

SALLY CAVANAGH,

Or, The Untenanted Graves.

A TALE OF TIPPERARY.

BY CHARLES J. KICKHAM.

CHAPTER XII. Continued.

WHY THE SCHOOL-MASTER'S HAIR GREW GRAY.

"I was very proud and happy when I got the little school. I thanked God with a full heart that now my widowed mother would have a home, and some of the little comforts to which she had so long a stranger. My father died when I was twelve years old. Her life since his death had been one long struggle with poverty and want. I had too much reason to believe that she had not been happier as a wife than she had been as a widow; for my father was a drunkard. Yet, she always endeavored to make me believe that he was a good man; and my own recollection of him led me to believe that he was not a bad man. Strange to say, I loved him far better than I loved my poor mother; and what is still stranger, his ill treatment of her—I might apply the term brutal to it—never caused me any pain or grief. I believe I thought that everything my father did should be right. My mother confirmed me in this way of thinking; for she always spoke to him with respect,—almost with reverence. I can remember her singing and laughing when he had gone out after cruelly beating her. I think he must have loved her; for, one day when he returned home unexpectedly and found her asleep, with a wound upon her forehead, which his own hand had inflicted, he stooped down and kissed her. I knew she was not asleep, though he thought she was; for I saw her lips tremble, and the tears stealing down her cheeks. He walked out of the house softly; and then my mother began to sob, and flung herself upon her knees. I can recall to this day the flutter of her heart as she strained me in her arms after praying fervently.

"It never occurred to me that there was anything degrading or sinful in drunkenness, until one morning when I went with my father to the public-house. He drank two glasses of raw whiskey, and was on his way home, when a wretched sot of his acquaintance stopped him. The man's face and lips were livid, and his eyes dull and glassy. He was in rags, and when I saw his whole frame trembling, I thought it was cold he was.

"Are you after having your 'morn-ing'?" said he to my father.

"I am," was the reply.

"The wretched man held his face close to my father's. 'Blood-an'-ouns, mun,' said he, 'let us get the smell of it.'

"That was the first time I conceived anything like disgust for a drunkard. Perhaps the reason I did so then was because I saw my father was disgusted. I often reflect upon the extraordinary influence a father must exercise over the minds of his children. How great in his responsibility if he does not exercise that influence for good!

"One day my father was dragging my mother by the hair, and calling upon her, with the most frightful oaths, to get him money for more whiskey. In vain the poor woman pleaded that she had no money; he only kicked and dragged her the more savagely.

"Come you rip!" he shouted 'get me the money.'

"Come you rip!" I exclaimed, catching her by the hair, to 'get my dada the money.' For my sympathies were always at my father's side.

"He let her go, and staggered back against the wall as if a bullet had gone through him.

"Oh! God help me!" he cried, in the most heartbroken tones I have ever heard; 'as the old cock crows the young cock learns.' 'Oh! God help me!' He said no more, but went into his bedroom, apparently quite sober. He went to Cork next day, and took the pledge from Father Matthew. And from that day to the hour of his death he never tasted a drop of intoxicating drink. But his constitution was entirely broken by a long course of intemperance, and he lived only one year after becoming a teetotaler. His last words to me were: 'Willie, never be a drunkard.'

"What privation my mother suffered for my sake! She took the bit out of her own mouth to give it to me. Her great ambition was to make me 'a scholar,' and I was kept constantly at school. My

father, who was a good angler, had often sent me with presents of fish to the Protestant clergyman. A few months after my father's death the clergyman's wife met me, and inquired kindly for my mother. She also gave me a half-sovereign, which she desired me to give to my mother to buy clothes for me. And when the clothes were bought we were both to call upon her. We did call upon her; and, to my poor mother's dismay, the lady offered to provide for me if she were allowed to bring me up as a member of the Established Church. The lady was very mild and handsome; and I am sorry to think the half-sovereign which made me so happy was only a bribe. But these things have little or nothing to do with what I wish to tell you. I have written them almost unconsciously.

"My health was never very strong, and I scarcely ventured to hope that I could ever be anything but a burden to my dear mother. Judge of my rapture when my kind friend, Father O'Gorman, gave me the appointment of teacher to one of his schools. For three years after I was as peacefully happy as mortal man could hope to be. The injustice which I suffered from the parents of some of my pupils was very trying. But the love of the children for me made me forget it. The love of children has always been like a blessing from Heaven to me. Later, I have been sorely persecuted by an inspector—for the school is 'under the Board'—who appears to take pleasure in wounding my feelings in every possible way. But a word of sympathy from Father O'Gorman will heal the worst wound this official can inflict upon me almost instantaneously. For awhile I used to feel pained by the sneers of coarse-natured fellows, who would refer to my former poverty in the most offensive manner, because I respected myself and dressed decently. I soon, however, learned to despise this; particularly as none but the most vulgar ever attempted to annoy me in the way I have mentioned. And what need I care? Had I not my dear mother to welcome me with her loving smile, every evening, after the day's toil? Had I not the respect and good will of many among my humble neighbors? Yes; and the friendship of a few whom I could look up to without feeling that I was looked down upon. He for whom I write this was the most valued of these few friends. And here, in one word, let me thank him. His manner towards me was always frank, always kind, but never patronizing. I thank him with all my heart. He made me feel that I was a man.

"I have not yet touched upon the subject about which I sat down to write. I find I have been putting it off, almost unconsciously.

"Rose Mulvaney came to my school. She was accompanied the first day by her father and mother, who were simple peasants.

