

THREE LETTERS

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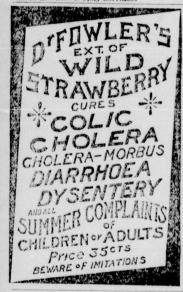


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FLORENCE O'NEILL.

The Rose of St. Germains;

THE SIEGE OF LIMERICK

BY AGNES M. STEWART, Author of "Life in the Cloister," "Grace O'Halloran," etc.

CHAPTER XXVII. - CONTINUED This day I have for the last time looked on the dead face of my dear uncle. I have collected all his valuables and papers; to morrow his remains will be removed to Morville for interment. How much would I like to go thither for awhile, and then return to my beloved Mrs. Whitely

How much would I give to know if one whom I hold dear is recovered of his wounds. How much to know if I am thought of as in the old, old days, when our troth was plighted beside my dying mother.

December, '91 The king is at Kensington, and has brought with him the Count Von Arn heim. I am persecuted on all sides I am asked to give a reason why I disike him; he is in favor with the king (were he in the favor of two kings maversion would be the same). He thirty years old, good-looking, rich, and enamored of myself, so says the queen. She tells me I refuse him in a spirit of obstinacy, and because I am still fostering attachment to an outlaw. Both the king and queen were much exasperated to-day, because I still con-tinue to refuse the Count, who urges his suit with a provoking pertinacity when he sees how I am opposed to it. Oh, how I wish I was a poor peasant girl, I should not be thus tortured.

January 15, 1692. This afternoon I received a summon o attend the king in his closet : the queen was not there; my heart beat violently. I looked at my face in the pier glass as I approached him. I was ghastly white; my black robe a contrast to my pale face; my knees shook under me. Then I said to myself, under me. there is not much of the courage of the O'Neills in their descendant. mastered my fear a little, and walking slowly up the long room, I made my obeisance to the king. Standing before him, I awaited his pleasure.

Let me try and remember how His Majesty opened the attack. I was so surprised that I have to think before I can clearly recollect all that passed His spare little person was seized

with a fit of asthmatic coughing at the moment I reached his chair. His manners are always more or less disgusting, so that he did not heed at all the nature of his cough, whilst a young lady stood immediately before him till the fit was over, for I dared not move, as he made no sign; neither did he sign for me to be seated. You know he is chary of speech and very brief in his replies. I was aware that I stood before one who is dead to the generous emotions of the heart, and, at the same time, an imperious sover eign. I felt too that the queen was

purposely absent. At last the king laid aside his handkerchief, and fixing his sparkling eyes on my face, his countenance more grave even than usual, he said :

"I wish to know why you refuse to marry one who is a faithful friend of mine. Now, reply in three or four words."

"Your Majesty, I cannot marry Count Von Arnheim," I said.

"It is woman's nonsense; you shall be his wife before we return to Holland. I have said so; it is my will. "But, Sire, it cannot, must not be,' and silly woman that I am, the tears

rushed to my eyes, and sobs choked

Enough, I have said you shall, you understand; now you may go." _,"But, your Majesty, I will not marry him," said I, heedless of the power of the person whom I addressed. The king rarely got in such a pas sion as on this occasion. He rose from

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his chair, seized me roughly by the arm, asked me how I dared set up my will against his, and in his rage, flung

his handkerchiefs on the ground. picked them up and handed them to him; he flung them on the floor again, saying: "Do you know I have power to imprison you-how dare you refuse when we approve? I see, I see, you want to endow the outlawed St. John with your estates; they shall be con-

fiscated first, Madam. His violence brought on another fit of coughing. I again picked up his handkerchiefs, and humbly asked should I remain.

"Go, Madam, go; I have told you you shall submit," was the rough reply, and I hurried to my bedroom, and when there, dear Mrs. Whitely, I fell on my knees and had a good long cry. How can I keep my troth as I wish and marry Von Arnheim? Then, again, you know it will not do for both contracting parties to be poor; for, although I know I ought to be very rich when I am twenty-one, sometimes I fear whether a reason will not be found why I should be made poor if I continue obstinate in my refusal, as I

mean to do.

