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ELLEN AHERN;
OR,
THE POOR COUSIN.
CONCLUDED IN THREE PARTS.

In the great dim old drawing-room, rendered more gloomy by the presence of death and the fitful glimmer of a single wax taper which cast long and grotesque shadows on the wall, lay the body of the late Countess of Fermanagh. Her son, Hugh Maguire, in whose heart grief struggled with resentment, and whose natural instincts were at war with selfish emotions and habits of thought which borrowed their hue from an undisciplined sensuality, kept watch beside her. He had given orders that none should intrude on that last, sad vigil. He had thrown back the pall from the stern, silent face, and was gazing down on its rare beauty, from which not even death had been able to efface its habitual expression of pride. And his heart relented to something like tenderness when the thought urged itself on him that for his aggrandizement she had steeped her soul in guilt, and embittered every subsequent moment of her life. Then he realized fully how severe must have been the blow when she found that she had lived only lived long enough to see all her plans frustrated and overthrown by Divine Providence, and herself covered with shame and confusion! and while he wept for her, alternate emotions of rage and mortification agitated his heart. To be suddenly thrown from a position to which he imagined he had an unassailable right; to be deprived of feudal power and despotic sway; to be stripped of title and place so ignominiously, were trials which probed him to the quick, and roused all the energy of his will to combat with; but to say that they had brought him to a sense of the evils and defects of his character, or given rise to one single aspiration for higher and better things, would be going too far. His only thought was how he could evade impertinent curiosity, and escape the awkward pass in which he found himself with *eclat* and credit; and consoled himself by the consideration that he was, by his mother's death, freed from all restraints, and by the generosity of his brother was provided with a handsome income which he could enjoy without being troubled by responsibilities or difficulties, such as had heretofore annoyed him in the collection of his income from his Irish estates. Then he came back to the thought of his dead mother, whom he remembered as so beautiful, resolute and proud, whose will had always been his law, and to whose superior judgment he had been accustomed to look up with respect, now lying motionless and voiceless before him, stricken in her prime, and her life dashed out in darkness and wild, bitter weep, a sudden gush of feeling welled up from his heart, and obeying the impulse, he leaned down and kissed tenderly and reverently the cold, white lips. Could they only have spoken! Could the inexorable spell that sealed them have been broken but for an instant to tell him, while his heart was softened, of the soul's brief sojourn in the unknown regions to which it had fled, what would have been the solemn revelation?—what the result? We cannot tell. We only know what Eternal Truth teaches us on such points, and between God and His judgments the imagination dare not intrude.

While he sat there pondering and awed—for the hush of death and its mystery is potent in its influence over all—he heard a light footstep approaching, and lifting his head from his hand, he saw Don Enrique Gron standing opposite to him beside the bier. A sudden scowl came over his features, and a deep flush of resentment when he saw the man whom he most hated and feared on earth intruder on the solitude of his woe.—Folding his arms as he rose up, he asked in a haughty and displeased tone: "To what accident he was indebted for the honor of a visit at that hour?"

"I have come," replied Don Enrique, in a calm and subdued tone, "to say to you, in the presence of the dead, what I would fain have said to her living. But Divine Providence ordered that otherwise."

"You speak like an oracle; but I neither wish or care to understand by what authority you assume a position which seems to imply there is something to forgive. I shall be obliged to you, therefore, if you will leave me," said Hugh Maguire, impetuously.

"There must be no harsh words spoken here," whispered Don Enrique. "Let us not renew the tempest and strife, that for her is forever hushed. Could she speak, she would bid you give me a more friendly greeting. Hugh Maguire, I am your brother!"

"My brother?" he exclaimed, starting back. "Desmond Maguire, Lord of Fermanagh, what would you with me? She is dead. Every obstacle to your wishes and grasping desires is removed." What do you want?"

"I have come to remind you of the fraternal relations between us, and declare to you how

much gratification it will afford me if you will allow the past to be forgotten as though it had not been, and in the interchange of better feelings and a mutual effort for nobler aims, cease to remember that we are not sons of the same mother."

