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ELLEN CLARE.

BY MISS AGNES STRICKLAND.

The last beams of a glorious sunset in the beginning of June, shone on the castellated hall of Rosecourt, one of the most splendid relics of Gothic architecture in England that had survived the assaults of sap and siege during the civil wars, or the yet more destructive change of taste which in those modern days has inclined our nobility to replace the august time-honoured residences of their ancestors, with the mushroom white brick edifices of the *parvenu*. The magnificent woods that rise in the background, and sloped down on either side to the shores of the Medway, were in the full pride of those tender yet brilliant tints, which succeed the first unfolding of the summer foliage, and are too exquisite to linger long. The hedges were still white with the profuse blossoms of the hawthorn, and the park was enamelled with every variety of wild-flower.

The bells were ringing merrily from the old grey tower of the village church, on the opposite bank of the river, and the sound, mellowed as it was from the effect of the intervening woods, and mingled with the vesper song of a thousand birds singing from brake and bough, fell sweetly on the listening ear, and conveyed ideas of festivity, peace, and joy. But these were feelings that found no place in the breast of the wretched pedestrian who had just gained the summit of a gentle hill that commanded a view of the stately mansion, which now, for the first time, burst upon her sight in its baronial grandeur.

Ellen Clare felt herself painfully oppressed with contending emotions as she passed to survey that fair domain and ancient seat of nobility, and, pressing her trembling hands upon her agitated bosom, as if to still its convulsive throbbings, she asked herself if it were possible that the gold locket which she then wore, indeed contained a bright ringlet that had been shorn from the head of the heir of this proud family, and presented to her by himself, in exchange for one of her glossy tresses, when last they parted.

Since that time, what days of ignominy had been hers. Yet Ellen, in the fond confidence of trusting love, relied on the strength of Lord Mowbray's affection, and would have deemed she wronged him, had she entertained a doubt of his performing those oft-reiterated promises of marriage which he had made, not only personally but by letter. Latterly, indeed, his letters had become shorter and less frequent, and at length he had ceased to write altogether. Some months had passed away since she had heard from him, but Ellen could not believe that this alarming proof of forgetfulness could proceed from falseness or neglect. At first she attributed Lord Mowbray's silence to accident, and lastly to illness. Yes, she was sure he was ill, very ill, or he would have written to her; and she thought it possible that her lordly lover, like Edwin in Mallet's touching ballad was pining for her presence, and his proud

family would not permit him to send for her; and the simple girl wept with impassioned tenderness at the supposition.

Whatever may have been said in praise of solitude, it is a dangerous fosterer of the susceptibilities of a young and sensitive heart. Ellen Clare was the only surviving child of a widowed curate, with whom she had grown up from infancy, in the seclusion of the humble parsonage of an obscure village, far remote from the great metropolis. Never having mingled with the world, she was alike unacquainted with its forms, its distinctions, its restraints, and its wiles. Her father, when not engaged in his pastoral duties, was too much absorbed in his studies to bestow much attention on the every-day concerns of life; and he was therefore unconscious that his beautiful and beloved girl had arrived at that perilous season when paternal watchfulness and advice would be most required to supply the place of a mother's care.

Having no counsellor of her own sex on whose friendship she could rely, and shrinking from the task of disclosing her feelings to her father, she formed the desperate resolution of quitting her paternal roof under the cover of night, for the purpose of seeking Lord Mowbray at the hall of his ancestors.

Had Ellen known enough of the world to form a proper estimate of the accidents, perils, and distress to which she might possibly be exposed in the course of such a journey, and the bitter disappointment in which it was only too likely to end, it is probable that it never would have been undertaken; but, unconscious of all that would have deterred a more experienced person—guided only by the deceitful beacon of a lover's hope—she left the home of her childhood, having first written a few incoherent lines to her father, in which she partially explained the reason of her flight.