January 28th.

The queen continues very cold and harsh, and her exasperation with the Princess Anne — for she persists in keeping the Marlboroughs about her makes her worse. She told me yester day that the king was fixed in his re solve; called me an ungrateful, ob stinate minx, and said that she had ordered my trousseau, and fixed the day for my marriage for the middle of next month. "I bid you receive the Count properly this evening," she said; "I shall be present, and, remember,

we shall enforce obedience I scarce know how I reached my own "This evening, this even rooms. 'I kept saying to myself. I felt as if a weight pressed on my heart. I called on him whom I must not name on this paper to come and help me, on my beloved Mr. and Mrs. Whitely and all this while, you see, I had for gotten Him who can help when the arm of man cannot sustain us. God, come to my aid; Oh, Lord, make haste to help me," I cried out in the anguish of my heart; in the words of the Psalmist, "In Thee I have put my

trust; let me never be confounded. Then in a little while my passion of tears was over; and much time hav-ing passed, and as I was to stand behind the queen's chair at the theatre that evening, I got up from my knees, for I knew my maid would soon come to dress me.

I am sure I see no beauty in myself to make the Count so ardent. white as a lily, and my eyes fearfully swollen with crying. I assure you the white silk and pearls I wore were not whiter than my face.

I saw her majesty look sharply at me when I came forward, for the Count, I found, was to be one of the royal party The queen is a superbly majestic woman now. She looked down on me; was a mind to crush me out of exist ence; and with a significant glance at Von Arnheim, she said, in an under tone, though loud enough for me to

"I have fixed the day of your nup tials for the 15th of next month, Count you will thus be ready to return with the king to Holland when he leaves England in March."

My persecutor, or course, presented me his arm. It was impossible for me to speak just then, there was such a throng around us, but I looked up in the queen's face to see if I could move her to pity; but no, the glance she levelled at me was expressive of anger and termination, for her lips were com pressed together, as I have seen them when she has visited the princess with any outbreak of anger, and as she swept in all her regal magnificence past me, the word "Beware!" fell from

Had I formed no prior attachment, I do not think I should have liked the Count. As it is, I feel an unconquer able aversion for the pertinacity with which he presses his suit, and I also

which he presses his suit, and raiso have a vague idea that he wooes not me, but the broad lands I inherit. I took my customary place behind the queen's chair, but tears and grief combined made me feel ill, coupled with the weariness of standing for two hours. Suddenly a cold dew overspread my face, the lights on the stage seemed all to blend in one confused mass, and I remember nothing more till I found myself in a retiring room of the theatre, whither I had been car That terrible Count was beside me, officiously assiduous in promoting my recovery.

I returned to the palace in his care and that of one of the queen's ladies. He conducted me to my own apartments, and you may easily imagine how hard he tried to press his suit, backed as he knew himself to be by the

king and queen. At last, dearest Mrs. Whitely-for I encourage the hope that one day, however distant, your eyes may fall on these lines—I grew angry, and turn-ing round upon him I asked him how he could find it in his heart to persecute one who had no affections to be-

"Yes, that is the very thing, Madam," he replied, with an insulting air and gesture. "I have heard of air and gesture. "I have heard of your attachment to a rebel and an outlaw, who has dared to take up arms against their Majesties. Madam, is the real reason why I am refused.

My hasty temper was now thoroughly roused.

"You insult me by such language, sir," I exclaimed. "I have no intention of marrying at present; moreover, I will never give my hand to a person

'Their Majesties-" he began. I interrupted him at once

"In this matter their Majesties have no right to control me, nor will I be so influenced. I again repeat, I will not

be forced to become your wife."
"Madam," he replied, "I forgive
you, because you are evidently a young lady of high spirit, who, doubtess, grieves for having said unjust things as soon as she has uttered them and as I am quite satisfied in the fact that the king and queen can bend you to compliance, I can afford for the present to be silent beneath your hard language.'

