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ELLEN; OR, THE ORCHARD-MAN'S DAUGHTER.

(From the Lamp.)

CHAPTER VII.

Well, it was May Sunday again, and in its bright beauty there was no disappointment this time; it was the perfect realization of the sunny warm bright day which young imaginations have ever pictured, and will ever picture it, notwithstanding the biting easterly wind, and the pouting sky, and the coquettish airs, the legacy of her predecessor, which often will spoil May's sweet face, and mar the sport of many a little votary, anxious to welcome the young summer queen with garlands of daisies, and primroses, and sweet harebells. Well, it was May Sunday, and cloudless the sun rose over the city as it sent forth its myriads into the fresh green fields. The smoke-dried denizens, the dwellers in streets and lanes, and crowded suburbs, some of whom had not partaken of the luxury of pure, fresh, unadulterated air since that day twelvemonth before.—Maying, at the era of our story, was much more fashionable than at present, at least among the class a semitone higher than the shopkeepers and artizans, but those generally chose May Sunday for their celebration, less, we fear, from a religious scruple of dissipating on the Sabbath, than from a notion that it was genteeler, as it certainly must have been quieter and pleasanter.—Many and well freighted were the vehicles that took their way through the beautiful outlets of the city to the shady nooks and dewy valleys beyond. We cannot say whether there was any law in force at the time against cruelty to animals, but if there was it was held lightly by dapper shopkeeper and sturdy tradesman, as he packed his "charge," of all sizes and ages, on jingle and Scotch cart or butt, as it may be, regardless of the week-worked beasties which panted beneath the load of live stock, and well-packed hampers with which they were so inconsiderately burdened; but they will have their holiday by-and-by too; astray on the common, or a nibble at the rich hedge side, in the green lanes, will refresh them and strengthen them to renew their toil, and to bear many an unnecessary stroke which will be dealt them on their homeward route. But we are lapsing into generalities, when we should be bringing our personages into full relief. Yes, it was May Sunday, and as early as seven o'clock in the morning a smart little donkey, tackled to a suitable cart, well filled with straw, and a bright green tamin quilt, cosily tucked round it, stood before a very neat whitewashed dwelling, on the Glanmire road, near Cork. It was the same cottage to which we led the reader on the first May Sunday of our introduction. It looked more life-like and cheerful now; the early sun was drinking the dew from the sparkling blades of the fresh green little plot before the windows. A lilac and laburnum tree in full blossom, stood on either side of the door; a border, about a foot wide, tidily enclosed by a compact row of scallop shells, displayed bachelors' buttons in every variety, double and single, red, white, and variegated. The delicious scented single wallflower, London pride, pansies, and sundry other plants of humble pretension and easy cultivation; there were no weeds, and the border had the air of being well and regularly cared. Mrs. Noonan was still the possessor of the cottage, and well may Mrs. D—— feel proud of the good which resulted from her timely well-directed benevolence. By untiring industry, self-denial, and careful management, Mrs. Noonan saw her little home once more look comfortable, and her children healthy and happy. A great era in the life of the little Noonans was this particular May Sunday. It was the first that they could afford to go Maying, really and truly Maying. On the former recurrences of the festival they had to be content with a walk to Sunday's well, and a feast of cakes and gingerbread, seated in a pleasant meadow, near the strawberry banks, over the sweet flowing Lee. But, to-day—oh, sweet prosperity! a real living donkey is at their disposal, and road-worthy cart ready to bear them to bear them to Watergrass-hill. There is William Noonan, a fine, sensible-looking boy, with a very good countenance. He sports a new suit of corduroys and a trim straw hat, cracking his whip merrily at the gate, not in gleeful anticipation of laying it presently on poor Jack. Oh, no, he was not a vicious boy, and no doubt he was only practising to bring out as large an amount of sound as was possible from the whip, which may warn poor Jack to be smart, without the necessity of striking him. Then there were his sisters Sally and Hannah, steady, cheerful-looking girls, in their blue stuff Sunday frocks, and check sun-bonnets; and the good widow herself, neat and tidy as usual, but to-day a wee bit finer. Her deep hemmed borders (which she still continued to wear in compliment to her "poor man" pinches with more care, and arranged with Quaker-like exactness. She and her girls were busy going to and fro, as people always are when preparing for an excursion, but it was so delightful, that in all the bustle of the little household, there were no angry names called, no impatient words spoken, or the holy name of God taken in vain. Mrs. Noonan had a great reverence for that holy name: it was never mentioned beneath her roof, at least by herself or any of her family, except in praise and thanksgiving; it was not only that she did not curse, but it was not used lightly or through custom, as unfortunately is too common. How often do we hear "Glory be to God," and "Praise be to God," uttered by people who have very little of His praise or glory in their hearts; and by people, too, who have been taught that the "Lord will not hold them guiltless who take the name of the Lord their God in vain." Well, we have said there were no angry words spoken. On the contrary, it was only "Hannah, astore," and "Sally, my comfort," you would hear, as the girls were summoned hither and thither; and then, "Yes, mother," was answered in such a cheerful, loving tone, it was like music. At length everything was ready, the basket packed, and for the information of those of Mrs. Noonan's class who may be some day going a-Maying, we will give the bill of fare. There was a piece of cold bacon cut into nice slices, and eight penny loaves of good household bread, and half a pound of cheese, in convenient pieces, and two bottles of new milk, and half a dozen eggs boiled hard; and many a time poor Mrs. Noonan said she was afraid she was a very foolish woman, and to have minded the eggs, and she getting ninepence a dozen for them from a regular customer. William took out the basket and tied it on, and there was nothing to be done but to give Pussy a little milk, and this same Pussy was a significant illustration of the training of the little Noonans. She had not the flighty, scared, emaciated look that those unfortunate animals have in some humble homes, martyrs to the cruel pranks of idle, ill-trained children.—Parents ought to be more observant of those evil dispositions in their children; it hardens little hearts, and the child accustomed to find amusement in torturing a poor animal, betrays instincts which a watchful parent should labor to destroy. Mrs. Noonan's cat was comely and sedate, and looking so well cared, that one would be apt to think if such things were customary, that Pussy's life was the lease of the premises.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I wonder what is keeping this child,' said Mrs. Noonan, as she put on her blue cloth cloak, a very respectable article, with a fine capacious hood, and from the very way that Mrs. Noonan put on that cloak you would say she was a clever, notable woman.

