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AILEY MOORE;

A TALE OF THE TIMES.

CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

Cecily took a pin from her neck—it was a cameo, a magnificent work of art, the 'dolorous Mother.' 'Take this,' she said to Ailey, 'wear it for me.' 'La Vergine dolorosa' cried Ailey, in surprise; for the cameo had been hitherto concealed by a neckband which Cecily wore. 'You wear the figure of our Lady of Dolours. Really Miss Tyrrell—' 'No 'miss' now, Ailey.' 'Well, really I think my heart must have discovered that you loved my sweet Mother, and her eyes filled. 'Ah, no, Miss Tyrrell—well, Cecily—no, do not part with the image of Mary,' said Ailey, almost passionately. 'I shall have one,' said Cecily, looking at Ailey's collar. Ailey blushed. 'I shall have yours, crissima,' said the beautiful young woman. 'Oh, mine is ordinary.' 'Nay, no pleading from 'our own Ailey Moore.' Ailey drew forth the pin. There was a very small medal under the shell—she was disengaging it. 'What are you removing?' 'A little medal,' said Ailey, smiling. 'Will you not leave it to the heretic?' 'Willingly; will you wear it?' 'For you, Ailey, had it come direct from the furnace.' The priest and the young men were amused, though affected. Parting commenced at last, and Ailey never felt such a parting; wherefore, who can tell? She trembled when Frank Tyrrell took her hand—and she felt like one who needed to weep, when Cecily moved towards the hall. 'Mr. Moore,' said Cecily, presenting her hand, 'may we not meet again? Will you never go to England?' 'I hope to see England, but not for a long time.' 'We should feel delighted at an opportunity of showing our friends the man to whom we owe so much.' 'Oh, do not speak of it—it's a trifle.' Cecily felt it was little to what Reginald Moore could do—would do. 'We will not be forgotten?' she said and there was a look of anxiety in the sweet speaker. Reginald Moore looked in her face, and their eyes met—fully, fully, their souls knew each other. And all prepared now to move. At the green gate they met Biddy, the beggar-woman, and Eddy, her grandson. 'Lord save ye all!' said Biddy, 'ye're late for the crownin'?' 'How is that, Biddy?' 'Oh, kase Skeria is crowned,' answered Biddy, 'and wifful murder against some one not known.' 'We're late then,' said Reginald. 'Late? said Father Mick; and it may be as well—a vic—eh—may it not?' 'Yes.' Biddy and Eddy followed Frank and his sister. 'Lord bless your handsome face,' said Biddy, 'and gie you a good sinochin.' 'What is that?' demanded Frank. 'A good wif to yer 'oner,' said Biddy. 'An' did you ne'er hear of our own Ailey Moore?'—sung out Eddy. 'Hould yer tounge, you omadhaun,' she cried to the boy. 'Beg yer pardon, sir, but all the poor are mad about Miss Ailey, sir—she's such an angel.' 'Come here,' he said to Eddy. 'Look at this young lady, now—say she's handsomer than Ailey Moore, and I'll give you a silver shilling.' A bird passed over Eddy's head, and he turned to whistle after it. 'You young scapegrace, don't you hear me.' 'Oh, sorra good sir, he'd be burned alive afore he'd give up Miss Ailey—' 'Oh, did you ne'er hear tell of our own Ailey Moore?' The roses could never come near her I'm sure! The angel of God to the sick and the poor, And our light in the darkness—is sweet Ailey Moore. 'How they love her!' cried Frank—and she is an angel! 'I never met her equal,' said Cecily. Eddy got two bright half-crowns. The brother and sister went to the lordly mansion of Kinmacarra; but its rich furniture, and its noble works of art, had no attraction for them. Father Quinlan's little parlour—the bright vision of Ailey Moore—the ever mastering and ever governed mind of Reginald—the

