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

(From the Lamp.)

CHAPTER XX.

The following day, as they feared, Ellen did not come, and Mrs. Noonan went and sent several times in the evening to know if Richard Mannix was at the Orchard, but no, he was still in the country; the day following that he did not come, and a fearful report reached the Noonans that Ellen had gone off that morning before day with Captain —, the regiment having left for one of the county towns.

Mrs. Noonan hastened to the Orchard to ascertain the truth. Mrs. Mannix was intoxicated, and uttering fearful imprecations against her daughter and her seducer. Mrs. Noonan, disgusted and horrified, quickly returned to Sally, who felt as if Ellen had been her sister; she loved her as one, and for many years looked on her as William's intended wife; and their great grief was now for him as well as Ellen. Mrs. Noonan and Sally were talking, as people with sore hearts will talk on such occasions, recalling memories of the past pleasant hours and cheerful hopes, contrasted with the present care and sorrowful forebodings, when they were interrupted by the entry of a waiting-maid belonging to a respectable family in the neighborhood.

"Mrs. Noonan, I'm told you can tell me all about this shocking story that's going about Mannix's daughter. I hear she was to be married to your son. What an escape he had of her," said the giggling waiting-maid.

"Poor girl! I'm afraid she has fallen into misfortune. God forgive her and them that was the cause of her ruin," said Mrs. Noonan.

"Amen! He used to visit above at the house, and the missus is losing her wits to know all about it. She bid me find out every thing; what sort of a looking girl she was, and if it was in a shay or the mail-coach she went off. Tell me all you know, and I'll pray for you," said the girl.

"I declare you came to a bad person to get news, and if I knew it myself, I'm too sorry for the poor deluded creature to be able to discourse much about it," said Mrs. Noonan.

"Well, to be sure," said the girl, "but it would be an act of charity of you to tell me something, herself is so curious; she had nothing against the girl that was before me I hear, but that she was no good at getting news for her; but never mind," she continued, as she perceived the tears streaming down Mrs. Noonan's cheeks, "I won't be troubling you, I'll just string a parcel of things together myself, and 'twill pass for gossip." And so saying, she skipped out of the house.

"Well, said Mrs. Noonan, when she was gone, "if that isn't a shame; it isn't come to my turn to find fault with quality, but if 'twas the Queen that did it, I'd say 'twas wrong, and bad example to send a servant finding out news, and scandal news too; no wonder for the creatures to be fond of gadding and gossiping when they get such encouragement."

The waiting-maid was not the only visitor to Mrs. Noonan that night; as they were preparing for bed, Richard Mannix, Ellen's unfortunate father, walked in. He did not speak a word of salutation to Mrs. Noonan or Sally, but seated himself in silence for two or three minutes, and then burst into a wild and fearful cry. Mrs. Noonan made no attempt to stop him, though every moan rent her heart; yet with the instinct of a superior mind, she sought not by commonplace words to suppress that strong tide of grief which checked, would rush back with deeper force to the poor breaking heart from whence it flowed. When he was able to speak, and would have cursed Ellen, she prevented him: she implored, she entreated him, she went on her knees to him, and extracted a promise, even in that unreasonable stage of his anguish, that he would never curse her. Then he spoke of his wife with maniacal rage, and ground his teeth, and glared like a murderer. Mrs. Noonan trembled; she had no word to say that could soothe or allay the fierce, dark passions that stirred him. All the misery which he had endured in his wedded life, and which for many long years he had borne with a sullen, despairing indifference, was now raked up with overwhelming bitterness, and seemed stinging him to vengeance. The only thing he loved, the only consolation he had, a virtuous daughter—she, his wife and her mother, like the destroying angel, had deprived him of. "Yes," he said, "but for beastly vice, his wretched child would never have disgraced him." Mrs. Noonan heard those frantic outpourings, and feared what they might lead him to. She and Sally knelt down near him, and prayed aloud that God might comfort him, and lead his child back from her evil ways, and save him from sending any poor sinner to her account with her sins unrepented of. Richard Mannix heard those earnest prayers for him, and his poor heart, too, was softened to utter a prayer, that the Lord might pity him.

