

# THE COLLEGIANS.

A TALE OF GARRYOWEN. BY Gerald Griffin.

## CHAPTER XXV.—Continued.

"Send her in," said Father Edward; "I don't like that secrecy."

Jim went out, and presently returned, ushering in with many curious and distrustful glances, the young female of whom he had spoken.

Father Edward desired her to take a chair, and then told the clerk to go out to the stable, and give the pony his afternoon feed.

When the latter had left the room, he indulged in a preliminary examination of the person of his visitor. She was young and well formed, and clothed in a blue cloak and bonnet, which were so disposed, as she sat as to conceal altogether both her person and her features.

"Well, my good girl," said the clergyman, in an encouraging tone, "what's your business with me?"

The young female remained for some moments silent, and her dress moved as if it were agitated by some strong emotion of the frame, at length, rising from her seat, and tottering towards the astonished priest, while she uncovered her face, with a burst of tears and sobbing: "Oh, uncle Edward, don't you know me?"

Her uncle started from his chair. Astonishment for some moments held him silent and almost breathless. He sat at last stooped down, gazed intently on her face, raised her, placed her on a chair, where she remained quite passive, resumed his own seat, and covered his face in silence with his hand.

Eily, more affected by this action than she might have been by the bitterest reproaches, continued to weep aloud with increasing violence.

"Don't cry—do not afflict yourself," said Father Edward, in a quiet, yet cold tone; "there can be no use in that. The Lord forgive me, child! Don't cry! Ah, Eily O'Connor! I never thought it would be our fate to meet in this manner."

"I hope you will forgive me, uncle," sobbed the poor girl; "I did, it for the best indeed."

"What!" exclaimed Father Edward, while his eyes lit up with sudden pleasure; "are you, then, married?"

"I was married, sir, a month before I left my father."

The good clergyman seemed to be more deeply moved by this intelligence than by anything which had yet occurred in the scene. He winked repeatedly with his eye-lids, in order to clear away the moisture which began to overspread the balls, but it would not do. The fountain had been unlocked, it gushed forth in a flood too copious to be restrained, and he gave up the contest.

He reached his hand to Eily, grasped hers, and shook it fervently and long, while he said, in a voice that was made hoarse and broken by emotion:—

"Well, well, Eily, that's a great deal. 'Tis not everything but it is a great deal. The general supposition was, that the cause of secrecy should be no other than a shameful one. I am very glad of this, Eily. This will be some comfort to your father." He again pressed her hand and shook it kindly, while Eily wept upon his own like an infant.

"And where do you stay, now, Eily?—where—who is your husband?" Eily appeared distressed at this question, and after some embarrassment, said: "My dear uncle, I am not at liberty to answer you those questions at present. My husband does not know of my having even taken this step, and I dare not think of telling what he commanded that I should keep secret."

"Secrecy still, Eily?" said the clergyman, rising from his seat, and walking up and down the room with his hands behind his back, and a severe expression returning to his eyes. "I say again, I do not like this affair. Why should your husband affect this deep concealment? Is he poor? Your father will rejoice to find it no worse. Is he afraid of the resentment of your friends? Let him bring back our own Eily, and he will be received with arms as open as charity. What, besides conscious guilt, can make him thus desirous of concealment?"

"I cannot tell you his reasons, uncle," said Eily, timidly; "but indeed, he is nothing of what you say."

"Well, and how do you live, then, Eily? With his friends, or how? If you will not tell where, you may at least tell how."

"It is not will not with me, indeed, uncle Edward, but dare not. My first act of disobedience cost me dearly enough, and I dare not attempt a second."

"Well, well," replied her uncle, a little annoyed, "you have more logic than I thought you had, I must not press you further on that head. But how do you live? Where do you hear Mass on Sundays? Or do you hear it regularly at all?"

Eily's drooping head and long silence gave answer in the negative. "Do you go to Mass every Sunday at least? You used to hear it every day, and a blessing fell on you and on your house while you did so. Do you attend it on Sunday itself?"

Eily continued silent. "Did you hear Mass a single Sunday at all since you left home?" he asked in increasing amazement.

Father Edward again paused for a considerable time, and eventually addressed his niece, with a deep seriousness of voice and manner. "Eily," he said, "a strong light has broken upon me respecting your situation. I fear this man, in whom you trust so much and so generously, and to whose will you show so perfect an obedience, is not a person fit to be trusted nor obeyed. You are married, I think to one who is not proud of his wife. Stay with me, Eily, I advise you—I warn you. It appears by your own words that this man is already a tyrant; he loves you not, and from being despotic he may grow dangerous. Remain with me, and write him a letter. I do not judge the man. I speak only from general probabilities, and these would suggest the great wisdom of your acting, as I say."

