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THE BRIDEGROOM OF BARNA.

CHAPTER III.

Barna was shining far through the stormy night, with the blaze of a hundred wedding lights. Roof and rafter shook to merry music and uproarious revelry, and the jocund dancers thronged with untiring steps every corner of the edifice.

Many a rustic beauty obtained her due meed of praise that evening—many a diffident beau was patted on the back with an approving—

Upon one topic alone did not unanimity prevail, and on that there was no one dissenting voice—that Hugh Lawlor and his bride were the handsomest couple that had been married in Elio-gary for twenty years.

Fatigued from dancing, and overcome by the heat, that fair and delicate bride now stood, leaning on the arm of her husband, in the recess of a window to which he had led her, upon reaching the bottom of the set; and the plain but ample curtain with which the window was furnished, while it afforded them a kind of retirement, was doubly welcome by its screening off, in some degree, the glare and warmth of the room.

Ellen, darling Ellen! murmured the low deep voice of Lawlor, 'you are weary of this scene—you have over-exerted yourself—you look faint—let me implore you to rest.'

'I am not weary now, Hugh,' and she slightly pressed the arm against which she leaned her forehead; 'besides, I have promised to dance the next set with John Butler of Palace.'

'Come, sir, don't be pettish; I thought you would be to-night the happiest and most grateful swain that ever won a wife after so long and weary a wooing as ours.'

'And so I am, my own beloved girl,' he said; 'how little did I think two years back that I should stand here as blessed as I do this hour, holding you close to this heart, that you may hear beating loud with its fulness of love and truth to you. Are you indeed at last my own forever? and he folded her closer to his side.'

'God only knows, dear Hugh—(gracious powers! how it lightens—did you ever see such flashes?)—often and often I think of that nasty Nansie, the fortune-teller—that woman you are always so kind to—that you gave the cabin to when Cregan ejected her. I never liked that woman, Hugh: do you remember her look, and what she said the day she first examined my hand? "A bride wedded"—and the innocent girl paused—'

'I do well, dearest; 'twould be bad for Nansie that all her predictions had so poor a chance of being realized. What a start—the thunder is certainly terrific; but you are sadly nervous.—John Butler of Palace—let me lead you from this place.'

'Hugh, will you never check your hasty temper?—ah! remember all that it has cost us. I own, whenever I hear you burst out thus, and that your look grows so dark, I always fly back to that tedious time when you used to be obliged to steal over here like a thief at night—when we had no place to meet but by Dempsey's Hear, for we knew no one else dared come near it.—How savage you used to be then with every one in the world.'

'With every one?' 'But me, Hugh; you were never cross to me. Oh, yes! once, when I asked you in a joke, after a long absence, what kept you away—was it Miss Byrne's murder? and you grasped my neck so, and held back my head to look at my face, and said—"Oh! Heavens! I have made you angry again. Come away from this spot—in-deed, indeed you hurt me—you grip my arm so—"

'Stay, girl! what did I tell you when I looked in your face?' 'I don't remember—I don't indeed.' 'By all your hopes of heaven, you do!' 'Something about your not minding twenty murders sooner than lose this face or lose myself—or some such foolish saying. Ah! come from this spot—I cannot bear the lightning—Come, I will even retire—I will say I am fatigued—'

Ellen Nugent—I beg pardon—Mrs. Lawlor, the set is waiting for you to lead off: permit me. Lawlor, there's Harriet Burke droppin' alone like the last rose of summer; she says you en-

gaged her three sets ago; there goes the pipes, and Sir Roger de Coverley for ever!—and away swept John Butler with the passive bride.

'Right and left—hands across—down the middle; and in ten minutes twenty merry couple were footing it away to drone and chanter.—'Well done, Master John! 'Luck to your own pretty foot, Miss Ellen.' 'Now for it, Miss Harriet; set the girls of Borris a pattern.' 'Ah, Mr. Lawlor, you take the shine out o' them all; ejaculated the servants, as they stood crowded inside and outside the door, waiting until a cessation in the dance afforded them an opening to slip unharmed through the throngs, laden with trays of sparkling glasses filled with positive lemonade, comparative negus, and superlative punch, for the refreshment of the dancers, and the edification of the high contracting parties who looked on, imbibing from the proceedings, as we have said, a large portion of pleasure, with a modicum of potato.

