



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XI.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 1861.

No. 36.

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

(From the Lamp.)

(Continued.)
While Billy was in hearing, Mrs. Buckley dared not say a word; but when he was gone she began—
“Ah! God will have it in store for you, my boy; mark my words for it He will; and you'll have the reward that all undutiful children have, sooner or later.”

“Tis no wonder if he was undutiful,” said Sophy, “when you're always fault-finding with father before him.”
“Do you dare say that to my face, you impudent hussey? I was well in my way of making fine ladies of ye May Sunday; but I don't blame ye, 'tis all your good father's doing; he won't correct ye, only encourages ye to give me insolence; you deserve to have me knock your head against the wall,” said Mrs. Buckley, contenting herself, however, with giving Sophy's hair a smart pull, and sending her crying to the bedroom. A neighboring teapot being forthcoming, Mrs. Buckley buttered her hot bun, for such she would have every morning it was possible, and what with comments on Charley Noonan's death, and Mrs. Noonan's not having a wake, and Norry Cahill's impudence, and the undutiful conduct of her children, and the unreasonableness of her husband, she was not silent during her preparations. When the first saucer of tea was sipped, she got into a more amiable mood, and desired her daughter Jane to coax Sophy out; but Sophy would not be coaxed; and then some of the best of the breakfast was sent into her with word not to be stubborn, not to be breaking her poor mother's heart. This done, Mrs. Buckley and her other children breakfasted and gossiped, nor was subject wanting. Mrs. Buckley told all the news she had heard or pryed out in her candle-lighting rounds, and Sophy related all she had gathered at the well, where she had spent a precious morning hour listening to all the idle talk that went on there concerning every one, great or humble, in the vicinity.

It was all well, or seemingly so, until Billy returned.
“Well, was he very mad? He didn't eat much,” said Mrs. Buckley, examining the basket. Mrs. Buckley's sons seldom spoke without using the holy name of God; indeed, such profaneness and wickedness was habitual in the family.

“He was cool enough,” said the boy; “he told me to tell you, that if you didn't care for his comforts, he'd care for himself; that he was after taking a pot of porter and a glass before I went, and that it was not the only one he'd take to-day.”

“Wisha, wisha, God help me! he'll be on the reel now for the next week,” said Mrs. Buckley.

And her words were verified, for that week he did not give one whole day to work. The intemperance of one day had to be slept off on the next, and so it went on; Mrs. Buckley, on her part, spending her time in idle complaints among the neighbors, some of whom sympathized with her when present, but very few of the well-disposed really pitied her; and yet she was truly an object of compassion—only to think what she was, and what she might have been; the responsibility that was hers, and her sad neglect of her duties. Her husband was a carpenter, and a very clever tradesman, earning on an average thirty shillings a week; moreover, he was of an easy and good-natured disposition, and if he had possessed the blessing of a sensible good wife, he would have borne a very fair character, and have been very independent in his way. Naturally he had no taste for the alehouse, but the discomfort of his home was so great, and the neglect of his comforts becoming every day of more frequent recurrence, he madly sought relief in its stimulants, and was in fair way of becoming a habitual drunkard.

As to Mrs. Buckley, she had no very glaring vice; at least none that would keep her without the pale of intercourse with her neighbors. In one sense, her moral character was without blemish; and though fond of feasting, she was not a drunkard. Nevertheless, her example was not the less dangerous or disedifying, for she was a neglectful wife and mother, and an idle, extravagant, gossipier. She was a scandal-talker, she blasphemed in a passion, and habitually profaned the name of God; and she was all this to the scandal of four unfortunate beings whom she had brought into the world, and whose prospects of earthly enjoyment she was surely destroying as she was their right to a happy eternity. And she might have so different, so rich in making a right use of God's blessings; but she seldom or never thought of Him, though His holy name was often on her unrighteous lips.

Mrs. Buckley spent that week drinking, and his wife in running hither and thither, borrowing and taking on credit those necessaries and luxuries which his regular work at other times insured.

