

**ELLEN; OR, THE
FANATIC'S
DAUGHTER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649572861

Ellen; Or, the Fanatic's Daughter by Mrs. V. G. Cowdin

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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MRS. V. G. COWDIN

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BY

MRS. V. G. COWDIN.

Mobile:

S. H. GOETZEL & COMPANY,
33 DAUPHIN STREET.

1860.

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Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1900,

By MRS. V. G. COWDIN,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern
District of Mississippi.

ELLEN

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BOOKSTORE
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NEW ORLEANS, LA.

Chapter First.

MANY years since, a traveller rode leisurely along the broad, well-beaten road of a thickly-settled and wealthy neighborhood in Louisiana. The weather was balmy, and the air deliciously fragrant with the perfume of wild shrubs and flowers that lined the roadside. Festooned from tree to tree, the gorgeous yellow jasmin hung in lofty arches, now mingling its bright golden clusters with the glossy, green foliage of the proud magnolia; now climbing around the outspread branches of the tall cypress, in wreathy crowns, fit emblems for the brow of lovely Spring. Already the broad fields were verdant with the growing crops, promising an abundant harvest; and from a distance, the chanting of the laborers, mingling with the merry voices of children at play—the chirping of the blithe sparrow, hopping gleefully from spray to spray, and the impassioned song of the wondrous mocking-bird, as sweep-

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ing through the air, he warbled forth his mysterious melody—all appeared in beautiful harmony with Nature's noble panorama.

To Horace Layton, our traveller, who had made a speedy trip from his Northern home, the scene appeared like enchantment. He had left the earth wrapped in the ghostly mantle of snow—the leafless trees glistening in their icy coats, and seeming too lifeless to be ever again clad in living verdure ; and he had left, far behind him, the sad cry of “ Give, give a morsel, or I perish ! ” Horace Layton had travelled many miles in the Southwest, and no object of commiseration had come to view. The negroes that he frequently met passing to and fro along the road, were well clothed, cheerful and healthy in appearance ; and as his mind was plentifully stored with Northern antipathies, it is no matter of wonder that the fair prospect before him filled his bosom with pleasurable emotions. When, by nightfall, he reached his place of destination, and alighted at the handsome residence of Major Wallace, the cordial greeting he received, and the comfort and elegance by which he found himself surrounded, completed the favorable impression that had been made upon him on his first entrance into the proscribed land.

Horace Layton was a native of New-York city ; he was gentlemanly in appearance, agreeable in conversation, and his literary acquirements were considerable—yet his intellect was, by no means, of a superior order. The greatest defect in his character was a want of self-reliance : he was nervously sensitive, and religiously inclined—though his religion consisted more of super-

stitious fears than a firm reliance upon the promises of the blessed Peace-Maker. He was unfortunate in having been, from his boyhood, under the control of his brother-in-law, "Parson Blake," who professed to be a minister of the Gospel, but in reality, used religion as a mere cloak beneath which, for a time, his vices were effectually hid. The parson was a thorough-going abolitionist, not from any real sympathy he had for the African race—in truth, he cared as little for slave as slaveholder—but the abolition of slavery was the popular theme of the day in his locality, and popularity, in his estimation, was an important object. He likewise, together with this notable sect in general, entertained some very ambitious views with regard to the future destination of the South—something similar to the project once entertained by the ambitious Aaron Burr—though, truly, the sedition of the abolitionist, so fraught with ruinous consequences, is far more nefarious than was the plot of the notorious traitor.

Parson Blake pretended to view the Southerners as a set of piratical desperadoes, from whom it would be a work of righteousness to wrest their birthrights; and in confidential communications, the fraternity conceived it to be an easy matter to effect their designs, by causing a disaffected state of the slave population toward their owners. The two races could not then peaceably inhabit the same country, neither could this great "Eden of America" be given up to the semi-civilized and destructive African. The aspiring party had resolved upon a total revolution in Southern affairs; and a question that required some ingenuity in adjusting, was the disposal of the valuable ruins, after the work of desolation had been accomplished.

"The South must then come under the undisputed jurisdiction of the abolition party," said Parson Blake, diving his hands deep down into his pockets that, to his excited imagination, already felt heavy from the proceeds of cotton and sugar plantations. "It must be given into our possession, sirs, and surely, 'tis nothing more than our due as a recompense for the glorious work of emancipating a much abused race, and affording them gospel privileges."

Quite consistent, Parson Blake ; yet possibly your plan will prove less feasible than you seem to imagine. It appears to be a peculiarity of your party that, in overly-pious zeal for the slave's soul, you quite lose sight of his bodily wants. "Set him free," is your cry, and, for aught you care, he may starve or fall back into his original state of barbarism—anything but remain in his present condition—a contented and cherished bondman—his true state when not assailed by the religious jugglery of the abolition incendiary. As for such unimportant items in the commonwealth, as Southern white people, it is not presumed that exalted beings, such as those who compose the abolition party, would be at all concerned for their weal, particularly when it is taken into consideration that Southern wealth is the goal that the saintly host have in view.

Horace Layton was unacquainted with the *peculiar views* of the abolition party. His own opinion of slavery was based upon having been taught to believe the slave denied all human rights—as inexpressibly degraded, and classed with the brute creation ; consequently, he was averse to the system of slavery, and anticipated but little comfort during his sojourn where it existed. He really thought his brother-in-law a model

of Christianly virtues, and there was nothing he more dreaded than to incur his disapprobation—in short, he was a mere tool in the hands of the wily parson. Left to the dictates of his own inclinations, Horace Layton would have passed thro' life as an amiable and inoffensive man, but, acting under the influence of Parson Blake, the sequel will prove him to have been worse than a heathen—a traitor to his own fireside.

It was to gratify Parson Blake that Horace went South. Application had been made for a teacher to take charge of a flourishing school in Louisiana. The salary was liberal, and the parson well knew that he was certain of as much of Horace's earnings as he thought proper to demand. In the same vocation at home he received a mere pittance ; so the sage parson had no wish for him to remain and earn a bare subsistence, when, elsewhere, he could add very materially to his own income. The parson did not say, give me thus, or so much for my own special benefit. Oh, no ! he was much too cunning for any such avowal of his real intentions. It was through the veneration that Horace had for religious matters ; his interest in charitable institutions, colonization societies, &c., that the parson exerted so much influence over him ; and for these purposes, ostensibly, subscriptions were solicited, that, in reality, were appropriated to his own uses ! The parson also believed that Horace could be of essential service to the abolition party, by giving information concerning matters that might be deemed necessary, and in circulating incendiary pamphlets and documents, or any other means of exciting the wished-for rebellion that so constantly glowed in the pious bosoms of the *worthy* brotherhood.