, 'No, I won't.

'Won't!' exclaimed Gerald. 'Will you not have new clothes?'

'No.'

'Why, child, you want them, and you must have them; and Gran will be angry, if you refuse.'

'No, she won't,' answered little Eddy.

'Ah, you are a self-willed stubborn boy, I fear, or you would not speak so boldly.'

Eddy turned away, and shook from head to foot, as though a fit were on him; it was almost as on the evening of the committal. Gerald seized hold on him by the shoulders, and turned him round. The tears burst from him in a torrent, and the poor little fellow wept aloud.

'Well, Eddy, I'll tell you how it is. You will be often sent to me, perhaps, and 'twould not do; your clothing were so bad. It is for me, you know, you are to put on the new dress, and to come to me and to see Ailey.

Eddy went on his knees, and would have kissed the feet of Gerald. The young man raised him up, having patted him kindly, gave him over to the tailor; from all of which it resulted that Eddy had a 'new shoot' of clothes.

Neddy presents himself on the present occasion, then, with a blue body coat and brass buttons, a leather cap, (shirt white as usual) and a pair of boots, remarkable for deep iron heels, which left deep impressions on all plaster materials. These impressions Eddy was very fond of, and though less curious than most boys, he often looked back to examine them in the wheel-ruts along the road.

As soon as the little shop had been opened, Eddy was admitted, for Eddy had been at the house many times before; and the poor man of the shop liked Eddy, he said, wonderfully, because he remarked the poor child always at his door so early, and his eyes never left the little drawing-room window all the hours he sat or stood outside; and he never complained, the poor man noted, but impetuously, instinctively he made for the stairs when he got inside the door. This day the poor man stopped him—he was a pale, mild man, just like the woman Eddy had met at St. Senaun's well, on Senaun's day—and he laid his hand upon Eddy's head, and he told the boy he liked him.

'And you like Miss Ailey?' demanded Eddy.

'Dearly!' said the mild man.

'And I like you,' said Eddy, while the tears came to his eyes.

From that minute the pale man loved Eddy above all things in the world, but Eddy could not be coaxed or bought to give him much talk or time.

Eddy got up stairs; the stairs ascended opposite the little shop-door, just at the end of the shop.

They were very white, though very narrow, and Eddy took great precautions about his shoes To avoid all noise, and exclude all risk of foot-prints, he took off his shoes, in fact, and ever so quietly he stole up, step by step. The mild man 'blest' him as he vanished at the stair-head, and said he was a fine-hearted little fellow.

The little room had no carpet, but, like the stairs, was very clean. A red deal-table was in the middle of the room, it was covered with tarpaulin; the fender was painted green; there was nicely cut paper in the fireplace; Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter were on the walls around; and between them Daniel O'Connell, Dr. M'Hale, Tom Steele, and Philpot Curran; a chest of drawers, with brass handles, was in one side of the apartment; and a looking-glass, with 'hay-making' on the top of it, bowed forth from the wall, so as to show the whole room, on the other. Add a glazed buffet, which contains cups, saucers, and decanters in one corner, and a few book-shelves in another, and you have Ailey Moore's residence in town since the week after her brother was made a prisoner.

We are not going to explain to the reader what no one ever understood, that is, the law of turning people out upon the road to starve or plunder. We can quite well comprehend how old Mr. Moore laid out some thousands in building a fine mansion, and large sums in draining, fencing, and improving—that is plain as the summer light to one. But the law which takes it all away from him for nothing, which approaches its object with serpentine march, and mystic terms, and call its villany 'justice,' that may be very good, as doubtless it is profound; at all events, we cannot understand it. This is quite a sufficient reason for any (unless Dr. Whately, of Dublin) not to undertake an exposition of the matter.

The grief of the young girl when she heard of her brother's condition was not to be described. Yet the reader must know, it was only when it was involuntary, that it was overwhelming. It struck her like lightning, and she fell like one dead. Thus Father Mick Quinlivan found her, for the bad news had reached his home before him. But most kindly had Providence dealt the blow that fell upon her in the house of the pastor. Obstacles might interpose to hide the hand of God, and blessed ordination be called 'misfortune,' had she been beneath any roof but Father Michaul's. With him this could not be. He lived for eternity, and time for him was nothing; the priest had also power to make his daughter feel just like himself.—When Ailey awoke, therefore, it was not to misery. She had been conveyed to Father Michaul's oratory; the altar, which she decked with fair flowers, and made witness of deep love that morning, in the evening saw her fall beneath the cross. When she opened her eyes, the crucifix stood before her. Mary the dolorous looked down with eyes of sympathy; her old confessor was kneeling beside her chair, and his hands stretched towards the place of sacrifice. The first words Ailey uttered were, '*Thy will be done!*'

Assuredly her poor heart often overflowed, because memory would strike the fountain before faith and confidence could arrest its hand; but the ebullition was soon over, and the spirit reposed in final calm, resting on the love with which God regards his children—no matter how he shows it.