While animated with the powerful excitement of pressing onwards to the completion of her arduous undertaking, doubts, fears, and even personal fatigue and suffering, were forgotten by the hapless traveller; but when its difficulties were surmounted, and the weary miles that intervened between her native village and the distant and unknown bourn to which she had hurried, had been traversed, and Ellen gazed for the first time on the lordly towers of Rosecourt, the hope that had supported her through every trial died within her, for never till that moment had she fully comprehended the distinction which fortune had opposed between the heir of princely domains & herself. But even while this conviction struck the chill of despair to her heart, love was ready to whisper, "Was not Mowbray aware of this vast distance in their stations?" and had he not sworn that a cottage shared with her would be preferable to all that the world could bestow without her! and the truth of her own guileless heart forbade the simple Ellen to suspect falsehood in the man on whom she had bestowed her youthful affections.

Anxious above all things to ascertain whether he were at the castle, she timidly approached the porter's lodge, and requested a glass of water. Sarah Colton, the porter's wife, was struck with the youth and loveliness of the weary pedestrian, and, observing that she appeared overcome with heat and fatigue, invited her to enter and take a seat, telling her, at the same time, that cold water was improper for her, but if she would wait till her daughter came in with the pail, she would give her some new milk and a home baked cake. Ellen gratefully availed herself of this kind offer; and when the porter's wife, in the course of conversation, asked her if she had ever seen the fine old hall, she replied in the negative, and eagerly embraced the opportunity of inquiring if the family were at home. "The Earl and Countess are both at the castle," replied Sarah, "and my young lord is expected to return this evening."

Ellen's heart beat quick and tumultuously; her colour went and came, and, in voice scarcely articulate from strong emotion, she demanded "If Lord Mowbray would pass through these gates on his way to the castle?" "We shall be greatly disappointed if he does not," replied the good woman; "do you not see

how gaily we have dressed the archway with flowers for them to pass under? All the tenants have gone out on horseback to meet them. There is a band of music stationed on the road to strike up a lively tune as the carriage comes in sight, and there will be fire-works in the park to-night. We did not have half such grand doings at my Lady's Jan's wedding, because she chose to please herself, and marry a younger son, you know. But this is a match after my old lord's own heart, for the young lady is a duke's daughter, with a fine fortune, and suitable in all respects to be my Lord Mowbray's wife."

"His wife!" shrieked Ellen; "you do not mean to say that Lord Mowbray is married?" "Surely I do," returned the other; "and if you wait a few minutes longer you will see both him and his bride, for I know by the bells striking out such a brave peal that the carriage is now crossing the bridge, and they will be at these gates almost immediately."

The hue of death overspread the features of the wretched Ellen at these words, and she fixed her eyes upon the speaker with a look of such unutterable despair, that the most inexperienced person in the world might have comprehended the intensity of her agony, though she shed no tears. "Good luck!" cried Sarah, in some alarm, "do you know any thing of our young lord, that the news should upset you thus? And yet it is no such great news neither, for he has been married these five months; only he has been on his bridal tour, so folks call it, and this is the first time of his bringing her ladyship home to the hall."

The cold drops of mental agony stood on Ellen's brow. She rose from her seat and moved towards the door with hurried and tottering steps, and when the porter's wife professed her promised refreshment, she sat it aside with a faint smile; and though her colourless lips murmured something that was meant to express acknowledgments for her kindness, the words were inarticulate. "Poor poor young thing," said the compassionate Sarah, casting a pitious regard on Ellen's figure. "A lady, too! But you shall not go, indeed you shall not, till you are better," continued she stepping betwixt Ellen and the door. "Let me depart?" cried the wretched girl, in a voice broken and hoarse from strong emotion. "I tell you I will not be detained," she added fiercely. "Dearest young lady, do not be angry," returned Sarah, soothingly; "but indeed I could not answer it to my conscience if I permitted you to quit the lodge in your present state of mind." "Nay, but I will go!" shrieked Ellen, in a tone of the wildest desperation. "do you think I will stay to see him, now he is the husband of another? And he would know me, too! Oh, let me go hence, for pity's sake." "Hush, dearest lady," whispered the porter's wife, drawing her back, and restraining her with gentle violence; "you cannot leave the lodge now without meeting the carriage. Surely you would not wish to do that?"