love of the poor—how good—how sweet—how valuable it was!—and they thought, each of them was possessed by it, that they should meet the brother and sister, and even the old priest again—all these occupied their minds during the preparation for their return to England. 'Alas they could not prophesy!' CHAPTER VI.—HOW MR. SNAPPER WENT A WOOLING, AND WHAT CAME THEREFROM. There are some men whom good habits destroy. They may escape in a crowd, if their garb be very ordinary, but if they make any effort to adorn themselves, from being ugly they become hideous. Mr. Snapper, land-agent, and attorney-at-law, was one of these. Mr. Snapper, however, thought otherwise, and on a morning in the summer of 1844—not so long ago, either—he rose early, made many ablutions, and dressed himself a la mode. Mr. Snapper wore a light waistcoat and grey pantaloons, a profusion of shirt collar, and a coloured neck-tie—the neck-tie most particularly directed attention to the crookedness of Mr. Snapper's eyes. Having been duly 'perfumed like a milliner,' to which class we mean no disrespect by saying so, Mr. Snapper took up his white kid gloves, approached the mirror for the hundredth time, laid his hat upon the dressing table, and commenced to look at himself as he drew on the said kid gloves—gentlemen always like to see themselves drawing on their gloves. The learned gentleman remarked that his hand was very large, and looked larger when developed and defined by the kid glove, so he thought he would carry the gloves carelessly in his hands. Then he thought he had made a mistake in the matter, and again put on his gloves; but again he looked dissatisfied, and to wear them off his hands was the ultimate resolve. Mr. Snapper was going to woo. The gig was at the door—a gig well known in those parts—the whip-handle rose gracefully from the left hand side, the whip itself bowed as gracefully in the 'passing breeze'; the horse was shining under brightly-polished harness, and the gig was shining behind the horse. In fact, all parties were engaged in the amorous enterprise of Mr. Snapper. Many congratulations on his looks Mr. Snapper received from Rody and Jude as he made his appearance in the yard. 'The good girl and man-of-all-work were in ecstasies; but it was because Mr. Snapper was going out, and well that amiable gentleman knew it. Rapidly Mr. Snapper's gig drove along the road by St. Seneau's Well, and was directed towards a charming plantation at no great distance. The plantation was perfectly seen from the road. The undulating ground, the neatly trimmed walks, the trees so beautifully arranged for shade and ornament; the lake, with its pair of swans, and the house off in the distance among large trees, looking not too large for moderate income, nor too small for a fair fortune; all were beautiful and attractive—of course, a man of less taste than Mr. Snapper would admire such a residence. As Mr. Snapper's eye wandered towards the hall-door, which had green lattice-work in front, a sylph-like young lady, leaning on a handsome young gentleman, were entering the house. 'All right,' said Mr. Snapper to himself; 'they're at home at any rate,' and Mr. Snapper's brow knit very unlike a gentleman 'going to woo.' The plantation, dear reader, is 'Moorfield,' and the lady and gentleman are Reginald Moore and gentle Ailey. Thither Mr. Snapper is going to seek a wife, and Ailey is the lady of his love. God help thee, gentle Ailey Moore! Reginald has ascended the stairs, and Ailey has entered the drawing-room, on the right hand of the hall. The former has his sanctum—an apartment which no one ever enters but himself, not even Ailey, the beloved Ailey, has found access there; perhaps because she has not sought it.—Some ladies would die if they were compelled to live in the same house with an unrevealed secret. Ailey Moore was quite contented to sacrifice her curiosity to other people's taste or convenience. In this, as in everything else, the dear young girl banished all selfishness, and the unselfish are always the lovable. But what is the secret? Reginald Moore has a passion deep as his own soul. It brings him into familiar communion with the world of glory around him and above him—and even within him. The shape of the summer cloud, and the rich azure in which it lies resting or moves so calmly; the leaf and flower in all their phase of transparent youth and rich maturity; the blaze of the midday sun and the gorgeous hues of its setting; the timid glance of the half-bidden brook, and the lordly swell of the mountain billow—all things beautiful and sublime speak to Reginald as his soul traverses the landscape or travels in the mid-sky—Reginald is a painter.