Seeking absolutely nothing in this world, unless to secure the next, produces a vigorous will and a cool judgment. Ailey soon selected the city for her future residence, for she thought it her duty to be near Gerald; happily it was her love too. Then the break up of a happy home was too frightful a trial for her father, whom she was determined to spare. Hence, once, and once only, he or she ever beheld it after Gerald's imprisonment. Father Mick would have been glad that both would make his home their own: but he would not urge a course that his affection only would suggest, and against which poor Ailey's judgment had been formed. The apartment in the mild man's house—obscure, inconvenient, but cheap and clean—just the home of decent poverty, was therefore Ailey Moore's.

Old Mr. Moore had not risen from his bed for a week, and his recovery was very far from certain. The image of his death sometimes smote poor Ailey—but she flew to 'Mary the Immaculate,' and again and again said, 'Mother!' At these times Ailey asked nothing—she felt that the dear kind heart that knew her need, and loved her from her babyhood, was listening—and she only repeated 'Mother!' There was a fond care over Ailey Moore—though her road was rough and thorny—just like that of Jesus flying to Egypt.

Ailey came in due time. She was a little pale, but very, very beautiful. 'Poor Eddy!' were the first words she uttered. 'Poor Eddy here again to-day? Why did you come so soon, Eddy?'

Eddy looked at her; and so full—so soul-like was his gaze, and so much devotion did there appear in the poor child, that Ailey regretted she had asked the question. She looked the declaration that he 'could not be elsewhere, even though he died for it, than those—poor Eddy!

'Ah! very well,' she added. 'You are welcome, my own poor Eddy!' and she laid her white hand upon his head, and Eddy wept for joy and happiness.

'How is Gran?'

Eddy's eyes brightened.

'How is Gran?' Ailey asked.

'Well,' answered Eddy, laughing.

'She gave you leave to come?'

'Gran is in town,' said Eddy.

'In town!—why?'

'The polis.'

'The police!'

'Thrun down th' ould house.'

'Your poor Gran's house, Eddy?'

'Yis, to tache me the Bible,' said Eddy.

'How, poor Eddy.

'Oh, kase Mr. Salmer's school would tache me the Bible if I went, and they tache me the Bible as I didn't go.'

'And you wouldn't go?'

Eddy's eyes burned, and the light of them was frightful for one so young,

'Eddy, you must forgive every one—for God's sake!'

'And Snapper?'

'Every one.'

Eddy shook his head, and the tears rolled down his cheeks—for he was thinking of Gerald Moore. Ailey saw the image in the poor boy's soul, and she thought it would not be sinful in her to yield a little, and she wept half for the poor boy's lovingness. Eddy fell on his knees.

'Oh! don't—don't—don't,' he cried agonizingly. 'Oh, don't, Miss Ailey. Oh, don't,' he cried more intensely, 'or, I'll die,' he added, in a tone so true—so heart-wrung, that it echoed in the depths of Ailey's soul.

The wonderful love of the poor man's child, that's loved! No one can ever know it, that has not laid his hand upon the breast and brow of labor. Labor is strong in everything—but most powerful in love!

Poor Eddy became very useful to Ailey. He was no loiterer on his errands, and was active and exact in everything she wished performed about the lodgings. Indeed he anticipated with so much success all she could wish and he could do, that she often opened her eyes with astonishment. And Eddy's love was to sit in a corner; he would be glad if it was the lobby, if he saw Ailey sometimes pass, but he usually sat in a corner of the little drawing-room, under the shelves of books—certain to run, if any one occasionally came to see Miss Moore, and in just the proper time to find himself back again. Yet no one ever told poor Eddy the time he ought to go or the time he should return. The heart of the poor boy was his instructor—and as there was nothing selfish in it, he was always right.

Ailey went to mass at eight o'clock, and Eddy 'minded the house.' The distance to the parish church was not considerable, and the offices were always punctually performed. There was, therefore, entire confidence in the arrangement of time. One could say, 'I'll go at such an hour and, I'll be home for such a thing.' So Miss Moore could always say to the old gentleman, she would be in again in three-quarters of an hour; and then she would kiss his forehead, and afterwards kneel upon her knees to get his blessing, and then pass the staircase and the little shop like a vision.