"Is this all your errand, Lord Desmond?" he asked, coldly.

"Not all," he replied, with noble sweetness. "It is my desire to shield her name from all opprobrium and reproach—nay, from even the shadow of suspicion—as jealously as it she were the mother that bore me and had always loved and cherished me, and to say to you in her presence how entirely I forgive—as I hope to be forgiven—all that she wrought me. I heard on my route hither that she had died suddenly, and I have travelled post haste, day and night, to be present and share with you in the funeral ceremonies."

"I thank you, for her," answered Hugh Maguire, whose heart was touched in spite of himself by the Christian nobleness exhibited by one who owed so little consideration to his mother or himself, and there was a quiver—almost imperceptible—in his voice. "There will be no funeral ceremonies. My mother, you know, was a member of the Church of England; and I shall convey her remains to England, to deposit them in the burial-place of her father's family.—I sent post to Belfast for a leaden coffin and people who understand these matters, to come and arrange everything. I expect them between this and day dawn. I am sensible of your generosity, Lord Desmond, but it costs the fortunate but little to be magnanimous."

"This is no place to argue points of feeling, or use recriminative language. Death is a gulf in which all such feelings should be buried, and beside which, all vindictive resentment should cease. The human heart scorns pity as a humiliation. This is natural, under some circumstances, nor would I chide you for it, nor insult you by offering it; but I do offer you my friendship and an obliteration of all the past," said Desmond Maguire, stretching his hand over the dead body of the woman who had been the pitiless foe of his detestable childhood, "and invite you, in the name of God, to reciprocate the feelings which at this moment influence me, and which may eventually ripen into a warmer, closer bond."

But, sullen and moody, he folded his arms across his breast and said, in a low, hoarse voice: "We shall meet again. I wish to be alone now. Your presence, and the whole thing, indeed, is so sudden that I am unprepared to meet you as you expect."

"As you please, Hugh Maguire. I have done what I thought right, and as I would have wished others, under the circumstances, to do unto me. But there is one more thing that I feel constrained to say. Our father—you do not remember him—he was the noblest and purest of God's creatures, an honor to his country and to his name, and revered alike by friend and foe. I would have you think of him sometimes, and I implore you, by his memory, to keep intact and sacred from dishonor the name which, as a fair and stainless legacy, he bequeathed to you. This is all, except that should adversity or misfortune overtake you, do not forget that in me you will always find a friend and brother, and under my roof a shelter."

"Thank you," said Hugh Maguire, still coldly, albeit his heart was touched by the persistence of such forgiveness and a kindly regard so undeserved. "Can you be here at day-break?"

"If you wish it—yes."

"Come, then. For her sake, whose name you would shield, I will do an act of justice. Lord Desmond, I thank you for my mother," said Hugh Maguire, in tones scarcely audible, while he drew the velvet pall up over her features, and waived his hand towards the door.

The next morning a group of men were assembled on the ruined terrace at Fermanagh, among whom Father McMahon, Sir Eadna Ahern, Fahey and Hugh Maguire, stood conspicuous. In the midst of them, standing on tressels, was the case which contained the hermetically-sealed coffin of lead in which lay all that was mortal of the proud Countess of Fermanagh. The black velvet pall, heavy with silver fringe, hung in massive folds around it.—The wind blew with a sad sound—like the exhausted breath of a wild tempest—from the sea, and the dash of the torrent in the ravine rose mournful and dirge-like amidst the silence. A flock of rooks swooped down from their cote, high up among the ruined battlements and clinging mosses, and with shrill, discordant cries, settled on the gray, old arches overhead. Dim and sad, the light crept stealthily up the rocky hill sides, and spread itself out over the landscape until every familiar object was visible. The group on the terrace were awaiting some one. The undertaker and his subordinate wore a look of undisguised impatience, and the servants of the house, sleepy and cold, wondered at the delay. In a few moments their suspense was at an end,

for Don Enrique, as he was still known, approached rapidly up from the rocky pass towards the waiting group on the terrace. Hugh Maguire advanced and took his offered hand, and Sir Eadna Ahern and Father McMahon welcomed him with silent but cordial greeting.