From his very infancy he sought to reproduce the forms of loveliness around him; but even at a youthful period ceased to exhibit his skill. He was too deeply in love with his pursuit—and he would not unveil anything which would not be its triumph. Like a true disciple, he was never satisfied; and like a manly soul, he determined to be so, some time. Reginald was gone to his studio. There was the outline of a female head in the easel—Reginald sat down before it. Around him were pictures which many of the critics would have called magnificent; to his deep ambition—the ambition of a Sanzio—they were nothing. He was, in a moment, lost in thought—his eyes still on the outline. Has the reader ever seen Raphael (painted by himself) contemplating a vision of the Virgin Mary? How beautiful the thought! The servant knocked. Reginald started as from a dream. He opened the door. He was calm, self-possessed as usual. 'Mr. Snapper, sir, the agent,' said John. 'Have you asked him to walk into the drawing-room?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Is my father at home?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Have you announced Mr. Snapper?' 'Yes.' 'I will be down in a few moments.' And Reginald turned again into his sanctum. He calculated with great truth his relations with Snapper. They were anything but satisfactory; the whole family were more or less in Snapper's power; supposing him to be a rascal—and charity demanded little beyond such a supposition; hence the course of proceeding was sufficiently clear—to listen to the agent, and expect what his interest would determine. Reginald found Snapper and old Mr. Moore in the drawing-room. Everything around spoke of Ailey's home; the fire-screens, from Reginald designs, the ottomans, the hangings, the sofa and chair-covers, the ornaments, they were all in the luxury of taste, without the gorgeousness of fashion. Snapper rose at Reginald's entrance. He approached with great warmth, which was a little abated by the young man's habitual reserve. Old Mr. Moore was gentle as a child. He had never been much of a man of business, but Providence always surrounded him with honest and competent servants, until his son was able to exercise a surveillance over affairs. 'Miss Moore is, I hope, quite well?' said Snapper. 'Quite so,' answered Reginald. 'A frightful ouisness this death of Skeria—Murdered, too, in the Queen's highway—and in close proximity to a magisterial residence.' 'Oh very awful!' said old Mr. Moore; 'very awful, indeed, Mr. Snapper—very awful. And has there been no discovery—no discovery—none whatever.' 'None of any importance to the ends of justice; but I augur we shall be able to net the assassin, as the saying is; we know how to pursue a malefactor, Mr. Moore, and he looked knowingly; he also made his nearest approach to a smile—in fact, he might have even succeeded only for the eyes—the eyes were 'the rub.' 'We there have lost the last life in our lease,' said Reginald, 'but, of course, you remember we have a written promise and engagement of renewal.' 'Oh, my dear sir,' answered the agent, 'I need not say that anything involving or concerning the domestic or other interests of your most respectable family have always been dear to me, Mr. Moore.' Snapper spoke very sententiously—unless with his eyes—which, like Parson Salmer's, were very unsteady. 'I am agent, as the saying is; I have the honor to possess the confidence, regard, and intentions of my lord of Kinmacarra. Make yourself quite, quiet easy; and if there be anything that his lordship can be advised to do, as the saying is, I have the honor, you know—you understand, Mr. Moore,' and the eyes were like anything on earth that means mischief—these eyes of Snapper. 'We are really obliged, Mr. Snapper, but I hope we shall not find it necessary to trouble his lordship.' 'But,' said Snapper—and he coughed—'but,' said Snapper, 'and he looked around the drawing-room, thinking to himself how happy he would be there,—but, Mr. Moore, and Mr. Reginald Moore, I suppose—as the saying is—you guess my most happy business here to-day. I am here; you both know the reason why I have given up important trusts, engagements, and so forth, to come over to Moorfield.' There was no reply. 'The fact is, Mr. Moore, that I have large means—as the saying is—some thousands of pounds which I have saved and economised like the bee, determined to settle in life at the proper time. I am naturally—as the saying is—