To return to Norry Cahill. Having left a

supply of sweets with the little orphans, she repaired to Mrs. Noonan's. She met Richard Mannix coming out, after having spoken a few blunt words of kindness to the widow, and putting half-a-crown into Willie's hand. Norry was not long in preparing a fine pot of tea; she induced Mrs. Noonan to partake of a cup; and the latter wanted to take it to Willie, he was so badly, but Norry would not allow her, but took him one herself; and as she saw the refreshment that cup of nice hot tea was to the poor sick boy, and saw it bring back the life-blood to the livid cheeks of the worn-out, exhausted mother, she would have been the happiest of beings at that moment, were it not for the recollection of her broken promise. Poor Mrs. Noonan, how much she needed that cup of strong tea; but what a strange effect it had on her; it was scarcely taken when she fainted—fainted from sheer weakness; it was many months since she had taken anything so good; scarcely, indeed, had she allowed herself sufficient nourishment to keep up her strength, for she could not bear to see her sick husband want for any comfort; and at that time there was no Mercy institution in the city, the pious sisters of which would have brought him those little luxuries, so grateful and necessary to the consumptive patient. Norry's good heart bled for Mrs. Noonan, as she would express it herself. She felt she almost owed her life to her care, for Mrs. Noonan had attended her in a bad fever, when the whole world seemed to have forgotten her, and had been a kind friend in many dilemmas, Norry thought she could never do too much for her, and yet how little was in her power to do. She felt very remorseful that she could not afford to devote a few days entirely to comfort and assist Mrs. Noonan, and care for her sick boy, who was very ill, and feverish; but it was another effect of her thoughtless imprudence and want of forethought in providing for the rainy day. She must not now remain from work; her doing so would only make matters worse; if it allowed her to be in one way, it would prevent her being of assistance in another. So, having settled a pillow on the little table near the corpse, and made Mrs. Noonan place her weary head thereon; and having left a drink by Willie, she had to go, glad to snatch a few moments at intervals to see how they were getting on.

Mrs. Noonan spent a lonesome, anxious day; lonesome for her husband, and uneasy about her little boy. Not many of the neighbors called, and such as did, made very cold, commonplace inquiries. Mrs. Noonan was not popular in the parish; some called her mean, some ‘stand-off,’ some selfish, and some said they did not know what to make of her. As to the first charge, the only proof they could adduce was, that she never joined in giving a feast or a tea-drinking, that she was very provident and careful in trifles; that she took in fine things to make up, on her own account, at a time when her husband was earning more than they spent, and though he said fifty times that he did not wish her to be distressing herself, that she had enough to do minding the house and children. But Mrs. Noonan, by her good management, had the time to spare, and she thought it was much better to be profitably employed, than to be idle, and so she was mean. The only foundation for the second charge was, that Mrs. Noonan was not at all fond of going into a neighbor's house for the purpose of having a talk, nor of encouraging them to idle their time in hers. When her husband was in health, and their circumstances good, she might easily have found time to indulge such propensity, but she preferred spending it in keeping her house and every thing in it scrupulously neat, and her husband and children's clothes tidy, and well mended; in fact, in taking such good care of her own family, that she had no time to interfere with the affairs of others, or talk over them.— She was never seen of a Sunday or week-day leaning on her arms over the half-door, watching the passers-by. Mrs. Buckley had been often heard to say, that she would not be bothered telling that woman anything; that she surpassed her entirely; that if you were telling her the most extraordinary things that ever came to pass, that she would not take her hands out of the washing-tub to listen to you, but go on scrubbing away, and drowning your voice, so as you couldn't hear yourself speak. Such seeming indifference to the concerns of others no doubt left Mrs. Noonan open to the third charge—selfishness. It must be so, for many of her neighbors had experienced that selfishness, in a strict sense, could not possibly be laid to Mrs. Noonan's charge. Many knew well that where there was a sick person in a house that Mrs. Noonan could find time to make inquiries, and assist an inexperienced mother or daughter to make a syrup or drink, and give a little pecuniary aid, too, if it was much needed; that it was, perchance, that made some say they did not know what to make of her. No; Mrs. Noonan was not a favorite; some even disliked her, because she was made a reproach to them