'See how them Thurlies girls dances!—the domestics went on; 'well, the dickens wouldn't tire them; I give it up to them.' 'Oh, Master Ned, the foot is off me! that I mightn't die in sin, but that boy threads like a colt. Who's that pushin' there behind?' 'Nansie, the fortune-teller!—'Wisha 'iss a-grahial, let me jest have one peep,' and the sly edged into the room.

'Oh then, blessings down upon you, Miss Ellen, this night; it does my heart good to look in your face.'

'Thank you, Nansie; do you remember telling me my fortune?' and the bride flew on.

'Master Hugh, I wouldn't doubt your step to be the nimblest in the room; and still Nansie edged forward, as Lawlor danced to his place at the bottom of the set. You had always the swiftest foot in the barony.'

'Oh, I hear you, Nansie,' said the modest bridegroom.

'If you do,' she said, stooping forward until, unperceived, her mouth came close to his ear, 'heed me—see if your foot is able for a jig without pumps now—the red-coats and peelers are crossin' the bawn-field—they'll be on you in five minutes; but try one good run for your life at any rate!'

If on a bright sunny day, while some gallant vessel, with every sail set, went careering, all life and bravery, before the wind, the ammunition store exploded, and in place of the stately shadow that a moment before danced upon the waves, left them one wide scene of wreck and devastation, the ruin could not be more sudden and irreparable than that which one hour effected in the happy abode of Barna.

The cold peevish morning broke upon a little world of the most abject misery. Here were seen guests hurrying from the spot, as though it had been the centre of pestilence, not of pleasure, their faces sickly from the exhaustion of revelry, and wild with horror. There, groups of the lower classes, the peasantry, the neighbors, the servants of Dary Nugent, standing sullenly with folded arms around the mansion, communicating their surmises in whispers, full of apprehension and dismay.

Within the house the derangement consequent upon the termination of unbounded festivity, was heightened by the confusion produced in the search of the military and police through the apartments. The furniture lay in heaps, sideboards and tables shattered or overturned, where they fell with their piles of glass and china, as the terror-stricken reveller rushed away upon the entrance of the authorities.

The servants were nowhere to be seen; and in chambers that a few hours back shook with the noise of music and the dance, all was now silent as the grave. A couple of greyhounds and a favorite terrier seemed the only things that remained to tell where so much life had lately been;—they strolled lazily and quietly through the lower part of the house, occasionally going to the foot of the stairs, placing their fore-paws upon the lowest step, snuffing anxiously up the ascent, and after a comfortless wag or two of the tail, turning away to repeat their rounds again. Yet, lonely and abandoned as that house appeared, how much of terrible affliction—of hope forever prostrate—and blasted youth, and despairing old age, did it contain!

In an upper and remote chamber that needed no artificial darkness—for the ancient trees of the orchard grew with their broad branches against the windows, knelt at the foot of a bed, two female servants, their heads bent down upon the coverlet, and enveloped (as is the custom with the women of their country in affliction) in the folds of their ample aprons. On one side sat their wretched master, his aged head bent down upon his breast in that kind of stupor exhibited by one who has received a stunning blow, from which he vainly strives to rouse himself to life and recollection; while opposite to him, with looks of anxiety and horror, stood the venerable priest, whose blessing had so lately been pronounced upon the bright frail head of her he now

watched, extending before him, in doubt whether the death or life contending in her frame was finally a triumph.