"I dare not, I could not, would not do so," said Eily. "You never were more mistaken in anybody's character than in his of whom you are speaking. If I did not fear, I love him far too well to treat him with so little confidence. When next we meet, uncle, you shall know the utmost of my apprehensions. At present, I can say no more. And the time is passing, too," she continued, looking at the sunshine which traversed the little room with a ray more faint and oblique. "I am pledged to return this evening. Well, my dear uncle, good-bye! I hope to bring you back a better niece than you are parting now. Trust all to me for three or four days more, and Eily never will have a secret again from her uncle nor her father."

"Good-bye, child—good-bye, Eily," said the clergyman, much affected. "Come here, Eily, an instant." He took up the linen bag before mentioned, and shook out into his hand the remaining silver of his dues. "Eily," said he with a smile, "it is a long time since uncle Edward gave you a Christmas-box. Here is one for you. Open your hand, now, if you do not wish to offend me. Good-bye—Good-bye, my poor darling child!" He kissed her cheeks, and then, as if reproaching himself for an access of leniency, he added in a more stern accent, "I hope Eily, that this may be the last time I shall have to part from my niece, without being able to tell her name."

Eily had no other answer than her tears, which, in most instances were the most persuasive arguments she could employ.

"She is an affectionate creature, after all," said Father Edward, when his niece had left the house—"a simple, affectionate, little creature; but I was right to be severe with her," he added giving himself credit for more than he deserved; "her conduct called for some severity, and I was in the right to exercise it as I did."

So saying, he returned to his chair by the fireside, and resumed the reading of his interrupted Office.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW HARDRESS CONSOLED HIMSELF DURING HIS SEPARATION FROM EILY.

Danny the Lord did not, as Eily was tempted to fear, neglect the delivery of her letter to Hardress. Night had surprised him on his way to Mr. Cregan's cottage. A bright crescent shed, its light over the lofty Toomies, and flung his own stunted shadow on the lime-stone road as he trudged along, breathing now and then on his cold fingers and singing:—

"Oh, did you not hear of Kate Kearney, Who lives on de banks of Killarney? From de glance of her eye Shun danger and fly, For fatal's de glance of Kate Kearney."

He had turned in upon the road which led to Aghadoc, and beheld at a short distance the ruined church and the broken grave-stones which were scattered around its base. Danny, with the caution which he had learned from his infancy, suppressed his unhallowed song as he approached this mournful retreat, and stepped along with a softer pace, in order to avoid attracting the attention of any spiritual loiterers in his neighborhood. The grave of poor Dalton, the huntsman, was amongst the many which he beheld, and Danny knew that it was generally reported amongst the peasantry, that his ghost had been frequently seen in the act of exercising, after death, that vocation to which during life, he had been so ardently attached. Danny, who had no ambition to become a subject for the view-halloo to his sporting acquaintances, kept on the shady side of the road, in the hope that by this means he might be enabled to "stale by unknownst."

Suddenly the night wind, which hurried after, bore to his ear the sound of several voices, which imitated the yelling of hounds in chase and the fox-hunter's cry. Danny started aghast with terror a heavy and turbid sensation pressed upon his nerves, and all his limbs grew damp. He crossed himself, and drew close to the dry stone wall which bounded the roadside.

"Hoicks! Come! come!—come away! Hoicks!" was shouted at the top of a voice that, one might easily judge, had sounded the death-knell of many a wily reynard. The cry was caught up, and echoed at various distances by three less practised voices. The ringing of horses' hoofs against the hard and frosty road was the next sound that encountered the ear of the little lord. It approached rapidly nearer, and grew too sharp and hard to suppose that it could be occasioned by any concussion of immaterial substances. It proved, indeed, to be a danger of a more positive and actual kind. Our traveller perceived, in a few minutes, that the noise proceeded from three drunken gentlemen who were returning from a neighboring debauch, and urging their horses forward at the summit of their speed with shouts and gestures, which gave them the appearance of demons.

The foremost perceiving Danny Mann, pulled up his horse with a violent check, and the others, as approached imitated his example. The animals (which were worthy of kinder masters) appeared to participate in the intoxication of their riders. Their eyes flared, their mouths were hid in foam, and they snorted in impatient scorn of the delay to which they were subjected.

"Tally!" cried the first who galloped up. "Ware bailiff! Who are you?"

"A poor man, sir, dat's going de road to—"

"Hoicks! A bailiff! Come! come away! Don't I know you, you limb of mischief? Give me out your processes, or I'll beat you into jelly. Kneel down there on the road until I ride over you!"

