



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XVII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JULY 26, 1867.

No. 51.

ELLEN AHERN; OR, THE POOR COUSIN. CONCLUDED IN THREE PARTS. PART II.—(Continued.)

Ellen Ahern thought she had disciplined her feelings and brought them under the subjection of her will, but now she felt all her weakness, and determined to expose herself no more to influences which could only result in unhappiness to her. Poverty is considered by some writers to be the acme of human misery, but to a woman, a blight on her affections, or a stab to the vitality of such love as only woman can feel, is as bitter a woe as her heart is capable of bearing. There was nothing left for her to do but to cover up her wounds, and struggle with the foe that had all unbidden invaded her peace as best she might until time and her own efforts gave her the victory she hoped for. Mr. Wardell, on two or three occasions, began to speak of Don Enrique in connection with the affairs of Desmond Maguire, but she besought him to desist, offering as an excuse that everything connected with the strange events that had transpired agitated her and brought on fever. Thus, in the pursuance of what seemed an apparent duty, she cut herself off from those explanations which would more than compensate her for all the sufferings she had endured. Don Enrique who was both surprised and piqued by her unaccountable conduct, and imagined that she had grown fickle and indifferent, made no further efforts to see her, but announced his intention of returning home immediately, if Mr. Wardell did not object. There being nothing to detain them, Mr. Wardell arranged it for Ellen Ahern and Therese to remain at Dairy Farm during his absence, and they sailed in one of his own ships. Ellen Ahern, when it was too late, regretted her inflexibility, and tormented herself with a thousand vague and useless imaginations which did not tend to restore the roses to her cheeks or strength to her system. Too weak to resume teaching, Therese continued to attend the Convent school; and as in the old times at Fermanagh, Thela was her constant companion, and the books Don Enrique had left for her, between the leaves of which might be seen here and there a withered heart's ease, were her chief relaxation and enjoyment; for many of the pages were marked by his pencil, and many of the most eloquent passages they contained showed on the margin a brief comment in his handwriting. Nothing could be kinder than the attentions of the family with whom they were sojourning, or more genuine and effective than their concern for her health and comfort. Father Weston came two or three times a week to visit her, and Mrs. Gaston and Mrs. Tilbot were unwearied in the manifestations of their interest in her welfare. The rarest delicacies from their table, and the sweetest flowers from their conservatories, were daily sent for her acceptance with friendly messages and playful commands to get well, all of which touched Ellen Ahern's sensitive and grateful heart deeply and tenderly, and made her think that she might even find a solace for heart in the calm blessings of an unselfish friendship. When Therese was at home, her devoted affection suggested a thousand things to cheer her. She brought her the first snowdrops and crocuses of the season, and would lure her out to walk under the blossoming trees when the evening sun shone warm and golden from the west, and bathed the landscape in rich effulgence. She sang to her—read to her, and sought by every winning art that her affection suggested to beguile her from her sad and quiet moods, and gradually her efforts were crowned with success, for her step grew stronger and lighter; she interested herself in objects around her, and a faint hue appeared once more on her colorless cheeks. They had heard nothing from Mr. Wardell since the ship sailed. They only knew from the papers that 'the ship had arrived in due time at Cork, passengers and crew well,' but no letters had yet reached them from Ireland, although sufficient time had elapsed for them to do so. Ellen Ahern's heart was full of strange anxiety which she dared not express, and fears without number, undefined and terrible, at times assailed her concerning Mr. Wardell's safety and the result of the business that carried him to Fermanagh. What if Lord Hugh and Lady Fermanagh should dispute the claims of Desmond Maguire in a manner which would compel him to bring the matter before a tribunal of justice.