CHAPTER XXI.

To return to Ellen. A very short period elapsed after the fatal step she had taken, when the load of her sin pressed heavily upon her.— Fortunately, her young heart did not harden in its iniquity. They were no ordinary arts which had deprived it of its lovely innocence, and Ellen, happily, was as sensitive of her degradation as if her education had been the most refined, her social position the most exalted. Her leaving her father's house had been promoted by more than the influence the evil partner of her flight had over her. Jane Buckley, the more to make her own society a necessity to Ellen, told her how her character was talked of, at the same time that she bade her not to bother herself about what they said. Ellen had no mother to look to for advice or comfort; she was worse than dead to her. She felt her reputation was gone, and in an hour of desperation she fled from her father's house. Now that the mist in which the evil tempter had shrouded her began to dissipate, her guilt, the events of the few past months, appeared like a terrible dream. She had an affectionate heart, and she thought bitterly of the misery and disgrace she had brought on her poor father, how fond he had been of her, and what little comfort he had; she thought of William Noonan's pure affection, of his mother and sisters, the friends of her childhood; it seemed now madness to have doubted them, and she began to loath the selfish being who, to gratify his wicked passion, had seduced her from her home, and broken all the ties of her life. Before, when any trouble assailed Ellen, and she had known many unhappy moments, she had a consolation she dare not think of now. She could pray, pray with the hope of being heard, and comforted. Now, alas! she dare not bend her knee to her outraged God. She was too well instructed in her religion to mock him by doing so. She knew that He bade sinners to approach to him, but she also knew that His merciful invitation was not given to those who continued to live in deliberate sin. No; she dared not kneel and worship her Creator, and ask him to bless her; the only prayer she uttered was an occasional ejaculation to God to have mercy on her.

Alas! the unhappy girl, led astray by a bad companion, yielding to the vanity and levity which she prompted, and the dissipation which she falsely imagined might banish her cares, and secure too, as she once thought she was, in her horror of vice. She was a sad illustration of the danger those run who are careless of small temptations, and yield to pride and self-will.

Ellen, with remorse preying on her heart, and undermining her health, which was never robust, had not a being to whom she might unbosom her sorrows. The woman with whom she was lodged she judged rightly could not be a virtuous person, and with the instinct of a once pure heart, which even her sin had not wholly blackened, she shrank from any companionship with her. As to the wicked partner of her guilt, an idea, not an improbable one, had taken possession of her mind, that he would soon desert her, and believing that her seeming to be unhappy would lead him to do so, she did all in her power to conceal her remorse and misery in his presence; not that she cared ever to see, but that she feared to be a homeless wanderer. One day with the fever of these thoughts consuming her, she saw him pass attending two fashionable-looking girls. "He will marry one of them," said Ellen, "and I shall be left to starve or die, or—," and she shrieked out the words—"to become like the dreadful creatures I see in the streets. For if I could work, no person would employ one without a character."

The fever long smouldering rushed to her brain, she stamped and raved; the woman with whom she lodged came and declared she was mad. She watched Captain — when he was returning to his quarters, and told him what she thought. He said—

"Nonsense, that he supposed she had drunk something which had affected her."

But the woman persisted that she had not, that she had never taken a drop of any kind of spirit since she lodged with her, and that seeing her so low in the morning, she carried her something to take, but she smashed the bottle and glass before her, saying it was the cause of her ruin, and muttering some talk about her mother.

Captain — was stunned, and rather shocked; he could sin against God and society, and destroy innocence, he could bring shame on a parent's head, and sorrow to his hearth, yet he was sensitive of seeing a young and interesting creature mad, and despite his not wishing to think so, mad through his agency; besides he did not like to be exposed, to be a subject of gossip, and in small towns those things get such wind.— What was he to? He went to Ellen's room to decide, for himself, her conduct bore out what the woman told him. She was talking incoherently, and her once gentle eyes were glaring at him like a tiger's; he made his escape as quickly

as he could from the house, and said he would send a doctor.