"Are we ready now, my Lord?" said the solemn-looking undertaker, touching his hat.—"The car is just below there; shall we start now?"

"In a moment," he replied, placing his hand on the coffin. "Fahey and you, sirs, and all here present, bear witness to what I say: You have regarded me heretofore as the chief of my house and sept, in default of a better one. And although this fact was admitted, there were rumors rife among you that Desmond, the eldest son of my father, had either met with foul play abroad or was still alive, ignorant of his birth and parentage, a wanderer on a strange land and an outcast from his inheritance. These rumors did not tend to heighten my popularity or make me beloved, a thing which I resented as a personal insult, and recklessly punished those who I thought were deficient in loyalty to me for a cause of which I believed myself as innocent as a babe unborn. So much for the past, and for my relations with those under me. All that is left for me to say is this. These rumors in a certain sense were true. Desmond Maguire, the Lord of Fermanagh, did not die in Spain as reported; he was lost when a child, but his life, owing to fortunate circumstances, was saved.—By strange events he has been restored to his name and country. I have seen him. She who sleeps here acknowledged his claim, and I recognize it, only too glad to relinquish the possessions of another which I unwittingly held. In this gentleman, sirs—known hitherto as Don Enrique Gron—behold—Lord Desmond Maguire—my eldest brother. Now, sirs," he said, turning sharply round to the undertaker, "you may proceed." Unheeding the buzz and exclamations around him, or the gush of sunlight that at the moment flashed up over the quartz peaks, he was striding away; but those who were present, and who saw him in his hour of sorrow and adversity bearing it so bravely, although they had never before felt a genuine sentiment of respect for him, pressed about him, offering their hands and cancelling all bitter remembrances in a warm and cordial grasp; and as he turned away his brother twined his arm in his, and walked with him near the coffin, when the funeral cortege left the spot. This *denouement* fell like a thunderbolt on Fahey, who, almost beside himself by the category in which he so unexpectedly found himself placed, rushed home and locked himself in, cursing his ill luck, and wishing—but too late—that he had exercised more mercy towards the poor tenants of Fermanagh. As to expecting anything from the new Lord, it was sheer folly to think of it, for he knew well that he was perfectly familiar with all his nefarious acts, and well acquainted with his agency in all the evil that had been wrought in the Barony since the death of his late master. We will leave him to his agreeable reflections and go up to St. Finbar's, where the people were gathering in groups after Mass, before the Church, telling to each other the strange news they had heard, but which they were afraid to believe lest it should end in disappointment. Every moment their number were augmented by fresh arrivals, and by ten o'clock men, women, and children, the old and young, so thronged and crowded the narrow street that it was impossible to pass through it. Father McMahon had announced to them that they had a new Lord—one who would be a friend and protector to them, and who inherited all the good and noble qualities of his race, and was, without a Catholic like themselves. He endorsed what Hugh Maguire had said, which was practically true, and told them that the "Don" who had been so long among them, and endeared himself to them by his liberality and sympathy, was really and truly Lord Desmond Maguire. Long and loud were the shouts sent up by the excited people; deep and fervent were the blessings they invoked on him, and their gratitude to Heaven found vent in prayers and pious ejaculations without end.—Then, when they became calm enough to think, endless were the suggestions and the romances they already founded on the affair, the mystery of which defied their shrewdest suspicions. They declared that they must have "been blind not to see the 'Don' was a Maguire out an' out; he was the dead image of the old man that reigned over them last."

Lord Desmond Maguire accompanied his brother some miles on the route, when they parted with a spirit of true Christian charity on one side, and a feeling of relief and sullen satisfaction on the other; nor did the twain ever meet again earth.