There lay Ellen Nugent, crushed as utterly by her sudden disasters as were the delicate blossoms that leant upon the window-stone all withered by the thunders of the night. From the moment the officers of justice burst into the dancing-room, she never uttered a word. A moment before she had been turned in the dance by her husband, her fingers still trembled from the light kiss he had secretly dropped upon them as he touched her hands; the next instant there was a cry—the room was filled with armed men, she heard one beloved name hissing from every lip. She sprang forward. With the glance of love, almighty in its power to search for the one amid the ten thousand, she saw that Lawlor was not there. She felt her eyes broadening; the faces round her spread into monstrous aspects; then all things turned the color of the blood; a noise as of the sea swam in her ears, and the rest was forgetfulness. She was borne insensible to the couch where her distracted friends now watched the first symptoms she had yet exhibited of returning consciousness.

And where was Lawlor?

Far away, amidst the wildest fastnesses of impracticable mountains, the morning saw him shrink to cover, like the stag from the hunters—a doomed and guilty man; his flight alone sufficient evidence of guilt; his guilt most dire assurance of his doom. That any one, however degraded in soul or lost in principles, could be found, in an age like the present, capable of committing the enormous atrocity with which his flight avowed him stained, may well be matter of horrible surprise; but that it should be perpetrated by one like Lawlor, gifted with intellectual attainments of no common order, and raised by fortune sufficiently above those of his class to free him from contact with all that impedes humanity of heart and refinement of manners, involves a moral anomaly as extraordinary as it is appalling. That such persons, however, are capable in one frenzied hour of the commission of deeds the most fiercely at variance with the natures, has ere now been abundantly proved; and it has been attempted to account for such preternatural excesses, by attributing them to monomania or hallucination. In the instance at present under contemplation, motives bear so remote a relation to the crime as to warrant in a great degree such a conclusion. It is the only way that we can account for one deed at war with a whole life, blasting, indeed, for ever the happiness, but making little revolution in the pursuits and dispositions, of the character.

From an early age we have seen that Lawlor was left his own master. Endued with feelings of high susceptibility and strong passions, he unfortunately lacked a guide to restrain them when they could alone be taught control. Then came his inauspicious attachment to Ellen Nugent.—The long and bitter, and hopeless opposition that attachment had to undergo, no doubt gave his spirit an inflexibility and sullenness that gradually hardened a heart not naturally ill-disposed, and imparted to it a selfishness by which it was finally corrupted. To his lonely and affectionate spirit, Ellen was all the world, the only living thing that he felt necessary to his existence; and, as he grew to manhood, the potency of this master passion affected more or less all his social proceedings, until the possession of his mistress became with him almost as much an object by which his skill in baffling his foes (for so he deemed all who did not favor his suit) was to be estimated, as one that was to confirm the happiness of his life. By degrees the impediments to that happiness gave way. The wounded brother of his beloved recovered to fall by the slower but surer hand of death. The irritated mother, too, resigned her enmity and her breath together. But then came White Will, with his impressive purse and his long train of persecutions; and if ever a crime, by its dreadful originality, indicated the revenge of a master spirit, it was that by which Lawlor, so fatally for himself, resolved to cross his enemy. The deed was done. By the death of Byrne, Redmond was reduced to comparative poverty, and with his wealth subsided his pretensions to claim Ellen Nugent as the bride of his son; and the desperate but devoted lover at once effected the humiliation of his enemy, and secured the hand of his long-wished-for mistress.

CHAPTER IV.

Months passed away, and Lawlor still continued to elude the officers of justice, but this was all that could be ascertained of his fate; and Time, that veers alike through the most buoyant hours of bliss and the profoundest nights of affliction, saw his hapless bride revive to a state of languid health and mournful resignation. She again attempted to resume the little daily round of domestic duties, and to whisper peace to her infirm father when she knew there was no peace in the sinking heart that prompted her. From the fatal evening of her nuptials, she never pronounced the name of her husband, nor was it ever

breathed in her hearing. She had loved him with a love surpassing that of woman. She had for his sake long encountered the stern anger of her brother, the loss of her father's confidence, the reproachful upbraidings of her mother, whose dying injunction, sealed with a solemn curse, that she should not wed with Lawlor, she had disregarded. The more loud the whispers of calumny spread, that his life was irregular, that his pursuits were unlawful, the more perseveringly she fought in his cause, with all that generous devotion and fidelity that none but her glorious sex can feel or practice.