"Here she is! here she is!' shouted William from the gate, and in came a little girl about seven years of age, who had been invited to join the May folk. Her first move was to pull off her bonnet and kick it about the room, and it was well for the credit of the snowy sun bonnet that the bright redotiles were so scrupulously clean.

"Come, come, this is no way to treat your bonnet, miss,' said Mrs. Noonan, bringing the gleeful urchin to a stand as she replaced the bonnet.

"Oh; I'm so happy,' said the little creature. "I dreamed last night, Mrs. Noonan, that it was a very wet day entirely, and that we could not go at all,' and here she took another caper.

"Easy, Lanniv, easy,' said Mrs. Noonan, regarding her with looks of admiration, which any one must have bestowed on her who had seen her at that moment. Her soft brown hair, sunny and silky, fell naturally about her cheeks, and was not distorted by braids or disfigured by bows; the deep hazel eyes were full of light and joyousness; the plump cheeks were not disturbed by dimples, but there was one so deep in the tiny round chin that it brought it in near contact with the rosy lips, which continually showed two rows of pearly teeth; but it was not the features, though so pretty, but their tender, winning expression, which was so attractive. The little limbs were delicately formed, and had all the childish grace which belongs to no particular class. She might have made a meet emblem, indeed, of the infant summer month. She looked so bright and full of hopeful life, her name might not inaptly have been May; but it was not—it was Ellen Mannix. She was the only child of Richard Mannix, the orchardman, and a great pet and plaything of the little Noonans, who were some years her seniors, and of their mother, too, who, though often getting a little too much of her company, could not help loving and pitying her, poor child. We will not say anything more of Ellen's antecedents, but see her seated snug and safe between Mrs. Noonan and her daughters on the donkey-cart. We will not attempt to follow the rambles of the party this day, or even to guess at the number of daisies that were picked, or the dingles that were explored and rifled of primroses and violets and bonnie blue-bells, or the quantity of hawthorn that was obtained through William's dexterous climbing, or the birds' nests which were found and only peeped into with pardonable curiosity—not robbed. William never thought of doing such things, for he did not associate with the idle, wicked boys, who make it a practice, who strew their vicious pathways with the mossy nests on which such care and ingenuity has been expended, and who may be seen pelting each other with the tiny eggs on which so much love and anxiety had been lavished, regardless of the plaintive notes which haunt their footsteps. The little Noonans enjoyed themselves that long lovely summer's day, without inflicting pain on anything.