"Dat de hands may stick to me, sir, if I have a process in de world."

"Kneel down, I say!" repeated the drunken horseman, shaking his whip loose, and applying it several times with all his might to the shoulders of the recusant. "Lie down on the road until I ride over you, and trample your infernal brains out."

"Pnk him! Sweat him! Pink the rascal!" cried another horseman, naked sword. "Put up your whip, Connolly; out with your sword, man and let us pink the scoundrel."

trate lord; but the animal true to that noble instinct which distinguishes the more generous individuals of his species, refused to fall in with the bloody humor of his rider. He set his feet apart, demi-vaulted to either side, and would not, by any persuasion or sleight of horsemanship, be prevailed upon to injure the fallen man.

Danny recovering from the stunning effects of the blow, and perceiving the gentlemen hemming him round with their swords, now sought in an appeal to their mercy, that security which he could not obtain by flight. He knelt before them lifted up his hands, and implored in accents which would have been irresistible by any but drunken gentlemen on a pinking frolic. But his cries were drowned in the savage shouts of his beleaguers. Their swords gathered round him in a fearful circle, and Cregan commenced operations by a thrust in the arm, which left a gash of nearly half an inch in depth. His companions, who did not possess the same dexterity in the exercise of the weapon, and were nevertheless equally free of its use, thrust so frequently, and with so much awkwardness, that the unfortunate deformed ran a considerable risk of losing his life. He had already received several gashes in the face and was growing faint with pain and anxiety, when the voice of a fourth horseman was heard at a little distance, and young Hardress Cregan, as little self-possessed as the rest, galloped into the group. He drew his small sword, flourished it in the moon-light with a fierce halloo! that was echoed far away among the lakes and mountains, and prepared to join in the fun. But one glance was sufficient to enable him to recognize his servant.

"Connolly, hold! Hold off, Cregah. Hold, or I'll stab you!" he cried aloud, while he struck up their swords with passion. "How dared you set upon my servant? You are both drunk! go home, or I'll hash you!"

"Drunk!" said his father, "puppy! wha-what do you call d-d-drunk? D-d-d- you day I'm drunk? Eh?" And he endeavored, but without much success, to assume a steady and dignified posture in his saddle.

"No, sir," said Hardress, who merited his own censure as richly as any one present; "but a—the—these two gentlemen are."

"Dye hear that, Cregah?" said Connolly. "Come along, and show him if we're drunk. Look here, Mister Slender-limbs! Do you see that road?"

"I do," said Hardress, who might have conscientiously sworn to the seeing more than one.

"And do you—look here—do you see this horse?"

"I do," said Hardress, with some gravity of deliberation.

"And do you see me?" shouted the querist.

"He raised his desperate foot On stirrup side, and gazed about."

"Ve-very well! You see that road, and you see my horse, and you see me! Ve-very well. Now, could a drunken man do this? Ye-hoicks! Come! come! come away!—hoicks! Come! saying, he drove the rowels into his horse's flanks, stooped forward on his seat, and galloped away with a speed that made the night air whistle by his ears. He was followed at an emulative rate by Hyland Cregah and the elder Cregan.

Hardress now assisted the afflicted Danny to mount behind him, and putting spurs to his horse, rode after his companions at a pace but little inferior, in point of speed, to that which they had used.

not in birth. But, tush, as Sterne says, 'are we not all relations?' Look at this hand! I admire you, Danny Mann! I respect, I venerate you; I think you a respectable person in your class; respectable in your class; and what more could be expected from a king? I admire, I love you, Danny! You are a king in heart, though not," he repeated, lowering the tone of his eulogy, while he fixed his half-closed eyes upon the deplorable figure of the little lord, "though not in appearance."

Anybody who could contemplate Danny's person at this moment, might have boldly joined in the assertion that he was not a "king in appearance." The poor hunchback sat forward in the chair in a crouching attitude, half terrified, and abashed by the finery with which he was surrounded. His joints were stiffened from the cold, his dress sparkling with hoar-frost, and his face of a wretched white wherever it was not discolored by the clothed blood. At every noise he half started from his seat, with the exclamation: "Tunder alive; it's de missez!"

"Nancy!" Hardress said addressing the old woman who came to answer the bell; "Nancy, draw that table near to the fire, there, and slip into the dining-parlor, do you hear? and bring here the whisky, a jug of hot water, a bowl, two glasses and a lemon. Don't say a word to the gentlemen; I'll take a quiet glass here in comfort with Danny."

"With Danny!" exclaimed the old woman, throwing up her hands. "Oh, dat I mightn't sin, master, if I dare do it," said Danny, springing out of the chair. "I'll be kilt by de missez."

(To be continued.)

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