The doctor came, and pronounced her in a bad brain fever. The woman of the house said she should be removed, and though the doctor assured her the fever was not contagious, she would not suffer her to remain, declaring that if she died there her house would get a bad name.

Captain — was very uncomfortable, he was in an unpleasant predicament, and desired his servant to get something done; the servant found it difficult to procure a lodging and he told his master to that effect, and that it was better to send her to the hospital; and the master told him to do so, and not be plaguing him. Accordingly, at dusk that evening, the shivering yet burning frame of poor Ellen was roughly pushed and dragged along the streets to the hospital between the captain's servant and a hired porter; her low muttered, incessant ravings it was melancholy to hear.

For several days Ellen's recovery seemed hopeless, and in her intervals of reason her strength and faculties were so prostrated, that the clergyman in attendance at the hospital found his ministrations perfectly useless. But the mercy of her Saviour interposed; she was not called in her sins; when death seemed inevitable, she rallied. Horrified at the danger she had been in, the earthly happiness she had forfeited and the disgrace she had incurred were comparatively forgotten in her gratitude to God for the eternity of misery she had escaped. The visits of the clergyman were humbly solicited; he knew nothing of her situation except what the nurse-tender had learned from the porter who had brought her to the hospital; namely, that she was living under the protection of an officer when she was taken ill, and that she was a stranger in the place. Anxiously, the good priest had visited her bedside during her delirium, praying Heaven that her poor soul might not be lost; he knew not the degree of guilt which was on her, for, unfortunately, his professional experience made him acquainted with cases where youth was no guarantee that depravity had not stained it with its deepest dye, but he knew that her unrepented sin in its least offensive light was sufficient to close the pure portals of Heaven against her forever. Tenderly and compassionately he dealt with the poor erring, but penitent girl. Like the dear Saviour that he served, his heart rejoiced to bring the strayed sheep back to the fold. It is ever thus that the good priest, when sorrow, or pestilence, or sin would prey on their victims, stands between them and the hideous spectre despair. The consolations of her holy religion imparted by this charitable shepherd brought back to Ellen the peace the world could not give.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was about two months after the hapless Ellen's flight, that Mrs. Noonan and Sally were surprised one evening by a visit from Richard Mannix; they had not seen him since the night he had first been assured of his daughter's elopement. After some ordinary conversation he came in a hesitating manner to the object of his visit. He told them how he had been called on that day by a clergyman from the town where Ellen was, how he told him all about her illness and repentance, and how he tried to induce him to allow her to return home to him; that the good man had come all the way from — himself, for the purpose of seeing him, and persuading him to pardon her.

"And you told him you would, to be sure, Richard Mannix?" said Mrs. Noonan.

"Don't be sure of it at all, Mrs. Noonan," said Richard Mannix, with a convulsed face, "don't be sure that an honest father would like to have his eyes cursed with the sight of a daughter who brought shame upon him."

"I don't wonder, Richard Mannix, that you should be unwilling; but consider she might do worse, and she is so penitent; don't throw her on the world, this once," said Mrs. Noonan.

"Yes, she might do worse, and the priest said so; and that I ought to thank God for touching heart so soon, and that I ought to be thankful that she had not recourse to drink to drown remorse, for that then there'd be no hope for her, no surety but that she'd become like the degraded creatures we see in the streets, and may be, end by destroying herself. But there's no reason why I'm bound to take her back; let her go and earn her bread honestly if she is really sorry."

"Oh, Richard Mannix, be advised by the good priest that would save your child, and don't harden your heart against her," said Mrs. Noonan. "You know," continued she, "that no virtuous or respectable family would take a girl into their service with anything against her character;— and if she got any needwork or the like, what danger of harm she would be in, without some decent person to lodge her and protect her."