As dinner-hour arrived it became an object to find a little well to spread their repast near.—The noon was very sultry, and the two bottles of milk were exhausted. After a persevering search a pure, clear, covered little well was found, and its mossy curtains looked undisturbed, as if it was seldom visited.

"I wonder if it is a holy well, mother?' said Willie.

"I don't know, my child, whether a saintly man has prayed here long; there are no rags on the bush, and it does not look hereabouts as if people came to give rounds; but for all, Willie, 'tis only one of God's blessings, which are so common we don't care to thank Him for them. Oh! how it refreshed my poor heart, and what would we do at all if the Lord was pleased to dry them up on us? and 'tis only a miracle He does not do it by some of them. What scolding and cursing, and idle talk, and taking away of the neighbors' characters they do have there at times. Dear me, what thanks it is to give Him for what the greatest king in this world could not give us, and who'd die himself for the want of it.' Mrs. Noonan never allowed her own children to go to the well until they had got sense to do as she bade them, and not loiter or listen to the scandal and idle talk going on there.

It was twilight when Mrs. Noonan and her family reached home after their day's recreation. The fire was so skilfully slacked, that Hannah had very little trouble in kindling it up, and everything was so tidy and convenient, the rolling-pin so white, that Mrs. Noonan had a brown cake ready to put on the girdle as soon as the girdle was hot enough for it; Ellen's little hand all the while in every thing—now, kindling the fire with Hannah, or arranging the tea-cups with Sally, or taking the scrapings of the table from Mrs. Noonan's to make a little cake for herself.—Some after tea, and when they had talked over the sports of the day, Mrs. Noonan knelt down to say prayers, as the family were in the habit of doing every night. Ellen knelt with the rest, but we cannot say she was fervent all the time; however, she bowed her head and smote her breast every time Mrs. Noonan did so, and it did not prevent the intelligent little one from making her comments, as William felt, to his confusion, when they rose from their knees.

"Willie, I'm thinking,' said she, 'that you say your prayers like the way the geese talk.'

William blushed, but pleaded guilty; and acknowledged that the Christian Brothers had often lectured the boys on the subject; and Mrs. Noonan kissed Elly, and then some edifying anecdotes were told, and (amongst the rest) of the little boy who tended sheep on the Alps, and who could never say more of the Lord's Prayer than "Our Father, who art in heaven,' and he would stop then and begin to cry; and when asked why he cried, and did not finish the prayer, he said that he could not go on, but cry for joy to think that the Great King, who made all the grand sights around him, and lived in heaven, that beautiful place, should let him, a poor little boy, call him father.

CHAPTER IX.