by their husbands; and some were now glad to say that, as great a pattern as she was, she had not the more luck. Foolish reasoners; they had to learn that though the Lord, for His own wise though mysterious ends, chooses to try those He loves—to appoint a season of probation and tribulations to them, yet that their misfortunes are of a widely different nature from the punishment He inflicts on those who fear Him not, nor keep His law; and that though the just man may suffer for a time, yet very rare are the instances where the Lord does not reward, even in an earthly way, the perseverance and industry of those who labor under His blessing, which blessing they have earned by the endeavor faithfully to obey His holy precepts.

But though Mrs. Noonan was no favorite, yet it was not the ordinary nature of her feelings towards her that operated on her neighbors in causing them to withhold their sympathy from her in her present bereavement; people can forgive easily those whom they consider subjects for pity, rather than envy, and Mrs. Noonan's transgressions were really so undefined in character, that they might have been wholly forgotten in her present position, but for the feeling that was got up against her by her unamiable neighbor. Mrs. Buckley, practised gossipier as she was, had the knack of coloring circumstances which might deceive the most unprejudiced; and, unfortunately, she did not hesitate at falsehood when it suited her purpose. That she would not have a public wake for such a good, unexceptionable husband, was crime dark enough in their eyes; but when they were told that it was all a sham her wanting money—that it was very convenient for her to turn every thing into ready cash to cheat her creditors; and that she would have got a parish coffin, only that she, Mrs. Buckley, threatened to make a show of her if she did so, then the exclamations against her knew no restraint; all agreed in Mrs. Buckley's resolve to ‘let her brew as she baked,’ not to sit an hour at the wake, nor to attend the funeral.

Though Mrs. Noonan's affliction was too deep to admit of being much increased by the slights of her neighbors, yet she felt not a little their neglect and unkindness. The first night of the wake Norry Cahill and herself were almost alone with the corpse. Richard Mannix came in at midnight, and asked if his wife was gone home. Norry replied that she had not been there at all that evening.

“She left home at nine o'clock purposely to come down here,” said he, “and I'd have come myself, but there was no one to look after the child, and I gave her the preference of coming. I was a wise man, though, to believe her. I suppose she is coshering in some of her haunts; but this is no place for such talk,” continued Richard Mannix, as he sat down.

He had been there about two hours when his wife ran in, looking flushed and excited, and very much confused when she saw her husband, tho' she did try to put a bold face on it. He looked at her and left the room, heaving a deep sigh as he went.

“I'll be murdered,” said she, when he was gone; as I was coming down here Sophy Buckley stopped me, and she's such a good poor soul, I could not deny her, and I should go in, and there's always such pleasant company there one forgets the time, and there she kept me ever since.” And Mrs. Mannix talked so loud and so much, and so little in keeping with the awful scene before her, that Mrs. Noonan would have been very glad if she had gone away; but Mrs. Mannix expressed her intention to stay there till morning. However, seeing no refreshment coming but a cup of tea, and tired of talking, it being almost entirely on her side, she consented, much to Mrs. Noonan's relief, to lie down in the kitchen, Norry having brought down her own bed when it was dusk, hoping to induce Mrs. Noonan to stretch. For three nights poor Charles Noonan's remains were waked, Richard Mannix and one or two of the neighbors whom he could influence sharing the lonesome watch. As the day of interment drew near, Mrs. Noonan began to feel more bitterly the desertion of her neighbors. Her husband's clothes had been disposed of, and a strong, and handsome coffin obtained; but how was it to be borne to the grave? She had calculated that some of Charley's friends, by whom he was greatly liked, would have offered to perform this last sad act of friendship towards him; but none of them came forward, and they kept so much aloof that Mrs. Noonan could not find courage to make the request.— The utmost exertions she could make would not enable her to hire a hearse. However, the evening before the interment, just as she had decided with Norry that the latter should go out and hire a donkey and cart for the purpose, Richard Mannix came in, and said some of the neighbors would like to know at what hour in the morning the burial would be, as they intended to take poor Charley's remains on their shoulders. This unexpected intelligence quite overcame Mrs.