"And would you be content with my hand unwillingly bestowed," said I, with flashing eyes, and scarcely able to articulate, in what I might almost term my righteous anger.

"Most certainly; the affection of the at first unwilling bride will follow, as a matter of course, after she has become my wife. Farewell, Madam," he added, rising, "I shall have the pleasure of visiting you to morrow in the

presence of the queen."

I knew well that all I that night suffered arose from a want of full and entire trust in the power of Him who alone can help us. I forgot all the calm and peace I had experienced earlier in the day, when I committed this matter and my whole being into the hands of God. And so it happened that for some time after Von Arnheim had left me, I remained overwhelmed by the shock I had received The weather was extremely cold, and I sat for a long time heedless that the fire had almost burnt itself out, and dreading even the coming of my

At length, feeling the necessity of exertion, I aroused myself, and made up my mind to throw myself at the queen's feet in the morning, and make last effort to excite her pity.

You may well imagine, dear Mrs. Whitely, that I passed an indifferent night. Alas, I had little to expect from the pity of Queen Mary.

It was not left to mote a second control of the co

It was not left to me to put myself in Her Majesty's way, for she sent me a message desiring me to come to her half an hour before the usual time.

Of course I well knew that this was meant for a private conversation before her ladies gathered round her. When I entered her closet she was working, and without raising head, or vouchsafing me a single glance, she began by saying:

"I understood perfectly well the cause of your illness last night. glance at your tearful, swollen eyes is sufficient. I have sent for you in order to tell you that I shall put an end to such scenes very quickly. Your mar-riage will take place a fortnight earlthe middle of next month, it shall be

solemnized the end of this. I cast myself at the queen's feet, im ploring her not to compel me to disbey her commands, by forcing on my

rriage with the Count.
'Disobey!" exclaimed Her Majesty, marriage with the Count. in a tone of unqualified contempt. would advise you to think over the penalty of disobedience to your sovereign's will. It will be imprisonment in the Tower. Withdraw, and when you next enter my presence let it be without tears.

Wandering away again from Thee, O God, by the sinfulness of my nature leaning for help upon an arm of flesh, a reed that bendeth beneath every wind. Oh, forgive me, my Almighty Father, and teach me to see that from Thee alone true help, in the hour of direct need, can come.
Strength was given to me; I obeyed

the queen's behest, and wreathed my face with smiles when next I entered her presence.
But let me not forget in this Journal

to allude to one to whom I owe this looking up to God, to whom I thus owe more than tongue can express. must promise by telling you she is but an humble waiting woman appointed by the queen as my especial attendant. On that night, after my swoon, when I was so graciously molested by the addresses of the Count, I had remained for some time after his departure, cold and tearful, when Grace Wilmot entered the room.

A strange woman I had often thought her. Plain exceedingly she was; her complexion was swarthy, with large features, ill-formed; her eyes were fine, dark, and expressivethey redeemed, in some degree, the plainness of her face. She was tall, too, and her figure as beautiful as her features were the reverse.

She was a woman of, perhaps, forty years of age, singularly reticent, sparing in her speech as the king himself, but often very sorrowful and abstracted withal, so that I often felt Grace Wilmot had a story of her own, if she chose to tell it.

On the evening to which I have alluded, when she entered my chamber she paused, and an expression of deep sympathy seemed to pass over her hard features. She was about to speak, but as suddenly checked her-self, and was, as usual, the humble, unobtrusive waiting-woman. Even the sympathy of poor Grace was much to me where all around me seemed as if their hearts were of adamant. chanced to look in her face as she was helping to divest me of my dress; our eyes met, in mine the tears still trembled; heart opened to heart; the rich heiress was no more remembered; the woman looked upon the woman, differing only from each other by their social positions; the barriers raised by the conventionalities of life were for the time thrown down, and before I well knew what I was about, my head rested on the bosom of Grace,

Minard's Liniment Cures Diphtheria.

who has pursued me as you have and her warm tears were falling in a plenteous shower on my brow.