But the brightest and happiest May Sunday must come to a close, and Mrs. Noonan grew fidgetty as it was growing late, and no person was coming to take Ellen home. Mrs. Noonan had a great objection to send out William after dusk on a road near a city where, unfortunately, of a Sunday evening there was much to be heard and seen that was not edifying or good for a boy to know: but as Mrs. Noonan was a very early riser, five o'clock in the summer seldom finding her in bed, she could not afford to be out of it late, and unwilling though she was, she bade William take Ellen home; and, happy as her heart could wish, she ambled on by his side, her little hands scarcely able to clasp the monster bunch of primroses she held. Many a bright path the young May moon made through the richly-blooming orchard, and many a silvery lamp she hung through the branches, and how sweet the white-washed cottage looked in the moonlight, and the green turfy benches on either side of the door, and the thin blue smoke curling gracefully above the trees, and soon lost in the clear air. Imagination might picture it the dwelling of virtue, contentment, and peace;—how suited it seemed to the bright innocent litttle being whose home it was, and who approached it like a playful lamb. As William and his little companion drew near, they stopped; for loud and angry voices came to them through the half door. After a little pause, however, they went in; and oh, what a change from the calm heavenly scene without. Richard Mannix, Ellen's father, sat on the end of a disorderly-looking table, smoking a pipe; he was not intoxicated, but greatly excited; and now and again addressed a bitter remark to his wife, who staggered about the room, kicking and pushing the furniture before her, and cursing and scolding vehemently. Alas! the unfortunate woman was drunk; she knew not what she said, cared not what she did, the grace of God had gone from her, and her distorted countenance as she spoke betrayed the evil spirit which possessed her.—Little Ellen ran up to her mother: 'See, mamma,' said she, 'the beautiful bunch of primroses I have brought you.'

"Let me alone, child, don't bother me,' said Mrs. Mannix, and she snatched the bunch of primroses from Ellen's hand, and flung them into the fire. Mrs. Mannix would have been sorry to have done this, or fretted her child, if she knew what she was doing; she had that sort of love for her which many a bad selfish mother has for her child, and would spoil her with petting in her sober moments.

"Oh! my posies, my posies,' roared Ellen, the little summer face drenched in tears.

"Don't cry; Hannah will give you hers tomorrow,' said William.

"I don't care, I don't care,' sobbed poor little Ellen; and she called her mother a very bold name.

"That is true for you, child, she is,' said the father; and here he took his wife's dress cap, which she had previously thrown on the table, and dashed it into the fire after the flowers.

"Oh, Ellen, don't call your mother names, 'tis very wicked,' said William; and he was very glad to run away home out of that wretched dwelling; for wretched it was, though there was no poverty there, only the absence of that grace which makes the poorest home happy.

Certainly there was a scene after William went away; cursing and fighting lasted for some time, the china on the dresser was broken, and Ellen was put to bed by her father, her little frame heaving sadly with the stifled sobs his coaxing and soothing could not at all hush.

Alas! the train of misery and evil which the indulgence of one bad passion draws after it.—Five at least of God's holy commandments Mrs. Mannix was breaking, besides the sin she caused in others. Did she not break the first commandment by making a god of her evil propensity, sacrificing to it her reason, in contempt of the grace and favor of her Creator? Did she not break the second by terrible blasphemy? She was certainly profaning the Lord's day, and keeping it like a brute. She broke the fourth by bad example to her child, and made her break it, shadowing the nature of the angel in her innocent and as yet unaccountable heart, and sending her to rest in rebellion against her. Then did she not outrage the fifth by quarrelling with, and abuse of, her husband? Oh, terrible indulgence! Oh, blackest crime in woman! Suddenly and sadly thus the light of Ellen's summer day was quenched. It was the first May Sunday which left an impression on her childish memory.

When William Noonan reached home he was pale and panting. Now there were many boys not nearly his age who would have been neither shocked nor surprised at what they had seen in the cottage of Richard Mannix. And why?—Simply because he was not accustomed to witness such scenes, or to hear of them. Mrs. Noonan, as we have said, was no gossiper. She valued her time too much to be a visitor in her neighbor's houses, unless she could be of some use there; and she did not encourage mere idle visitors. As Sophy Buckley said, they would not be bothered telling her anything, she would never stop her ironing or clear-starching to listen, and it made them sometimes ashamed of themselves. And when some scandal talker could not be got rid of by the broadest hint, she would send her children out of hearing of her uncharitable visitor, and so saved their young minds from being familiarized with vice. And thus it was that William now sat before her so shocked and frightened.

Mrs. Noonan was greatly grieved by what she heard from William, but not very much surprised, for she had heard of Mrs. Mannix's intemperate habits. When William told her the fate of Ellen's primroses, 'it would be well for the poor child herself if she had thrown her there instead of the flowers,' said Mrs. Noonan.

"Is it to have poor Ellen burnt alive, mother,' said William.