The merry notes of the pipe and tabor, the roll of the drums, and the flourish of the wind instruments, mixed with the pealing of the bells, and the joyful exclamations of the peasantry announcing the near approach of Lord Mowbray and his bride, smote on the ear of Ellen like the knell of herself and her father. A stupefying horror stole over her—her brain reeled—a darkening mist shaded her eyes—breath and circulation were alike suspended—and the ground appeared receding from beneath her feet; but the roll and ruck of the carriage wheels, dashing up to the park gates, roused her from the insensibility into which she was gradually sinking. At first, so far from availing herself of the opportunity of surveying the bridal party, while she herself remained unseen, she closed her eyes, and pressed her hands upon them, to exclude, if possible, the light of day; but when the open carriage stopped under the arched gateway, and the dearly loved and fatally familiar voice of Lord Mowbray met her ear, her eyes instinctively followed that sound, and she looked once more upon him—and more than that, she glanced with a sudden and desperate curiosity from him to her fortunate rival; and though she did not

like her luckless namesake in the old ballad exclaim, "Is this your bride, Lord Thomas?" yet in the very climax of her misery, she could not help observing that Lady Mowbray was many years older than herself, and that her personal attractions, even when set off in the bridal finery of lilac sash, white feathers, and Brussels lace, could not equal her unadorned charms. "But he does not think so!" she sighed, as she withdrew her eyes, and closed them in despair; for what to her, in this withering desolation of heart, were the fairest possessions of youth and beauty.

Lord Mowbray spoke again, and once more the unhappy Ellen felt herself impelled to listen, for the soft soothing tones of tenderness in which he spoke, were so precisely the same in which he had been accustomed to address herself, that she scarcely believed it possible that they could be uttered to another ear than hers. It was, however, Lady Mowbray, to his wife, that he now turned and said, with an air of affectionate solicitude, "Caroline, my love, wrap your cloak about you. The mist is rising from the river, and I am apprehensive lest you should take cold, as we must proceed through the park at a slow pace, out of compliment to these good people who have come to meet us, and welcome their future lady to Rosecourt. Indeed you look fatigued; I fear the exertion of travelling twenty miles to-day has been too much for you in your present situation."

Whatever was Lady Mowbray's reply, Ellen heard it not—a pang more bitter than death, had transfixed her heart. Her anguish was too mighty for her feeble travel-worn frame, and with a suppressed hysterical sob, she sank upon the ground.

It was well for the forlorn wretch that she had fallen into the hands of the Christians. During her illness she was attended with the most solicitude. A dangerous fever had seized upon her frame, and for many days Ellen vibrated between life and death, reason and insanity; yet not so fortunate as to find forgetfulness in delirium, the cause of her distress was ever present to her mind; and she raved continually about Lord Mowbray and her wrongs, till the whole story became familiar to the humble but compassionate inhabitants of the lodge. While the porter's family were yet undecided in what manner to make known the circumstance to their young lord, he had received a hasty summons to embark with his regiment for the Peninsula, to join the army under the command of Sir John Moore; and the only opportunity that offered for addressing his lordship on the subject, was when he was about to pass through Colton's gates, on his way to London. Lord Mowbray was then hurried and agitated having just taken a final leave of his parent and his wife, but the earnest and solemn manner in which Sarah Colton entreated him to enter the lodge, and listen to a sad story in which he was only too deeply concerned, induced him reluctantly to comply with her request. She led him, without further explanation, into the chamber where, with death-pale features, and eyes which, although open, were rayless, and unconscious of outward objects, lay the attenuated form of his once lovely and beloved Ellen. "Merciful heaven!" cried Lord Mowbray, stepping back in utter consternation, while the colour faded from his quivering lip, "what is the meaning of this? How came she here?"

(To be continued.)

GAMBLING MANIACS.

Persons in the humble and middle ranks of society live in a state of happy ignorance of the distresses caused in the "upper circles" by gambling. They do not know, for instance, that sometimes noblemen and gentlemen perill thousands of pounds on the turn of a card, or a throw of a die, and that, in some cases, a large and valuable landed estate will be lost by an individual in a single night's play. Gaming, in fact, though greatly modified of late years, and pursued chiefly for excitement, is the vice which preys on the higher orders of society, and causes a torturing disquietude and humiliation of feeling, where, otherwise, there need be nothing to give serious distresses either in