Noonan. It surely speaks nobleness of mind to be more sensible of kindness than alive to injuries. Mrs. Noonan was so affected that she could scarcely sob out her grateful thanks for the tardy kindness. Norry Cahill thought it must be Richard Mannix that prevailed with them;—but it was not so: it was when they saw the really handsome coffin Mrs. Noonan had procured they began to think that she was not quite so bad as it was said. At all events, they became remorseful of revenging on poor Charles the faults attributed to his widow.

Well, the morning came—the sweet, dewy May morning—the sun had not risen, and it was pleasanter his bright beams were not there to mock the mourning in that little home. The hour had come, the dreaded hour, to Nelly, that she would hear the agonizing sound of the heavy hammer beating in those cruel nails that would close for ever from her sight the face of him whom she had loved so tenderly and so well.— She had anticipated from the hour he died those heartrending moments. Every stroke went like a thorn through every pulse of her heart, and her only consolation then was to think of the nails that pierced the tender hands of her dear Saviour, and to unite her sufferings to His.— Quietly, and without any loud wailing, she followed the remains to their resting-place. She enjoyed the privilege of her class, to see the last rite paid to the departed. It was a lonesome little funeral, only attended by the coffin-bearers and their relievers—no women but the widow and Norry. Ah, women are harder to be disabused, or at least to acknowledge being disabused of false impressions than men, especially when it is one of their own sex that is under condemnation: in waywardness rather than in wisdom, they are tenacious of first impressions. But if Charles Noonan's funeral was poor in array, it was rich in the sincerity of feeling of those who attended.—If there was no thrilling wail, there was no jesting, or thoughtless laughter. All was Christian-like, decent, and solemn; and when the burial service was over, no man there, though anxious to pay the widow any compliment in his power, would venture to invite her to an ale-house to be treated. They knew such a proposal would be the greatest affront they could offer her. Mrs. Noonan and Norry remained after the rest had departed, and as they knelt and wept over the grave, a soft summer shower fell on the green turf. Mrs. Noonan raised her eyes to Heaven and thanked God. It may be superstition, but the sad heart looks for such signs as these times, and if they come it will bless them and will be soothed.

CHAPTER III.

Norry Cahill, as we have seen, had brought down her bed to Mrs. Noonan's. The latter was very glad when she offered to share it with her for some time. Willie was in a slow, but not dangerous fever. He had never asked, poor boy, about his father. He understood it all.— His mother was now very badly able to care for him, she was so weak, and she was obliged, however unwillingly, to yield to Norry's entreaties on their return from the funeral, to go to bed and take one day's rest. Norry was unwilling in her attendance, and the more so as she saw how dependent they were on her endeavors.

When night came Norry thought the best drink she could give Mrs. Noonan to make her sleep would be a glass of mulled porter. She had steadily refused taking anything of the kind since her husband's death; but Norry resolved she should not have her way this time, she was so frightfully weak and low. The porter was prepared accordingly, but though Norry knelt and entreated, she could not succeed in inducing Mrs. Noonan to taste the porter.

“Only taste it just to please me, and see how nice it is, and one would think it was poison I brought you,” said Norry.

“Oh, it is very nice—too nice; but I have a horror of it, Norry; and as to poison, 'tis that, and no mistake, to many. Oh, I have an awful horror of anything in the shape of drink, Norry.”

“To be sure you have, of taking too much of it; but when one is low, and in want of it, sure there can be no harm in taking it, Mrs. Noonan.”

“No, Norry, if one could make certain that they'd be able to stop when they ought.”

“You need not dread that, anyhow, Mrs. Noonan.”