"I know all that, and the priest said as much, and more; he said she had not health to work now, and that I had no other daughter to have it a scandal to my taking her back; wisha, he'd

compassionate her more if he knew the sort of a mother she has, and that she may lay her misfortune at her door, God forgive her. I'm to give him my answer to-morrow."

As Mrs. Noonan began now to suspect, Richard Mannix had made up his mind to take back his penitent daughter; indeed he had only come to sound her sentiments on the subject; he went away shortly afterwards, not, however, without giving some broad hints of the good fortune he would give Ellen if he could get some decent, correct young man to marry her.

"Poor man," said Mrs. Noonan to Sally when he was gone, "he'd be for trying to get our William for his poor child, and to purchase him dear he'd think too; but if William himself would do it, and I know he never would, I'd rather see him dead than married to a girl, if she was the first lady in the land, who hadn't a spotless character."

It was late, perhaps between seven and eight o'clock of a fine evening early in November;— the moon shone through a dry fog, such as we sometimes experience at that season. Would that it was thick enough to shroud her from every passing eye, thought Ellen Mannix as she trod the road to her father's cottage; she entered the orchard-gate with a faltering step, and a breaking heart. The little cur dog, her old pet, met her there and frisked and whined, and was wild with joy for seeing her. Ellen sat down on the sward, and clung to the poor affectionate animal. She wept bitterly, she felt that he was the only thing that loved her once that would be proud to welcome her now. For a long while she remained there weeping, the poor dog licking the tears from her streaming eyes; at length she rose and entered the cottage; her mother was in bed, gone there in her usual state; her father was pacing up and down the room, perhaps expecting her. She threw herself on her knees at his feet, and begged his forgiveness.

"Oh, Ellen, how could you bring shame on you father's grey hairs? but I forgive you, and may God forgive you," he said, and rushed from the house.

From the time of Ellen's return to her father's cottage she held no intercourse with any person except his inmates. She firmly resisted the Buckley's attempt to renew their acquaintance. Perseveringly she strove to perform her home duties, and to bear patiently the trials which more than ever she experienced there. Her mother's terrible habits—her many upbraidings in her intoxication—her inability to please, as she once used, her father, now grown sadly fretful and peevish from his misfortunes—her ruined hopes—the position in which her crime had placed her—she bore all without a murmur as a deserved punishment for her transgression; but though she did not murmur she mourned, and her health, which never recovered the shock of what she suffered after leaving her home, daily declined. She never went outside the cottage except at the earliest hour on the Sunday morning to her church; and at dusk in the evening, when everything was arranged within, she would steal to a secluded spot in the orchard, followed by the little dog, who would not lose sight of her for a moment.

CHAPTER XXIII.

But again it is May Sunday, and a day cold and windy, closed into a night of clouded sky and uncertain moonlight. Ellen felt more than usually depressed and miserable that day, it brought scathing memories to her heart. Late in the evening, as usual, she repaired to her little haunt in the orchard. She could not sit still that night, but walked to and fro wringing her hands, and weeping bitterly; at length she was interrupted by a voice calling her name. She felt as if an icy finger pressed on her heart.

"William Noonan, what brought you here? why are you here?" she cried.

"Why do you speak to me that way, Ellen?" said he.

"Have you heard of me? have you heard of what I did?" shrieked Ellen.

"Oh! I heard nothing," said the young man with a groan.

"Well, I guessed if you did that you would not come near me—near such a guilty wretch as I am," said Ellen, and she fell in a swoon at his feet.

William had a thought to fly from the spot and not to touch her, her words had brought a frightful feeling to his breast; but as the moon blazed brightly out from a cloud, and he saw the wasted, pallid, dying creature at his feet, with a fearful shudder he raised her up and carried her into the cottage. Her father was there, and, saying that he believed his daughter was dying, that he had better look to her, without another word he left the house.