'Were Hugh here,' she would scornfully say to his detractors, 'you dared not insinuate in his presence the stories with which you are so ready to wound the feelings of his only defender. Pronounce them to his face, and I will judge by your boldness whether they are deserving of belief.'

And now that idolized one, no longer her lover, but her husband, was, like the first murderer, a fugitive upon the earth, with a curse as deep as Cain's pursuing his footsteps; and she, but no, she had no more to hear of him in blame or obloquy! for, coarse as the people were by whom she was surrounded, their hearts too deeply sympathized in her early sorrows not to respect the eternal silence that sealed her lips. Of one thing only, connected with Lawlor's fate, it was thought she could not be ignorant—that her abode was watched by the emissaries of justice, from a supposition that she was so passionately beloved by the criminal, that he would at some period attempt to visit her; but on this subject, too, it is needless to say, she never ventured a remark;—perhaps she felt the current of her existence dying away too surely, to care further about any event by which it might be momentarily ruffled or illumined.

It was far in summer. At the close of a sweet evening in July, Ellen sat alone in the window of her chamber that opened upon the deep soft grass and refreshing umbrage of the orchard, by which the greater part of the mansion was overshadowed. The air was sweet with the fragrance of lime-trees, and slumberous with the lulling hum of the bees that clustered in the branches. The melancholy girl had thrown the window entirely open, and sat reclined, with her head thrown back, resting a reverie against the wainscot, scarce conscious of the departing sunset, whose lingering tints, as they fell upon her wan, fair forehead, and the long locks of paly gold that descended to her shoulders, invested her whole aspect with that mournful and spiritual beauty that subdues us in the immortal pencilings of Guido. To a careless eye she would have seemed intently listening to the mellow song of the blackbird, that gushed at intervals upon her ear; but the sweetest sounds of earth had no longer charms for Ellen. Her spirit was far away, in petitions to Him who had chosen, for His own wise purposes, to break so bruised a reed as her pining and tortured heart. The warm tint of evening faded from her face, and the twilight night of summer came down amid the green recesses of the orchard, and still she sat motionless, drinking the holy peace of the scene. All at once she was roused by a shadow encroaching on the faint light admitted through the window; and, starting up, she saw the tall figure of a woman close to it. It was Nansie, the fortune-teller, who curtsied low when she saw that she was perceived, but preserved that respectful silence by which, with innate good sense or taste, the Irish peasantry evince the sense of the sorrows of their superiors, when they feel that they are beyond human consolation. Associated as this woman was with some of the most painful recollections of her past life, Ellen naturally felt shocked upon recognizing her; but she was too sorely injured to little trials of this kind not to overcome them; she therefore, upon recovering herself, inquired of the woman the cause of her being so late about the house.

'Picking a few herbs about the orchard I was, Mrs. Ellen,' was the reply, 'for a poor girl that's not very well. I was just going away when I saw you, and I made bould to come and ax after your health; and proud I am to see you sitting there looking'—but she dared not to finish the hollow flattery.

'What is the matter with the girl?'

'Wisha, Miss, nothing but downright fretting; she was married last Shroff (Shrove-tide) was a twelvemonth; but I'm loth to keep you in the damp, Miss; the dew is very wet entirely to-night, and yourself you're not very strong.'

'I don't mind it,' said Ellen swerving from the blow, and making an effort to be resolute.—'Who did she marry?'

'A boy of the Donoghues, Miss; and the match didn't turn out well, at all, at all.'

'Why? pervered Miss Nugent.'

'Sorrow a-one of me knows,' replied Nansie; 'but they don't live together; their people came betune them, I believe; they used to say he was wild, and all that; but sure, at any rate, that's no reason for separating man and wife after being married before the altar.'

