

THE MASTER OF MAN :-: By Sir Hall Caine

An Outspoken and Moving Study of a Deep Sex Problem by the Noted Author of "The Manxman," "The Deemster," "The Eternal City," "The Woman Thou Gavest Me," Etc.



With the leaves pattering over her head and the river running at her feet, it was almost as if she herself were singing

Is Man's Law Too Hard for the Woman in the Case? Is Censorship Enough Punishment for Him, While She Pays the Legal Penalty?

In This Frank and Gripping Story the Man, as Judge, Sits in Sentence on the Girl Tried for Their Sin.

THIS STARTS THE STORY

VICTOR STOWELL is handsome, of fine nature, the actor of a family of distinction on the Isle of Man, where his father is Deemster, or chief judge. Curious enough he enters the stage of this powerful romance of a sin and its consequences that makes him sit in sentence on the woman, who is tried for their mutual transgression, as a voluntary scapegoat to save her good name from the results of a girlish escapade. Bessie Colliester, a peasant girl, is crude but good-looking in a coarse-grained way. Little does Stowell think, when he takes the blame of walking out with her outside school hours and school bounds to save her from her brutal stepfather and to save his chum, who has really been guilty, from punishment, that Bessie's crying, which starts so young, is to affect directly his own happiness and his future great love for beautiful and great-hearted Fenella Stanley. The principal of the school asks the boy who had been guilty of this breach of discipline and maybe of morals to rise and confess. Protecting his friend, Alick Gell, Victor is unjustly struck by the principal, who, discovering the truth later, remorsefully writes to the Deemster to take his son home or he himself for shame must resign his principality. The Deemster brings his boy home and gives him character, despite the seeming expulsion from school, by taking him to visit all his important friends. Bessie, sent home, too, is threatened by Dan Baldrum, her stepfather, and divides that she had been not with Victor, but with Alick, whose father, the Speaker of the Manx Parliament, is Dan's landlord. Alick comes sneaking home too and confesses the truth to his choleric, hard father.

Both Victor and Alick are kept at home duties, which mainly consist of having a good time and getting into boyish scrapes. Fenella Stanley goes to college in England.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

IT WAS late afternoon early in September. The day had been wonderful. Over the bald crown above Druidside the sun came sailing across the Irish Sea from a crimsoning sky beyond the purple crests of the Moore Mountains. Stowell and Gell had been camping out for two days in the Manx hills, and, parting at a junction of paths, Gell had gone down toward Douglas while Stowell had dropped into the deepest depths of the glen that led homeward. Victor was as brown as a berry. He was wearing long, thick-soled yellow boots, almost up to his knees, with his trousers tucked into them, a loose yellow shirt, rolled up to the elbows of his strong round arms, no waistcoat, his Norfolk jacket thrown over his left shoulder, and a knapsack strapped on his back. With long, plunging strides he was coming down the glen, singing sometimes in a voice that was partly drowned by the louder water where it dipped into a dub, when, toward the Curragh end, it on a sudden, through a gap in the river, he came upon a startling vision.

It was a girl. She was about seventeen years of age, bareheaded and barefooted, and standing knee-deep in the water. Her lips, and a little of the mouth at either side, were stained blue with blackberries—she had clearly been picking them, and had a pair of shoes and stockings to get at a laden bush. She was splendidly tall, and had bronze brown hair, with a glint of gold when she smiled, and her face was shining on it now, through a gap in the thinning trees that overhung the glen, and with the leaves pattering over her head, and the river running at her feet, it was almost as if she herself were singing. With her spare hand she was holding up her dress, which was partly of lace—light and loose and semi-transparent—and when a breeze, which was blowing from the sea, lapped it about her body there was a hint of the white, round, beautiful form beneath. Her eyes were dark and brilliantly full, and her face was magnificently intellectual, so clear-cut and clean. And yet she was so feminine, so womanly, such a girl! She must have heard Stowell's footsteps, and perhaps his singing as he approached, for she turned to look up at him—calmly, rather seriously, a little anxiously, but without the slightest discomfort, as if she had expected it. He had seen her at the moment, pausing to do so, without being quite aware of it, and feeling for one brief moment as if wind and water had suddenly stopped and the world stood still. There was a moment of silence, in which he felt a certain chill, and she a certain warmth, and both a certain dryness at the throat. The girl was the first to recover self-control. Her face brightened and she smiled and then, in a voice that was a little husky, and yet sounded to him like music, she said, "As if she had asked and answered an earlier question for herself."

"But, of course, you don't know who I am, do you?"

He did. Although she was so utterly unlike what he had expected (what he had not expected at all), he knew—she was Fenella Stanley.

As often as he thought of it afterwards he could never be quite sure what he had said to her in those first moments. He could only remember that it must have been by his vivid memory of what she had said in reply.

She watched him, womanlike, for a moment longer, to see what impression she had made upon him, now that she knew what impression he had made upon her. Then she glanced down at the pebbles in the running water, and then at her shoes and stockings, which, with her parasol, lay on the bank, and said: "I suppose you ought to go away while I get out of this."

"Why?"

He never knew what made him say that, but she glanced up at him again, with the answering sunshine of another smile, and said: "Well, you needn't, if you don't want to."

After that she stepped out of the river, and sat on the grass to dry her feet and put on her stockings. As she did so, and he stood watching, forgetting (such was the spell of things) to turn his eyes, she shot another look up at him, and said: "I remember that the last time I was in these parts you ordered me off, sir."

"And the last time I was at Government House you turned me out of the tennis court," he answered.

She laughed. He laughed. They both laughed together. Also they both trembled. But she was feeling braver, so he went down on his knees to tie her laces.

It was a frightening ordeal, but he got through at last, and to cover their embarrassment, while the lacing was going on, they came to certain explanations.