"They told me that Rose had lived with her grandmother high up on the mountain, and that her education was almost entirely neglected; and with tears of entreaty in their eyes, they begged of me to do my best to make up for the lost time, by taking all the pains I could 'to bring her on,' as they expressed it. I promised to do my best; and after warning Rose to be 'a good girl,' and assuring her that 'the master' would soon make her 'a fine scholar,' the good, simple old couple shook me warmly by the hand, and with many a 'God bless you' and 'Good luck to you,' took their leave.

"Poor Rose! How she laughed, and cried, and blushed at her deficiency. She was diligent, however, and naturally quick, and soon began to make wonderful progress. Have I said that Rose was strikingly beautiful? I have seen

one face which was, perhaps, more regnarily handsome. It was that of a young lady whom you know. But you will pardon me for saying that there was a soul, an ever-changing something in the face of Rose Mulvaney, which, to my mind, far excelled the still loveliness of the face to which I have alluded. O my friend! may you never feel the pang which has torn my wretched heart to pieces!"

Jane Evans' pale face flushed, and her breathing became quick. She closed the book hastily and gazed into the fire.

"Is the difference much?" she thought.

She stood up, with her hair flowing wildly, and opening the window shutters, rested her burning forehead against the glass, and looked out at the stars. The room door opened and Mrs. Evans, with a most woe-begone face, presented herself.

"O Jane!" she exclaimed, in a tone of utter misery, "what are you thinking of?" Miss Evans turned round quickly. "What am I thinking of?" she repeated. "Why?"

"I won't allow it," says Mrs. Evans, with feeble determination.

"Allow what?"

"Mrs. Hill came down from the lodge, and told that there was a man on horseback at the gate, and I'm after sending Joe and Philip to arrest him. I'll send for the police, so put it out of your head," exclaimed Mrs. Evans, still feebly energetic.

"For Heaven's sake, mamma, tell me what you mean."

"Ah, Jane, what did you mean by talking of America?"

Here voices were heard outside, near the front of the house, and Miss Evans hastily pulled down the window-blind. She moved the blind a little aside, and saw the two serving men leading a horse with somebody on his back. When the hall door was opened, and the light shone out upon the group, Miss Evans smiled.

"Come here, mamma."

Mrs. Evans looked out.

"'Tis Mr. Mooney," says she faintly.

"And now," her daughter observed, "you know I have retired for the night. I need not say how ridiculously you have acted. And now I suppose you will see the necessity of making the best of it."

"But, Jane, what did you mean by talking of America? Is it possible that you are still thinking of that man? You know—"

But Jane pointed to the group outside, and waved her hand towards the door.

Mrs. Evans walked away with a look suggestive of smelling-salts. She was not a strong-minded lady. And Brian Purcell was the one shadowing her path.

"Mr. Mooney," said Mrs. Evans from the hall door, "there has been some unfortunate mistake. And now, to let me see that you are not offended, come in."

Mr. Mooney alighted with great alacrity. The men having hold of his bridle prevented him from dashing away in a figure of eight.

"Sit down, Mr. Mooney," says the lady of the house.

"Oh! not at all," says Mr. Mooney. "I'm sorry my daughter has retired for the night."

"We had a capital hunt," observed Mr. Mooney, with his eyes very wide open, and staring at the wall. "After going four miles, as the crow flies, towards the slate quarries he doubled back to Coolbawn cover, where the earth was open. Everything went off splendidly—the marquis was delighted—except a row between Mr. Grindem and a person of the name of Brian Purcell. Mr.—that is Grindem and I, are capital friends. 'How are you, Mooney?' says

he. 'How do you do, Mr.—ahem!—How do you do Grindem?' says I. Capital fellow, Grindem. Stood any amount of brandy." Here Mr. Mooney fortified himself with a glass of wine, and with desperate resolution said, "I had the pleasure of seeing—ahem!—Miss Evans there in the morning."

"Oh! yes; she was there."

"The three Miss Plunkets were in at the finish. Why does not Miss Evans ride to hounds? Don't tell me she can't do it. For dear me," exclaims Mr. Mooney, holding out his hand, and staring at the wall, "there's nothing she can't do." Mr. Mooney sat bolt upright in his chair, sucking the handle of his hunting whip. He fixed his eyes on the ceiling, as if he could see through it into the room above. "Mrs. Evans," says Mr. Mooney, looking through the ceiling, "I can't stand it."

"Stand what, Mr. Mooney?"

"Particularly now," continued the young gentleman, "since my mother is down on me."

Mrs. Evans looked surprised, but thought it best to let him go on.

"Down on me," he repeated, "on account of Miss Baker. Not Miss Baker, you know, but the fat one."

"Really, Mr. Mooney, I don't understand you."

"Don't think, Mrs. Evans," says Mr. Mooney, taking the lady's hand, and looking the reverse of cheerful, "don't think it was her beauty! No, Mrs. Evans. It was the sublimity of her disposition. The sublimity, Mrs. Evans. And is it not a sad thing, Mrs. Evans—here Mr. Mooney became lugubrious to a degree—"is it not melancholy, heart-breaking, for a man to have a mother—"

"Mr. Mooney is obliged to have recourse to his pocket-handkerchief, but not being able to find it, uses the skirt of his scarlet coat. 'To have a mother, Mrs. Evans, without an atom of sublimity?'"

"Really, Mr. Mooney—"

"I don't say my mother is not grand, for she is grand. Look at her in her violet velvet, and where will you see a grander woman? But, my dear Mrs. Evans, what is grandeur without sublimity?"

"Pon my word, Mr. Mooney, I must beg—"

(To be continued.)

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