One evening she and Therese were together alone in the little parlor, conversing on various topics when the child adroitly led the way to her darling theme—a religious life. The moon, full and unclouded, shone through the vine-covered windows, making a pattern of silvery brightness on the floor, while the winds, laden with rare and spicy perfumes, sighed softly past. Ellen Ahern was reclining on the sofa, and Therese was kneeling on the floor beside her,

with her head leaning against her bosom. That morning they had both received the Holy Communion, and their souls, filled with patient calm and other sweet fruits of the Divine union, were softened and attuned to such themes. 'It is certainly a very perfect way of serving God, if one can be sure of a vocation,' observed Ellen Ahern. 'In that case I can imagine no state this side of Heaven happier. The very thought, that all that follows in word and act is for God's sake, whether of obedience or of mortification, ought to make the trials of a religious life a sweet endurance. Those who are thus chosen are highly blessed.' 'I think sometimes, dear Miss Ahern, that I have a vocation for a religious life,' said the child, timidly. 'You, dear Therese,' said Ellen Ahern, drawing her closer to herself, while a sense of something about to be lost to her thrilled her heart and made it throb wildly. 'You are too young. I could not spare you child.' 'The flowers that you love best are the buds with the morning dew drops on them,' said Therese, in low, gentle tones, 'and a certain saint says that our Lord is well pleased when the young consecrate to him the first bloom of their life, ere the world has contaminated or stained it.' Just then a quick footstep rang on the gravel, and some one entered the little porch. They heard the sound of a cane on the floor as if it was a help, and even necessary to the progress of the person, and the next moment a voice which they both recognized called out in loud, clear tones: 'Therese! where are you?' 'Here, sir!' she exclaimed, springing up.—'Oh, Miss Ahern, it is papa.' In another moment she was folded to his breast, and her arms were clinging about him in a wild embrace, while she repeatedly kissed his cheeks, now no longer sunken and pale, but wearing the outline and hues of better health. 'Where is Miss Ahern, and how is she?' said Mr. Wardell, as he led her into the parlor. 'Here, sir, and better. I am very glad you have come back. How long have you been at home?' 'I landed about two hours ago, and I've brought you such a budget of love and messages that I despair of delivering one half. In fact, I have no time to talk. You and Therese must get ready to start by to-morrow at five o'clock.' 'Start, sir! Where to?' 'To Ireland, Miss Ahern. I have come back for you both. Her grandmother thinks she cannot last much longer, and frets continually to see her.' 'To Ireland!' said Ellen Ahern, all amazed. 'I cannot go, sir.' 'Cannot go! I dare not return without you. Your old friend and guardian, Sir Eadhna Ahern, commands you to come by all that you owe him and all the love he has lavished on you from the day you were born. He is very old and infirm, and if you do not go with me you may never see him again.' 'Alas! but that would be terrible; but have you no letters?' 'I came off in such haste, that I had no time to get letters, but they told me to tell you that everything bid fair to prosper under the new reign.' 'Where is the new landlord?—I mean Desmond Maguire,' she asked, timidly. 'He is in Dublin, and will remain there to complete some arrangements about his property, and make a transfer of his Spanish means to Ireland.' 'And his friend, the Spanish gentleman who was here?' 'Oho! Yes! The Senor Giron. He may be in Spain. There is no such person at Fermanagh.' 'Are you quite sure, sir?' 'Perfectly sure, Miss Ahern. But I have no time to lose. I must be back to the city to-night to see Father St. John. You go back with us.' 'Yes, sir,' replied Ellen Ahern, after some hesitation. 'They are all away, and I will go for a short time. My venerated and beloved old kinsman's wishes are law to me. I would not pain him by a refusal, or forego his last last blessing for any selfish considerations of my own. But is all right at Fermanagh?' 'All right, thanks be to God and you Ellen Ahern. Everything has resulted more happily than I deserved. There was no trouble,' said Mr. Wardell, in a softened voice. 'Our proofs were too positive and overwhelming.' 'And Lady Fermanagh?' 'She is dead. Let us step gently over her ashes. Her son has gone to the continent where he will remain.' 'Dead! My God! I hope Thou didst in the plenitude of Thy mercy receive her,' exclaimed Ellen Ahern dreadfully shocked. 'Amen!' said Mr. Wardell, solemnly. 'But

I must leave you now, my children. Be ready to meet me to-morrow at four o'clock. I forgot to tell you that Father McMahon sent you a message in Latin, which I have forgotten every word of.' 'I can imagine it,' she said, smiling softly as thoughts of her old home came rushing on her heart. 'I must go—oh, yes—I must see them all again.' There was with the nuns the next morning. She attended Mass in their chapel, and afterwards bade them adieu, cheered by the promise that they would remember her daily in their prayers. But one evening, when the ship was rolling on the billows of the Atlantic, and nought was heard but the creaking of the cordage and the dashing of the foam under her prow—when nothing was seen in the wide waste around them but the phosphorescent gleams from the dark billows, and the gem like brightness of the stars above them, Therese, leaning on her father's breast, with his arm about her, confided her cherished secret to him. So far from meeting with the opposition she feared, and the quiet sarcasms that she feared still more, she heard him murmur: 'Thank God!' and say, 'You have chosen well, my child. You are my all, and with joy, as part of my reparation to Him, and I pray that He may preserve you in your present intentions.' And she felt herself clasped in a closer embrace, and from that hour there was a sweet and holy confidence between father and child, which had more of heaven in it than aught they had ever known before.