Ellen's heart died within her; she inquired no further, but bid the woman a scarcely audible good night.

'The best of good nights and blessings, Miss,' said the herbalist, about to depart; but pausing, she added, 'I believe that masher is not at home to-night, Miss; I saw him go yonder the road this morning, as if for the fair of Nenagh.'

'My father is not at home; did you want him?'

'Oh gosh! no Miss; good night, and luck attend you.'

'Mother of Him, Whom you watched upon the cross through the long and killing night!' murmured the distracted girl, when again alone, 'look down upon me with pity; you, whose sinless soul was wrung with more than mortal agony, teach a helpless and erring creature to struggle with the lot that is wearing her to the grave!' and she raised her eyes to the brightening stars. When she dropped them again Lawlor was standing close to her; his very breath almost mingling with the rich shadows of her hair. One frantic shriek, as she sprang with an electric shiver from the spot, gushed to her lips; but, with an instinctive sense of the result, she stifled it ere it passed them, and with a groan sank upon her knees before the window, her hands in vain motioning the intruder to depart.

'Ellen,' he murmured, 'Ellen, hear me!'

She made no reply, but remained bent in attitude of supplication and dismay, until she perceived him attempting to enter the apartment with a stifled sob she rushed forward and essayed to close the window against him.

'Very well,' he said, 'it is a matter of indifference to me; for you and for your love I have become what I am; I have lost them both, and life is intolerable; here then, I remain until I am observed and given up to justice.'

'No, no!' she almost shrieked, 'do not drive me to distraction; wretched, sinful, outcast man, what have I done to deserve this trial?'

'Ellen, my life, my bride, hear me! the world and all its prizes, pleasures, wealth, fair fame, are to me henceforward what they are to the dead. I had long ceased to value them; one thing alone, your affection, bound me to earth; that, that is gone too, this terrible hour convulses me. What, then, have I to dread? No; here I remain; let me die at least within the air you breathe.'

'Madman! will you kill me. Every path about the house is beset with armed men thirsting for your blood.'

'I know it, Ellen, yet I have ventured, and dared them all. Oh, darling! what have I not dared in this world and the next, to be for ever within sight of the beauty from which I am debarred forever? Yet one hour with you, only one hour, Ellen, if it were but once in the long dreary year, and I could bear to live.'

'May God assist me!' cried the frenzied girl.—'Oh Hugh! live, live, to repent what has come between us, and left us blackened and withered wretches upon the God's fair world.'

'Give me one sign, one proof then, Ellen,' said the impassioned criminal, 'that you still have not lost all the fond love you so often vowed me; let me clasp you once more to this breaking heart, and degraded and branded as I am, I will be more boundlessly happy than thrones could make me out of your sight. Say that you disclaim me, that I am not your husband, wedded in the sight of that church you reverence so deeply; shut out from your presence, all of heaven I have long dared to hope for, and give me up to a shameful death; or afford me one hour's shelter in peace and rapture by your side. May I enter?'

There was no reply, she sprang through the window and extended his arm—shuddering, she recoiled from him, but only for an instant—with one broken gasp she darted forward and fell senseless on his bosom.

(To be Continued.)

A PEEP BEHIND THE SCENES.

(From the N. Y. Tablet.)

It surpasses our comprehension how any intelligent body of people can quietly submit to be gulled by designing quavers. Nevertheless it is of daily occurrence and can only be explained on the principle attributed to Barnum that the world loves to be humbugged. Cuckerny has now-a-days become a regular science, and the most barefaced of its branches, to characterize them by a milder term than swindles, are assuredly the "Bible Mission Associations." A grand expose of the "Irish Church Missions" was lately taken place in Liverpool, which forcibly reminds us of the old adage that "when rogues fall out honest men get their due." The disclosures which have been made unveil the interior rottenness of the Protestant system, and prove that the law established institution is a gigantic fraud upon the weak credulity of society. Honest and simple-minded Englishmen are systematically plundered out of immense sums of money under the impres-