affectionate and all that; and I think the time is come to settle myself in life.' And again Mr. Snapper looked around the drawing-room. 'And,' concluded Mr. Snapper, 'as I have made up my mind—and so on—to settle in life, I have come to—ahem!—to ask your daughter, Miss Moore, to be my wedded wife, Mr. Moore, and to give her my hand and my means, and so forth.' 'My daughter!' said the old man. 'Ailey!' cried Reginald. 'My good friend, you are not serious.' 'Serious, gentlemen; serious as a man deeply in love—and so on—can be. My happiness—' 'Ah, well, Mr. Snapper,' said Reginald, 'my father, I am sure, will settle the matter briefly.' 'Oh, it can't be; it can't be, Mr. Snapper; oh, it can't be.' 'And why not, Mr. Moore; I have means, you know, and power, and—' 'But, Mr. Snapper,' remarked Reginald, who was determined to develop his visitor, 'you must remember you are double my sister's age, of a different religion, and I hardly think your tastes are very similar.' 'Oh, as for age, so much the better, as you know; no imprudence—and all that—no hunting and drinking—and so forth,—and as for taste, I like all her ways very well—as the saying is.—I'll not interfere with her religion—only going among the common people, and so on—just a little prudence.' 'She would never consent,' said Reginald. 'Oh, you can manage that,' said Snapper, laughing. He imagined he was gaining ground. 'She'll obey you now, and?'—he laughed again—'she'll obey me—as the saying is—by-and-by.' Many a lady would be glad, you know, to take her place,' continued the ugly little land-agent. 'Well, Mr. Snapper,' said Reginald, slowly and solemnly, 'it can never be.' 'Never!' said the father. 'Eh! never!' echoed Snapper; 'never, ah!—as the saying is—ah! well. And you remember my means?' 'Yes.' 'And my power?' 'Certainly.' 'And you think you can afford to refuse me your daughter—and so on?' 'Afford!' said Reginald. 'Ah! well, don't mind—as the saying is,' and the ruffian leered most frightfully. There was a very long pause. 'By the bye, Mr. Moore, senior, and Mr. Reginald Moore, I believe the last life of this property fell two nights ago.' 'Well,' answered father and son together. 'I was just thinking—as the saying is—that his lordship might need this mansion,' said the villain, with a bitter smile. 'My house?' cried the old man. Reginald said not a word. 'Oh, you will pardon me—as the saying is,' slowly croaked the land-agent—'the lease is out, and the land takes the castle—as the saying is—the tail follows the hide, you know, Mr. Moore, senior.' Bitterly—bitterly he spoke; and very slowly too, to make every syllable tell. 'I have signed and sealed promise of a renewal, you know, Snapper; on the faith of that instrument I built this house.' 'Ah! if the old gentleman—a very good old gentleman, as the saying is—if the old gentleman had the power; but he hadn't—and so on—Mr. Moore, senior; and, besides, there is no witness to the document.' The old man's wrath was rising. 'I say there is, sir.' 'He's dead, and no man knows his handwriting,' said Snapper, with a chuckle; 'and you know in all fairness, you know, his lordship cannot—cannot be bound. I am very sorry, I assure you, but—' 'I think you had better spare that language, friend,' quietly remarked Reginald. 'You may wrong us—for that it is not necessary to mock us. I think this conversation may as well end.' 'You will be good enough, Mr. Reginald Moore, just in kindness, to allow me to settle business on the part of my noble patron, the Lord of Kinmacarra, and so on. I would not, as the saying is, vex you, or put you in a passion, and so on; indeed, it would not be safe.—Some say—' Reginald reddened to the hair roots, but remained silent. 'However,' the fellow continued, 'I am on business.' 'Well, then?' said the old man. 'There are ten years, during which you have been £200 a-year back in arrears of the farms.' 'Yes, the abatement!' cried old Mr. Moore. 'Ah, sir, Mr. Moore, as to that, the receipt shows that the money remains due—the old gentleman, you see, Mr. Moore, was so provident, and so on; and the heir, as the saying is, wants they money.'