One more scene and our task is finished. There was great joy that day in the humble and quiet dwelling of the saintly old priest of St. Finbar's. While he was reading aloud from the pages of a favorite author to his friend, Sir Eadhna Ahern, who, feeble and failing with old age and the pining he felt to see his precious *cooleen bawn*, was reclining in a cushioned chair by the window, the door opened gently and Ellen Ahern was kneeling before them, ere they knew she was in the house.

'My child, my little ewe lamb, welcome—ten thousand times welcome!' cried the old man, when, having recovered from the first shock of his happiness, he fell weeping on her neck. 'No less welcome to me, my beloved child! In te Domini speravi. I have not been con-founded,' said Father McMahon, laying his trembling hands on her head. 'Rise up my child, and let us look on your pleasant countenance once more.' And, seated between them, with her bonnet thrown back, while her cheeks were all aglow, she gave expression to her joy at being with them once more, and amidst smiles and tears, she gave them a brief outline of the events that had occurred up to her unexpected return to Ireland, avoiding as much as possible the mention of the names of Don Enrique or Lord Desmond, by which means she was still left in ignorance of the real facts of the case, while the two overjoyed old men, not observing the omission in the excitement of the moment, and taking it for granted that she understood everything in connection with it, failed to enlighten her. Amidst the happiness of their reunion the moments slipped rapidly away, and twilight began to gather over the earth and creep into the windows, subduing and softening every emotion, when they were all startled by a bounding about of some large body in the hall, followed by an energetic snuffing, and at last by a shrill scream from the housekeeper, who burst open the door and rushed in with Thela at her heels. 'It's him, yer riverince, or his wrath, (ghost), an' maybe she's somewhere to the fore—Glory to God!' she exclaimed, catching a full view of Ellen Ahern's face, 'it's herself, sure! Bedad, honey, but I b'lieve I've been asleep and just awake.' Thereupon she sprang forward, almost overturning Father McMahon, and fell to kissing and embracing Ellen Ahern with an emphasis which almost deprived her of breath, saying at intervals: 'You're starvin', I know, honey *machree*—let me go an' get ye a cup of hot tay and some cowlid fowl an' toast. 'Thanks be to God, there's plenty now an' no lie about it, since the new reign begun. Musha then, *asthore*, but we had the divi's own doin's with the *murtherin'* villains—' 'Bridget! woman! how often must I caution you to be merciful to the fallen and to the dead? Tread lightly over their ashes,' said Father McMahon. 'Aye, bedad; like they trod over the dust of our kin forewent there at Cathagura—I aint a saint, yer riverince, thank ye. Every man to his trade. You're a saint, an' I'm only a poor, sinful craythur that's got to let out the spite that's in me. As to her ladyship that's dead an' gone—Christ pity her soul—I've got nothing ag'in her—but for *hym*—the epalpeen an' *change-lin*—I'd—'I'd—well then yer riverince, I'd send him, if I had my way wid him, to spend the rest of his days wid them Trapps that live on cowlid air and moonshine, that yer ownself' was telkin'