We will retrace our steps to the day when Ellen Ahern, having seen Don Enrique at Mr. Wardell's door, got into the carriage with

Theresa in a wild tumult of feeling, and drove out to Dairy Farm, where the kind-hearted and grateful family noticed instantly how ill she was, and insisted on her lying down and trying some simple remedies which they prepared for her without delay; but she grew worse, and ere nightfall she was in a delirium of fever.—Alarmed and grieved, Theresa did not leave her for a moment, but sought by the most incessant care and soothing attentions and caresses to mitigate her sufferings. As soon as the carriage returned, and the driver had communicated the distressing tidings of her illness to Mr. Wardell, he ordered the man to go without a moment's loss of time for his own physician, Dr. B., and Father Weston, and request them to see Miss Ahern without delay, and if necessary, drive them out there without sparing his horses.—Don Enrique, in whose heart the desire to see and converse with her had been paramount to all other considerations, was both shocked and grieved to hear of her sudden and dangerous illness, and rode out every day to Dairy Farm to inquire how she was and linger around the spot which had become, in his eyes, consecrated by her presence. He had found no difficulty, as may be imagined, in arranging matters with Mr. Wardell; who, in default of any other evidence, would have sworn to his identity on the strength of his remarkable resemblance to his deceased father, and who rejoiced to find in him all those pure and lofty qualities which he knew would be the means of repairing much of the evil wrought by his predecessor, Lord Hugh. There was nothing left, therefore, but for him to return to Ireland, accompanied by Mr. Wardell and his mother, and Mr. Wardell's lawyer, Mr. Preston, and claim his title and the estate; but he lingered day after day, rendered miserable by alternate hopes and fears which the reports of Ellen Ahern's physician gave rise to, and offering his daily prayers to Heaven for her recovery. At length she was pronounced out of danger—to be rapidly convalescing—and one day Mr. Wardell and two or three other friends were permitted to see her. But no message came to Don Enrique, although he called daily, and left rare flowers and books—such as he in his pure taste had selected to relieve the tedium and ennui of the sick room—and words of kindly meaning and hopeful cheer; he received no response or sign that his attentions were more than simply tolerated. He would not judge her rashly, but wait patiently until she was stronger, that he might hear from her own lips that he was not despised and forgotten; for he still remembered that she had never replied to the only letter he had ever written her, although he ignored the fact that in that very letter he had urged the pretensions of Desmond Maguire to her hand, without thinking that she was entirely ignorant that Desmond Maguire and Don Enrique Gron was one and the same person. One day he went in, and having heard that she had left her room the day before, sent in his card with the hope that she was well enough to see him, but she begged to be excused as she still felt indisposed. Scarcely understanding it all, he wrote her a few lines the day after, stating that he was on the eve of returning to Ireland, and begged permission to see her that he might convey to her friends a faithful report of her health. It cost Ellen Ahern no faint struggle and not a few pangs to decline the interview so persistently sought after; but when he wrote urging it on account of something he wished to explain, and much that he had to say which it was impossible to express in writing, she took the alarm, thinking it was his purpose to endeavor to interest her in her kinsman, Desmond Maguire, and perhaps inveigle her into a promise to consider favorably his romantic claims to her hand, she positively declared that her health rendered her unequal to such an interview.

(To be Continued.)

EXTRAORDINARY ASSEMBLAGE OF THE BISHOPS AND OTHER DIGNITARIES OF CHRISTENDOM IN ROME—THE EIGHTEENTH CENTENARY OF THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. PETER AND THE CANONISATION OF THE NINETEEN MARTYRS OF GORCUM IN HOLLAND AND OTHER SAINTS.

(Compiled for the Weekly Register by a Father of the Order of St. Francis.)

"Majorum hoc dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quæ pro amicis suis."—St. John xv. 13.
"Spectaculum facti annus mundo et angelis et hominibus."—1 Cor. iv. 9.