"She's just doing as badly by her poor child, my heart. The pain of the burning would soon be over, and Ellen would be in Heaven; but how will it be with her hereafter, perhaps when the soul may be lost through her mother's neglect and bad example? But now, William, don't you or the girls be talking to any one about the unfortunate woman. Our blessed Saviour gave us a warning not to be passing judgment on sinners: 'tis not for us to be exposing them, only to pray to God to convert them, and to give us grace not to do the likes. And be thankful ye have a sober mother yourselves; 'tis not praising myself I am, only Him that gave me grace to be so.'

CHAPTER X.

As Mrs. Noonan communed with herself that night, after the children lay down to peaceful rest, she thanked God with all her heart that she did not mind the suggestions of would-be friends, who would say to her, "You're neglecting yourself entirely, Mrs. Noonan, what a spectre you are—the Lord between us and harm! When you're over that washing-tub, you ought to take a pint of porter, or a glass of punch; if you don't, those you're pinching yourself for will soon be without you." And so on. But Mrs. Noonan did not. She distrusted herself, and feared that one pint might become two, and two multiply till she became that dreadful degrading stain on her sex, an "intemperate woman." How cheerfully Mrs. Noonan had lived on potatoes and milk, and the humblest fare, in order that she might be able to purchase school-books and comfortable clothing for her children, and give them the brown cake and tea on Sundays when they were good. Thus, by her self-denial and prudence, she made her little family really respectable, and could give them those comforts and small indulgences which had a salutary effect even on their moral culture; while many of her neighbors, with far better means, had their children shabby and ill-cared, and very commonly spent their earnings on two or three days in the week, and starved the remainder.

It was early on the morning following the May Sunday we have been telling of, when Ellen announced herself with a wow, wow, as usual, at the window of Mrs. Noonan's laundry. She was barefooted, with a soiled frock, and her hair wild and uncombed, and her face still smeared with the tears of the previous night. It was quite usual to see poor Elly in this trim of a morning. She was merrier, poor child, than might be expected, and a sugar-stick she held in her hand seemed to have thrown the fate of the primrose into oblivion; it was only when she saw those which Hannah and Sally had brought, and which now looked so fresh and so nicely arranged in little mugs, that she hung down her little head, and gave a small sigh; but she soon cheered again.

"'Twould be better for you to have a bun in you hand this morning than that sugar-stick.—Who gave it to you so early, Elly?' said Mrs. Noonan.

"Oh! that's a secret,' said Elly, trying to hide her little reddening face.

"Little children should have no secrets, Elly. Who gave it to you? Tell me, like a good child.'

"I promised not to tell anybody, father or mother, or anybody,' said Elly.

"That's very wrong, Elly; you should not make that promise, nor take anything you would not tell your father and mother; tell me where did you get it, or I'll be angry with you,' said Mrs. Noonan.

After some demur, and when she saw Mrs. Noonan was seriously displeased, Elly confessed that it was Nancy, her maid.

"But why wouldn't she let you tell?' said Mrs. Noonan.

It then came out that Elly went as usual that morning with the maid to drive home the cows; that Nancy, being a dishonest girl, and seeing the state her mistress was in, and knowing she would not be up to measure the milk, took advantage of this temptation left in her way, took some milk from the cows in the field, which she gave to a girl provided with a vessel to receive it, and then bribed little Elly, who was a quick, intelligent child, not to tell. "It was only a drop of milk she gave to a poor creature that was in want of it.'

Mrs. Noonan was puzzled what to do; she knew it was no use to tell it to Mrs. Mannix, or to Richard, either; he would only have a scene with his wife, and things would go on as usual; and as to Nancy's punishment, if she were turned away, worse might come, for no decent girl could remain at the Orchard Cottage. She took Elly on her knee, and tried to impress on her the sin she had committed by conniving at the robbery of her parents, and she said she should give her the sugarstick to give back to Nancy. At first Elly refused, but at length she gave it to Mrs. Noonan, and promised her faithfully never to do it again.

"Did you say your prayers this morning, Elly?' said she.

"No; I did not,' said Elly.

"No wonder you should have done wrong, Elly; kneel down, child, and say your prayers, and never leave your room without thanking