me about. But give me yer bonnet and things, *asthore*; God's blessin' on yer winsome face.—It'll be a wondher if it don't break Lord Desmond's heart, yet.' 'Don't make any plans but bread and butter ones for me, dear Bridget,' said Ellen Ahern, while the blood mounted to her cheeks and temples, 'or I shall surely vanish again.' 'Never fear me, *asthore machree*; but it'll be no use settin' yerself ag'in yer fortin'. But 'is it yerself, honey flesh an' blood?' said Bridget, laughing and crying by turns. 'Sure Thela—the haste—scared my sivin senses away, an' maybe I aint right yet. Plase yer riverince to bring me to myself, wid a pinch on my arm or a sharp crack over my skull wid your blackthorn there in the corner.' 'You are not dreaming, dear Bridget. You'll be convinced of it when you see me eating cold chicken and toast, for I am very hungry; and when my trunk comes, I have something for you which I brought all the way from America, which will convince you that I am my own real self,' said Ellen Ahern. 'Glory be to God an' the Blessed Virgin, I never expected to live to see a day like this.—But I'll take nothing from ye—I want nothing; it's enough to have yerself, darlint, so it is.' 'But I shall be hurt if you do not take the beautiful flowered shawl and silk gown I brought you, my dear old friend,' said Ellen Ahern. 'It's aisy to see when people's got the real old blood in their veins. Och! I'd like to know if ever they would a'thought of bringin' a poor old craythur like me a shawl and gown from fur-rin' parts. Yes, a *suitish*, I'll wear it for your own d-r sake,' said the housekeeper, through whose imagination floated visions of consequence and grandeur to be derived from her promised finery. 'Biddy, woman, will you get the child some supper?' exclaimed Father McMahon, emphatically. 'I'm goin' this minute, an' yer riverince needn't be so short on a body,' she said, wiping her eyes, and smoothing down her apron as she left the room. And they were left together once more to talk of the past and of the excellent promise of the present. They told her while she sat quietly between them, holding a hand of each—of the changes for the better that Desmond Maguire had already made, the hearts that he had already gladdened and the misery that he had alleviated in the Barony. The Scotchmen had all been dismissed, and their expenses home paid by Lord Desmond, while some of the men of Fermanagh were set to work to demolish the half built factory and restore the ruins of *Catha-gura*, which, from their antiquity and associations, were rendered holy in his sight. This afforded employment at once to many, while a number—the husband and fathers of the Barony restored to their old lands and houses, which were secured to them and their children by long and just leases—were busy preparing the soil for the spring planting, and thatching and repairing their half ruined cabins. Those who had been driven out paupers into neighboring parishes heard the good news, and lost no time in returning to the scenes of their dearest associations, where they found from the new landlord a patient hearing and steady employment. 'Everything,' they told, 'was going on as happily and merrily as a marriage bell—not that everybody had suddenly grown rich, or good, or thrifty, but because they were put in a fair train to become so, through having plenty of work and good wages. As to Fabe, he had disappeared—luckily for him—as he had by his frauds and dishonest proceedings placed himself within the power of the law, and would have been prosecuted if he had not fled.' While the two were enjoying the repast prepared by the skilful fingers of Bridget, the excellent dame had sent the *gosssoon* abroad to spread the tidings of Ellen Ahern's arrival, and ordered him to coax Thela along as poor positive of the fact. The next morning, after Mass, Father McMahon's house was too small to hold the crowd of humble friends who thronged to see her, and whose demonstrations of joy and undiminished affection were so touching and eloquent, that the very depths of Ellen's heart were moved within her, and she felt that this reviving of old ties and affections would only inflict fresh pangs, and open anew the wounds she was striving to heal, when the hour of separation came. But the exquisite joy she felt was almost a recompense beforehand for the anticipated hours of bitterness to come. Happy in their belief that she knew every detail and all the minutiae of Lord Desmond's restoration, and his identity with Don Enrique, her two ancient and venerated friends gave themselves no thought of her ever leaving them again. 'Come *Aileen a suitish*,' said Sir Eadhna Ahern, the next day, 'would you not like to go up to the old place? I feel so much better, that if you will lend me your arm, *maavourneen*, I shall be able to get there without trouble.'

'It is what I am wishing in my heart, dear cousin Eadhna; but are you sure—that is—I would like to know when Lord Desmond Maguire is expected home,' asked Ellen Ahern, hesitatingly. 'In a week or so, I think. It will be a happy day to me, a *suitish*, to see your two bright faces together again,' was the reply. 'Again! he forgets,' murmured she; 'woe's me that I should have to paid him by leaving him again. Let us go now, dear,' she said, softly, as she threw on her hat and scarf; 'here, lean on my arm, and let us walk slowly. How soft and sweet the wind is to-day; and the cry of the cuckoo from the copse down there makes me a child again. I almost think I smell the fern on yonder hill side. Oh, it is very, very sweet to be at home once more, cousin Eadhna!'