The whole Christian world is at this moment in motion, and God's faithful people are expecting glorious results from the illustrious gathering about to be witnessed in Rome, and to which are hastening from all climes in great numbers the legitimate successors of the Apostles, with many hundred ecclesiastics, and thousands of the laity. How brimful of joy will the large and paternal heart of Pius IX. be in beholding around his apostolic throne so many members of the hierarchy from every nation under the sun! What a glorious day for Rome and for Christendom will the 29th of June, 1867, be, when two events

of the greatest importance will be commemorated, which for all time will shed a halo of glory around the altars of religion, and wonderfully aid in the propagation of truth—viz, the 1800th anniversary of the martyrdom of the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, and the unusually solemn canonisation of the renowned martyrs of Gorcum and other saints! "God is wonderful in His saints" at all times, but in our days He has, to console us for the afflictions which we, in common with our august Head and Father, have, during nearly twenty-one years, been suffering from the authors of heterodoxy and the propagandists of Rationalism and Materialism, greatly augmented the number of our celestial patrons, copiously poured out the riches of his bounty, and diffused more largely among erring Christians and benighted heathens the saving truths of faith, and the healing unction of Sacramental graces, which spread their odoriferous breathings among the children of men, and are producing everywhere the most astounding effects. Rome, thou art still great, amidst the ravages of time, and the revolutions of nations! Thou art greater now under the rule of the Martyr-Pope, than when, under Augustus Cæsar, your material grandeur had reached its meridian altitude!—Rome of the Pagans was a sink of pollution—the recruiting ground from which Satan raised his battalions to maintain his gigantic kingdom. Rome of the Popes has been the centre of Catholic truth, the parent of Christian civilisation, and the source of perennial blessings to countless generations of men, in every age and in every clime. From the days of St. Paul to our own times, "your faith has been spoken of throughout the whole world," your religion upheld by the promises of the Eternal Truth Himself, and your ethics, which bear the *imprimatur* of the finesse Deity, were destined by the eternal decrees to be commensurate with the limits of our globe, and to run coeval with all time!

The approaching grand festival will be a remarkable epoch in the history of the Roman Church, the mother and mistress of all Churches, and her loving daughters diffused throughout the world will largely partake of her jubilation, because, being affiliated to her by the adhering bonds of inter-communion, it is only natural that the members should rejoice with their head. In all probability the Holy Father and the episcopal body now hastening to Rome will never again see each other in the flesh. A double festival, like the approaching one, will never again be solemnised in our times; and therefore, the 18th centenary of St. Peter's martyrdom and the canonisation of so many great saints, will be an event that will fill the Holy City with countless pilgrims, who on their return to all the divisions of the globe from which they are now setting out, will cause a reaction, in favor of religion and its concomitant blessings, and spread the sweet perfumes of sanctity through all the ramifications of society. Though many holy servants of God are to be enrolled among the saints, thirteen of whom belong to the seraphic and well-beloved Order of St. Francis, this and the following papers shall be confined to the history, in an epitomised form, of the "Martyrs of Gorcum." The Calvinists of Gorcum signalled their zeal for reform and their hatred for Catholicism by arresting nineteen priests and religious men. Those heroic men, having endured many insults at the hands of their ferocious persecutors, were taken to Brill, and there hanged, on account of religion, on the 9th of July, 1572. Of these, eleven were Franciscan friars, called Recollects, who belonged to the convent of Gorcum, amongst whom were Nicholas Pick, the guardian, and Jerome Werden, vicar of the same convent.—The first was thirty-eight years of age, an eminent preacher, and a man endowed with the primitive spirit of his Order, especially the love of holy poverty and mortification. He feared to indulge in the least superfluity, even in the meanest and most necessary things, especially in his meals; and he would very frequently say, "I fear if St. Francis were living he would not approve of this or that." He was most zealous in preserving this spirit of poverty and penance in his community, and he used to call property and superfluity the bane of a religious state. His constant cheerfulness rendered piety, and even penance, amiable. He often had these words in his mouth:—"We must always serve God with cheerfulness." He had very often expressed an earnest desire to die a martyr, but he sincerely confessed himself wholly unworthy of that honor. The other martyrs were a Dominican, two Norbertines, one Canon Regular of St. Austin, called John Oosterwica, three curates, and another secular priest. The first of these curates was Leonard Vechel, the elder pastor of Gorcum. He had gained great reputation in his theological studies at Louvain, under the celebrated Ruard Tupper; and, in the discharge of pastoral duties at Gorcum, had joined an uncommon zeal, piety, eloquence, and learning, with such success that his practice and conduct in difficult cases was a rule for other curates of the