Yesterday the Governor had telegraphed to the Deemster that he would like to fulfill his promise to visit Hellamroad and stay the night if convenient. So they had driven over in the carriage and arrived about two hours ago, and were going back tomorrow morning.

"Of course you were not there when we came," she said, "being, it seems,

some war, perhaps (she didn't know what, but it would be changed—she was sure it would). And then, when woman took her rightful place beside man, as his equal, his comrade, his other self, they would see what would happen.

"When all was done and he had helped her up (how his fingers tingled!) and they stood side by side for the first time (she was less than half a head shorter than himself and her eyes seemed almost on the level of his) and they were ready to go, he suddenly remembered that they were on the wrong side of the road. So if she hadn't taken off her boots and stockings and waded through the water again, or else walk half a mile down the glen to the bridge, he would have to carry her across the river.

Without more ado she let him do it—picking her up in his quivering arms and striding through the water in his long boots.

Then being dropped to her feet she laughed again; and he laughed, and they went on laughing, all the way down the glen road, and through the watery lanes of the Curragh, where the tall bushes were singing low in the breeze from the sea—but not so loud as the hearts of this pair of children.

That night, after dinner, leaving the Deemster and the Governor at the table, discussing insular subjects (a constitutional change which was then being mooted), Victor took Fenella out onto the piazza (his mother had called it so), the unenclosed wooden terrace which overlooked the coast.

He was in a dark blue jacket suit, not yet having possessed evening wear, but sitting in a gauzy light dress, with her satin slippers, and her bronze-brown hair was curled about her face in bewitching ringlets.

The evening was very quiet, almost breathless, with hardly a leaf stirring. The moonlight lay in the glen, on the Point of Ayre (seven miles away on its neck of land covered by a wilderness of white stones) was answering to the far-off gleam of the light on the Mall of Grouse, while the sky to the west was a slumberous red, as if the night were dreaming of the departed day.

They had not yet recovered from their experience in the glen, and, sitting out there in the moonlight (for the moon had just sailed through a rack of clouds), they were still speaking indolently, and then laughing nervously at nothing—nothing that tingled sense of sex which made them afraid of each other, that mysterious call of man to maid which, when it first comes, as pure as an angel's whisper, says: "What a wonderful day it has been," she said.

"The most wonderful day I have ever known," he answered.

"And what a wonderful home you have here," she said.

"Haven't we?" he replied. And then he told her that over there in the dark lay Hellamroad, and over there Scotland, and over there England, and straight ahead was Norway and the North Pole.

That caught them up into the zone of great things, the certainties, the vast darkness out of which the geniuses come and toward which they go; and, having found his voice at last, he began to tell her how the island came to be peopled by its present race.

This was the very scene of the Norse invasion—the Vikings from Iceland having landed on this spot a thousand years ago. When the old sea king (his name was Orry) came ashore at the Lhen (it was on a starlight night like this), the native inhabitants of Man had gone down to challenge him. "Where do you come from?" they had cried, and he had pointed to the milky way, and he had answered, "That's the road to my country." But the native people had fought him to throw him back into the sea—yes, men and women, too, they said.

This very ground between them and the coast had been the battlefield, and it must still be full of the dead who had died that day.

"What a wonderful story!" she said.

"Isn't it?"

"The women fought too, you say?"

"Thousands of them, side by side with their men, and they were the mothers of the Manxmen of today."

"How glorious! How perfectly glorious!"

And then, clasping her hands about her knee, and looking steadfastly into the dark of the night, she, on her part, told him something. It was about a great new movement which was beginning in England for a change in the condition of women. Oh, it was wonderful! Miss Clough, the principal, and all the girls at Newnam were abuzz with it and it was going to change things throughout the world. In the past the attitude toward women of literature, law, even religion, had been so unfair, so cruel. She could cry to think of it—the long martyrdom of woman through all the ages.

"Do you know," she said, "I think a good deal of the Bible itself is very wicked toward women."

"That's shocking, isn't it?"

"Oh, no, no," said Victor—he was struggling to follow her, and not finding it easy.

"But all that will be changed some day," said Fenella.

It might require some terrible world-trouble to change it, some cataclysm,

with a stone and surrounded by an iron railing, and then she clutched at Victor's arm, held on tightly and trembled like a child.

That restored the balance of things a little, and going home (it was his turn to hold on now) he could not help chafing her on her feminine fear. Was that one of the old stories that would have to be retold a second time when the great world-change came, the great cataclysm?

"Oh, that! Well, of course . . . (he believed she was blushing, though in the darkness he could not see) women may not have the strength and courage of men—the physical courage, I mean."

"Only physical?" he asked.

"She stammered again, and said that naturally men would always be men and women, women."

"You don't want that altered, do you?" she said.

"Oh, no, not I, not a bit," said Victor, and then there was more laughter (rather tremulous laughter now) and less talking for the next five minutes.

They had got back to the piazza by this time, and knowing that her face was in the shaft of light that came through the glass door from the dining room, Fenella turned quickly and shot away upstairs.

He could have kicked himself next morning when he awoke late, and found the broad sunshine in his bedroom, and heard from Janet that Fenella had been up two hours and all over the stables and the plantation.

After breakfast (downstairs for him this time) the Governor's big blue landau, with two fine Irish boys, driven by an English coachman, came sweeping round to the front and he went out in the morning sunshine, with the Deemster and Janet, to see their guests away.

The Governor shook hands with him warmly, but Fenella (who was wearing a coat and some kind of transparent green scarf about her neck, and thanked the Deemster and kissed Janet as she was stepping into the carriage) looked another way when she was saying good-by to him.

He slammed the door to, and stepped back, and the carriage started, and (while the other two went indoors) he stood and looked after it as it went winding down the drive, amid the

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