"Dear young lady, dear child, how I have wished to speak, and dared not by reason of the humbleness of my position," she said: "but now, position," she said: "but now, blessed be God and His Virgin Mother, the well-springs of sympathy are open for, oh, my lamb, it is a terrible thing to suffer, and have none to cheer us with a consoling word.'

I recovered somewhat, and raised

my head from her bosom.
"My good Grace," I said, in much bewilderment, "you have spoken words none dare to utter here. you of the proscribed faith of Rome? "Even so, Madam, and greatly have I drank of the chalice of human suffering; but I will show you whence draw hope and consolation. Grace Wilmot, the handmaid of a lady of rank such as yours, still presumes to tell her mistress how gether strength at the same fount, in absence of the Sacraments now so long denied us. From this, Madam, I have

drawn my strength. She drew from her pocket two small and well-worn volumes. The one was a copy of the Four Gospels, the other ar edition of that all but inspired book,

The Imitation of Christ. She turned over its pages, and pointed to one chapter, headed:
"De l'amour de Jesus sur toutes

It was a French copy of A'Kempis by which I understood my maid to be an educated woman.

"That one chapter, Madam," said she, "is often on my lips, and I hope ever in my heart. At a time of griev ous suffering an aged priest bid me study it well. Since then I have realized more clearly the fact contained therein, that one must 'not trust nor rely on a windy reed; for all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall fade like the flower of the grass. an implicit confidence in God. Madam He will even work miracles rather than abandon those who put their trust in Him

"But, my good Grace," said I, want ing, verily, the simple, unquestioning faith of my handmaiden, whom I was fast learning to regard with respect 'this marriage is resolved on by those who have me in their power; imprison ment and the confiscation of my property will be the alternative.

Grace sorrowfully shook her head, seeing that, as yet, I had so much to learn before I could get in the right way, and her plain countenance see for the time marvellously beautiful by reason of the superhuman expression by which it was animated, as she said, with her splendid eyes lifted up to

"There is a King above all earthly kings, before whom the greatest of earthly monarchs is but as the dust of the earth. Bear up, Madam, this mar-

riage will not, shall not be. I felt touched, and in spite of myself it seemed as if the spirit of prophecy which animated those of old had de scended on this extraordinary being, in whom, though about my person eve since I had come to the palace, I had discerned nothing beyond the most rigorous punctuality in the discharge of her duties; respect, without the slightest tinge of subserviency; humility, without any approach to abjection, and so careful a performance of her employments that it would have been impossible for the most exacting person to discover neglect. If Grace was required at a certain time, there she was; if she was wanted to execute a certain task, it was done without delay. In short, I recognized in the exact sidelity of my handmaiden that which, until now, I had not observed or noticed in the lights in which the state of the lights in which the state of the lights in which the light noticed in the lights in which I now regarded them. She had all the qualities of one who studies to embody into her life the holy maxims of the Gospel, reduced to that practical performance which lead to perfection

and which constitute sanctity. All proud reserve between Grace and myself was now crushed beneath my feet. I had yearned for sympathy ever since the day my feet had first crossed the threshold of the queen's court. I now possessed it. I had met a kindred mind, in a quarter in which one would least have expected to find Moreover that mind was intelligent and cultivated; above all else, it was educated in the highest sense of the word, in what Father Law son termed the science of the saints, and had held forward to me as the most useful knowledge first to be gained, without which all else was vain and hurtful.

We knelt together in prayer : above all else we prayed for resignation to the inevitable. Then when I had lain down, Grace, as usual, came to draw around my bed the heavy, satin curtains, and wished me her customary good night."

Impelled by a sudden impulse, I threw aside the curtain and called her back. I arose, and drawing her reluctant face to mine, I kissed her brew,

saying:
"Grace, dear Grace, be my friend."

She bent down and kissed the hand which still rested on the curtain. Her humility humbled me, and her answer was worthy of herself.