Ailey had entered in good time. The congregation were assembled—the lights on the altar showed that the sacrifice was about to commence, and her own little corner, just behind a confessional, was unoccupied. In fact, she (Ailey) was more known than she thought, and more loved and pitied in the city than ever she imagined; and no one now went to the little spot where Miss Moore had been seen to go a few times in succession; for no one would cross her, if they could. How little, again we say, the poor are known.

The Holy sacrifice was nearly finished, when Ailey's attention was attracted by the appearance of a young man some few yards before her. He partly stood and partly knelt on one knee during the mass, and this singularity was very striking; but besides she was almost certain that his face would reveal him to be one, who in her present circumstances was the very least desirable acquaintance. Ailey was dressed in grey—grey something which we don't know, and she had on a rustic bonnet with a green veil. The very first time she suspected who her neighbor might be, she dropped the veil, and a view of her face was therefore impossible. She sought to bury herself in her retreat, and anxiously looked for the end of the morning devotion, and to the movement of the congregation. If it happened to be the person who awakened so much anxiety he would scarcely be able to recognise her in her costume and the confusion of departure from the church.

At length the time came, and Ailey recommended herself to God's Holy Mother. The priest made his last inclination at the altar-foot; there was a pause to pray for the dead—that beautiful moment that unites us in God's mind with those whom we love—and all rose. The young man turned full round—it was James Boran! the vagabond who had insulted her when she had protectors, and helped to leave her in the desolation and bereavement which she felt was just before her. Ailey trembled a little, but she knew that if not discovered, emotion would be dangerous to concealment, and so she made an effort, strengthened by prayer, to be calm; and she succeeded. She left her little refuge, gently made her reverence, and proceeded down the nave—once outside the gates she thought herself in safety. She quickened her pace; she almost flew, poor child, and remembered not that such was the most successful way to awaken observation. She arrived at home; but as she turned to enter the little shop near the archway—a shadow fell upon her vision which told her she had not escaped, although it passed on apparently without stopping.

Arrived upstairs she was immediately obliged to seize a chair. Eddy was forthwith standing near her with a cup of water. Even at that moment, the poor boy was a comfort; nay, a security, and she gave him her hand in attestation of her gratitude. The boy took it in both of his, and he looked at her as she saw him look at his poor grandmother, only there was great reverence in his love-look. Then he laughed, and a tear then stole down his cheek, and finally he placed the small fair hand upon his head.—Ailey smiled, even in her fears. She felt that Eddy would die for her.

Contrary to Eddy's custom, he kept this day very near the window, not so as to be seen, as to see. Ailey had no reason to blame his curiosity; besides, he very seldom sought indulgence, so she paid no attention, or very little.—However, Eddy would eat there, and read there, and seemed to rush back there after every momentary withdrawal from the spot, so that at length Ailey said—

'You are fond of the window, Eddy!'

'Yes,' said the boy looking at her—and then into the street.

'Do you expect any one?'

'No, but—'

'But what, Eddy?'

'Hush!—Ail—Miss Ailey,' he said, reddening. 'Hush,' he said; 'the hawk! the hawk!'

'Eddy!'

'Boran!' said Eddy, while his teeth ground like madness.

'Oh, my God! my God! Mary, have pity on me!'

Eddy was from the window in a moment.—He was down at Ailey's feet; his face was laid upon her little shoes. He wept.

'My God!' again cried Ailey.

'Don't be afeard,' said Eddy.

'Oh, Eddy, I must be afraid.'

'No, Miss Ailey,' said the boy, firmly.

'Why?' she asked, struck by his manner.

'Granmother is in town,' said Eddy, smiling, 'and—'

'And what, Eddy?'

'And I know one, and Gran knows one to ketch the hawk; don't be afeard Miss Ailey.'

The young girl felt confidence; she hardly knew why.

'And who does Gran depend on, Eddy?—You must tell me everything.'

'Must I, Miss Ailey?' he was handling the riband of her shoe, and looking up into her beautiful face.

'Oh, no, Miss Ailey!' he replied; 'sure no—oh no.'

'And why, Eddy?'

'Because,' he answered, while the tears rolling down his face were a perfect contrast to the firmness of his voice; 'because Gran towld me, God an' Ailey—Miss Ailey Moore would hate a liar, and I never towd a lie.'

The young girl was affected; she saw he could keep a promise, and valued him the more. Besides, who knew that the man might not be compromised, or even herself, if she knew him? but certainly the beggarman, that strange, solemn mysterious man, stood before Ailey's mind, and not disagreeably.