And why was William Noonan there? A few sentences will explain. He knew nothing of Ellen's guilt. His mother, and sister, in the few letters they wrote to him, shrank from disclosing it; they feared how he would be affected by it, and they at such a distance from him. When his anxious inquiries about Ellen of late became

so pressing, his mother determined to go off, and to break the sad news to him herself. The sudden illness of her married daughter prevented her doing so, and William became uneasy at the unsatisfactory accounts he received. He resolved to surprise them, and spend May Sunday with them. Some unexpected delay on the road prevented his arriving until late in the evening. A depression, a sinking of heart, for which he could not account, seized William as he approached his old home; it was but the presentiment which so often foreshadows some dire calamity. He found his mother's cottage locked up, and he learned from one of the neighbors that his mother and Sally were spending the day with his married sister, but that they were to return that night. William now turned his steps to the orchard, and finding Ellen not within, and hearing from the servant that she was somewhere about the place, he went in search of her, and found her as we have seen.

When William returned to his mother's, she and Sally were arrived before him. They were quite unprepared for his coming, and his agitation and ghastly look explained where he had been. His questions it was now useless to evade, and not all his mother's influence over him could for a time allay the roused passions which fired and shook his strong frame. It was pitiable to see a noble, honest heart so tried, its true pure affection so blasted, to see his fine hale face livid as a corpse, and no words coming from the convulsed lips and set teeth. It was pitiable to see the mother and sister that loved him, feeling his grief: pitiable to see that young fair girl going to the grave with the brand of shame on her brow! and the old sorrow-stricken father, notwithstanding she had disgraced them, vainly hoping to stand between the grave and the only thing on earth that he loved. It was pitiable, but let us pity more the bad, neglectful mother, and the libertine, for the curse of God was on their heads. The latter may sneer at and scorn to heed the wrong he had inflicted on a humble gardener. Yet, though high his position, it was well for him that William Noonan, with passions naturally strong, was taught to control them from childhood by a good parent, and that the deep revenge which for the moment stirred his soul was restrained by the fear of God in which he had been trained; for he did not want the physical courage, or the lion nerve, to dare the deed the tempter of his soul suggested, but the grace of the Saviour whom he had known and served in his youth and his manhood, was more powerful, and so the seducer escaped punishment at his hands, and William had not the blood of an unrepentant sinner to account for. It was late that night ere he could be induced to seek some rest for his weary frame. Before going to bed, he expressed his intention of leaving the next morning early, and returning to his situation in the North; Mrs. Noonan and Sally agreed that it was better for the latter to accompany him, to take care of, and comfort him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Sally was desirous to see Ellen before she went. William had told them that he was sure she was dying. She had not seen her since her unfortunate estrangement from them. Mrs. Noonan, on hearing from her father that her health was failing so fast, wished, and offered to go to her, but Ellen was putting off the meeting from day to day; not through pride or resentment now, but with a feeling of deep shame.— Mrs. Noonan willingly accompanied Sally in her painful leave-taking; and, though it was long past midnight, they set off for the orchard.— Shortly before their arrival, the clergyman and doctor had left, the latter pronouncing that Ellen's hours were numbered. Her sudden meeting with William had caused the rupture of a blood-vessel in her lungs, which promised a speedy termination to the consumption, which for months had been consuming her. When Mrs. Noonan and Sally entered, Ellen was sitting up in the bed, propped by pillows; in one hand she held a crucifix, the other was clasped in her father's. They stood for a few moments unperceived witnesses of the sad scene, and was shocked to hear Ellen's father say to her—

"Curse the wretch that brought you to this, Ellen; curse him, my child, with your dying breath, that it may overtake him speedily."

"Oh, dear father, don't talk that way to me," said Ellen, "how could I face my God with curses on my lips? What did the clergyman tell us to-night but that we must forgive every one that injured us, if we hope for mercy ourselves. Oh, I could not do it. I never did it," said the dying girl.

"Well, you needn't if you don't like, my darling; it is no matter, the curse of God is on him," said Richard Mannix; "and that it may never cease to pursue him," he muttered between his ground teeth.

Ellen swooned. "Oh, Richard Mannix," said Mrs. Noonan, "don't drive her God from the death-bed of your poor child by wicked curses."