“But I do dread it, Norry, though I have my confidence in God that He will save me from it; but I tremble to think of putting myself in the way of it at all, at all. Sit down there, Norry, and I will tell you what came under my own observation of the ruin and sorrow it brought. It made a great impression on me, seeing that I was almost an eye-witness of it myself. When I was a slip of a girl I was stopping with a relation of my father's in the country, and she had a cousin, a very comfortable rich farmer living close by. He died, and left one son, with plenty of means and a fine farm. Well, the widow, a young, hearty woman, was in great grief, and fretting after him, and all the old

women about were coming and making much of her. Take notice that before this time she was as sober a woman as there was in the parish, and was never known to take anything that would affect her, no more than you or I. Well, out of good nature, to be sure, though it was the bad nature for her, they used to make her take a strong glass of punch or a pot of porter at night, and when she'd be in low spirits, to comfort her poor heart; as they'd say, and sure enough she found it comfort her, and she stuck to it, and before long she found that she had no comfort without it. In a little time she came to be the talk of the parish. Her son was a growing-up boy at the time, and to be sure, when his mother was constantly out of her senses with drink, she could not look after him properly, and so he fell into bad company, and if she was inclined to check him, 'tis only natural to think that he would not take much notice of the advice of such a mother. Well, the farm soon got into arrears, and everything went wrong. She was plundered when she was drunk, and of course her son did not look after anything more than herself, but became in time a night-walker and a drunkard. To finish my story, he joined the White Boys, and was taken up for being concerned in a murder. I saw him myself going by hand-cuffed, and cursing his unfortunate mother. He was as handsome a young man as you'd see in a day's walk, and all the people had great pity for his father's son, for he had been a very honest, well-conducted man, and was of a very decent family. Well, the unfortunate boy was found guilty and hung, and the priest made him say he forgave his mother, and pray God to forgive her. The only day for years that she was seen sober was the day she was looking at him hanging; but she comforted herself that night again with the whiskey, and in a few weeks she was begging from door to door, and no one gave her an alms with a good grace; and in some time she was missed from the neighborhood, and in a little while again her body was found in a bog-hole, and every one said it must have been drunk she was when she crossed the bog and fell in. The remembrance of that woman and her son never left my heart since, and 'tis no wonder, Norry, that I should have a horror of comforting myself with the likes.— There are examples as bad as that before us every day, and many of them coming from the same cause, drowning their sorrow, as they say. Oh, no, Norry, but making it much worse, and damning their souls. Poor Charley used to say there was not a worse evil spirit in hell than a drunken woman, and sometimes of a Sunday when I'd bring him a drink of porter, seeing it was necessary for him to take it, as he was never strong in himself, when he'd be pressing me to join him, ‘Charley,’ I'd say, ‘take care, would you like to see me get fond of it?’ ‘Twas enough, I promise you;’ ‘it would stop his mouth at once.’

“Sure, Mrs. Noonan, dear, 'tis myself that would be far from asking you to take it if I thought any harm would come out of it.”

“I know that well, Norry; that it is all good nature for me; but you see them people, too, maybe, little thought the harm they were doing the widow that I told you about, though not like you, Norry, there are people who have had habits themselves, and they don't care how they bring others into them, doing the devil's work for him, as I heard a clergyman say in his sermon once.”

“Well, Mrs. Noonan, dear, if it isn't you have cured me of ever pressing drink on any one again to comfort them. Sure there's truth and grace in every word that comes from you.”

“Oh, Norry, if there is any good in me at all, thank God for it; only for His grace what would we be?”

“True, for you, Mrs. Noonan; but see how some won't take the grace that He'd give us all, if we would only have it.”

“Yes, Norry, we all get sufficient grace to do what is right, if we profit by it; but there are blessings, I think, that the Lord gives to some above others. What did I deserve from Him that He gave me sober, good parents, that brought me up well?”

“Of a surety,” said Norry, ‘tis the greatest blessing on earth for poor bodies to have good parents, specially a good mother: 'tis the father's duty to feed and clothe them, but 'tis on the mother the care of bringing them up right is most throned.”

“Yes, Norry, if a father starves his family or deserts them, he'll be considered a great brute; and sure the mother is worse that lets them grow up in vice and idle habits, while they are young and could be checked. Of course 'tis a great matter too to have the father give good example, and to have him a good husband; for many children are brought to disregard the advice of a good mother when they see her badly treated by their father; still they most always depend on the mother.”

It may be supposed that Norry did not ask