As the clock struck twelve, Ailey had her small bonnet on, and her little basket on her arm. Eddy looked from his place near the window, but he did not stir. The young lady was calm—a little flush on her cheek—but only enough to render her more angelic, and a slight tremulousness in her voice, which only made it more musical. Eddy looked at her like a worshipper.

'So Eddy is not coming to-day.'

Eddy looked into the street, and aswered nothing. There was a twitch of the lips and eyelids; she knew that Eddy would bear anything on earth to go where she was going—to go with her anywhere—to be near her, and to see her and hear her; but now she was going to the JAIL.

Ailey knew that this poor beggar's grandson would be satisfied almost to die for the opportunity of seeing Gerald. Yet he remained, because he should watch for her—not satisfy himself. She began to feel some singular reverence for the little boy.

Ailey proceeded on her mission to the prison, and endeavored to prepare for her daily interview in such a way as to conceal her actual perturbation. She arrived safely at the great metal-door entrance: the huge knocker and the great rivets, and the iron tressel-work, and the high walls, contrasting with the green plot outside the gate, and the fine sunshine—all deepened the reflection of the prisoner's fate. She was admitted at once, with a courtesy which always marks an humble Irish official to a young lady. She met the parish clergyman coming out; he had just made a long visit to her brother; her brother's attorney also made his appearance; he had formed one of the morning council; all seemed prepared for her.

Ailey first ascended some steps, then passed along a corridor, then descended a few steps, and then turned on the right into a yard; having crossed the yard, she found herself near a colonnade, and was soon in the arms of her brother.

The multitude of questions regarding himself and all things on which she needed direction was not to be put where they then found themselves, so they passed along the yard before mentioned, groups eyeing them respectfully as they proceeded, until they came to the corridor, and in the corridor Gerald had his cell. It was by no means a bad sleeping-place, and he was allowed a table and any books he pleased. On the table were various pencil sketches, and a crucifix hung on the wall.

While the brother and sister conversed upon their hopes and fortunes—spoke about their father and Father Mick, and Moorfield—and both resolved to suffer with patience, and pray to God to spare their parents, spiritual and temporal—Ailey was turning over the sketches. She tremendously admired art, and she was looking at the heads of monks and priests, and philosophers and knaves; but at length turned upon a female countenance that fascinated her. The picture was a half figure, and a loose linen body only half concealed a symmetry which was perfection. The hair was black, and plainly laid over the marble brow, and the dark eyes shone out with a majesty almost too commanding. Ailey suddenly stopped in the middle of a sentence—

'Oh! how beautiful—or how—Gerald, who is this?'

'What does Ailey think of it?'

'Think, Gerald. Where did you see her? I thought it beautiful; I think it beautiful—and it frights me—that eye—that brow.'

'You would like her, Ailey, if you only knew her.'

Ailey was startled.

'You know her, then, Gerald?'

'Alas, yes, sister.'

'Where, dear Gerald—where?'

'Stay, darling—stay!' he said. 'Look here—this way!'—and drawing his sister to the iron bars of the cell, he pointed to the yard where a young girl stooped over a wash-tub. The poor thing worked away, and did not look around her. After a long time she raised her head—it was the original of the picture.

'My God!' exclaimed Ailey—'a prisoner!'

'A prisoner,' answered Gerald.

Ailey sat down upon the side of her brother's narrow bed.

'Ailey, love,' he said, 'there is one of seven children—three girls and four boys. They were born and reared at —— and received a liberal education. At sixty, the old man and his wife were turned on the high road, and themselves and the children left without a penny—ejected for another's rent. One brother went to America; the father died in the poor-house; the mother is blind from tears and want; the three younger boys have died of fever and destitution: one of the girls lies with them in the same pauper's grave; the other sister lives as domestic servant in ———, and that majestic-looking creature—'

Gerald paused—and Ailey looked at him.—She reddened—deepened, and looked like a flash of light into his face.

'Yes, sister,' he said, 'hers has been a misfortune worse than poverty, and a revenge like her misfortune.'

'O Gerald!'

'Ah, Ailey, God is very good to us,' said Gerald.

Ailey having remained the usual time, found as usual that hours flew by like minutes, and that she should say 'good-bye.' She learned that her brother's hopes depended upon shaking the credibility of Boran, and tracing the motives of Forde and his employer in this scheme. His attorney had strong suspicions, after a deep examination of the case, that Snapper knew something of Skerin's death. They should find the