Reginald looked the demon full in the face, but said not a syllable. 'Heaven, man!' exclaimed the old man, 'does not all the world know that we hold under an abatement, and that leaving the surplus on the face of the receipt, is only matter of form?' 'Wisely so settled, as the saying is,' answered Snapper, 'in order to punish delinquents, when one likes, and spare the deserving.' 'Come, we see now,' cried Reginald. 'Just only one word more, as the saying is, and the vagabond spoke in tones of great humility. 'I did not come over in my gig to offend you, and so on—not I, indeed. But allow me to add, that as you know, Mr. Moore, senior, holds under joint lease in that small farm of Gorta Cappul, there is a year's rent due.' 'I have my receipt from your own hand. You're—' 'Stay, father,' interrupted Reginald. 'Oh, indeed, you paid your rent honestly, no doubt, as the saying is, but he did not, and so on, sir. So you see, sir, we shall be obliged to call upon you; and—' 'Now, Snapper, have you done,' asked Reginald. 'You have shown us the last thread of the web,' he added. 'Have you done?' 'I end as I began, that I have much power, and, as the saying is, some means.' 'Is that all?' again asked Reginald. 'All,' said the devil smiling. 'Then leave this house forthwith,' said Reginald, with frightful calmness. 'Have I got your last word, and so on?' rejoined Snapper. 'Leave this house at once,' more emphatically said Reginald. 'But—' 'Leave this house this moment,' said the young man, laying his hand on the wretch's arm; 'from this moment I shall consider you as a trespasser—leave this house.' Pale as death, Snapper rose from his chair—took his white kid gloves out of his hat—shook a little—and walked precipitately to the door. A servant held his horse by the head while he entered the gig, and as he took the reins, the fellow ground his teeth, muttering— 'I'll bring down the pride of Moorfield and the Moores—my blow shan't merely stagger them, and so on. The devil will have them, or I'll have their doll, and the green acres, too.—Very good, and so forth—to take all from them is good—they're papists. To get all myself would be better—I'm a sound Protestant—whew!' And in this benevolent frame of mind, Mr. Snapper, the land-agent, went towards home. At a turn in the road, not far from the holy well, a poor man was sitting on the hedge. His hair was long and lank, and dark; his brows were grey. He leant his chin upon a long staff, and looked into the middle of the way. 'Dherk,' he said, 'Dherk in anim a veidin vuire!—Alms, in the name of the Virgin Mary.' 'Oh, you, Shaun, eh?' 'Yes, yer 'oner. Poor Shaun is growin' ould, sir.' Snapper looked into Shaun's face, and Shaun looked as innocent as a child. 'Shaun,' he said, 'did you hear of the murder?' 'Oh, the Lord betune us an' all harm, sure I did. These devils 'ill rune the country—no gentleman will stay in it.' Snapper again examined those full, strong eyes, but they never changed expression. 'Shaun,' said Snapper, 'walk in by the gig for a start.' Shaun rose up slowly—as one of his age and infirmities should rise—very slowly, and coughing a great deal. He stood by the gig. 'Shaun,' said the agent, 'did you hear anything about the murderer?' 'Och, yer 'oner, what 'ud I hare? Sure, people is, always talkin' you know, sir.' 'Well, now, what did you hear, Shaun—come?' 'Faith, strange things, Mr. Snapper.' Shaun got a bright half-crown. 'Well, now, Shaun?' 'Oh, gorry sir, I wouldn't like to say id.' 'Don't be in your own light, Shaun, and so on; who do they say?' Shaun put his finger on his lips, and looked towards Moorfield. 'Eh, eh?' cried Snapper. 'Iss, faith,' answered the beggar. 'They had a quarrel about a girl; and then there was an owld grudge, and they owed Skern money.' 'Shaw! Skeria's life was in their lease, and so on.' 'So much the better cover,' said the beggar-man, winking; 'and they had promise of renewal.' 'Right!' said Snapper; and, after a pause, 'Was he out that night?' 'He was,' answered Shaun; 'and his arm in a sling—his left arm.'