"Grace, Madam, feels honored by the friendship of her mistress, and it shall not cause her to forget the lovliness of her own position.

I laid my head upon the pillow re-signed, I might almost say happy, such is the influence of a virtuous ex-

I resolved before many days were over to ask Grace to tell me the story of her life. Outwardly there was no change in our respective positions.
We each seemed, without saying a word about the matter, instinctively

to understand that there must be no Indeed, when together, alteration. but very little passed between us, and yet her influence bore upon every

vord and action of my present life. The queen must have observed the change, and doubtless attributed it to the fear of her threat of incarceration; and, acting upon the change, gave me to understand that my marriage would not take place till the time she had first stated, and would be solemnized in the Chapel at Windsor Castle, the king intending to recruit his health in the country for a few weeks before his visit to Holland. Of course the Count's visits were frequent, and his odious attentions became daily more and more obtrusive. He naturally gave himself more latitude on account of the passiveness with which I received

January 27, 1692. Last night I was more particularly molested by the Count than has hither-to been the case. I entered my own chamber with the old weary feeling of depression at my heart. Perhaps it was increased by the terror I felt when the queen described to me the bridal robe she had ordered to be sent

to Windsor for my wedding day. course, Grace observed my languid look, enforced by spirits out of It is only at times like these that she steps, as it were, prominently forward to bear me up, as a mother extends her hand to save her child

from falling when making its steps. "Madame, you are forgetting the esson you have been trying to learn; that is why you are sorrowful to-night," said she, as she unfastened the bandeau of pearls which bound back my hair.

My bridal dress is ordered. Grace: we leave for Windsor early in the week," I said, half vexed just now, that there had been no look of pathy in the expression of those hard, grim features of hers. "Well, Madam, and what then?"

"And what then," said I, reiterating her words. her words. "Do you forget that the queen means this for the beginning of the end?

There was displeasure in the tones of my voice; I knew it, I had spoken half in anger.

"Only in so far as God wills to let His creatures have their way for some inscrutable purpose of His own; if so, vain is your rebellion to His will. have told you you have nothing to do but to pray, and be patient and resigned, leaning on God alone. Madam, you have but very little faith

The proud spirit within me was chafing as I sat beneath the hands of Grace, at the plainness of her words, conveying, as they did, a sharp rebuke. I changed color I knew, for I felt the warm blood tingling my cheeks, but I held my peace. She saw the flushed temples, too, but spoke no word. I inwardly admired her courage.

Dear Mrs. Whitely was present to my remembrance. When had I ever heard her murmur? I have no doubt Grace knows the amount of influence she now exercises over me; for my good she uses it unsparingly. feet passiveness and resignation, these are the weapons she would have me use; nothing short of this contents

I made an exertion to shake off my depression during her temporar absence on some little duty for me temporary When she returned I was in better

spirits. "Grace," I said, "I am going to

"I want you to tell me the story of your life. A painful expression fitted across

her hard, rugged features, tears filled her eyes, she made me no reply. "Does my request give you pain, race? I long to know how it is Grace? you are here attending upon me, filling so humble a position; how you became acquainted with my dear, dead uncle's friend, Father Lawson, and-in fact, I want to know all about

vou. Grace. "I cannot refuse you any request, Madam; it is my duty to obey you. I felt annoyed, and answered

"But I do not want you to make a duty of what I ask as a favor, Grace; simply forget that I ever asked the question. "No, Madam; the lady who has

sufficient virtue to listen to the ad-monitions of her servant, and allow her to become her monitress, surely should not find her inferior too proud to narrate her painful story. I do not attend the queen to

night," I replied : "we have several hours before us : be seated, Grace. She pushed away the chair opposite to my own, which I had motioned for her to use, and placing an ottoman at my feet, seated herself thereon. Thus her face was partly in the shadow, still the fire light revealed to me that she was moved by some

served tears trickle slowly down her TO BE CONTINUED.

strong emotion: her usually pale countenance was flushed, and I ob-

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