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LORENZO; OR, THE EMPIRE OF RELIGION.

BY A SCOTCH NON-CONFORMIST, A CONVERT TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH.
Translated from the French by a Lady of Philadelphia.

CHAPTER VIII.

After Lord Arthur had left the room, Lorenzo gave a free vent to his tears. This calmed him; and ascertaining that we were alone, "I am going," he said, "since Lord Walsingham has acquainted you with part of my history, to give you all the details."

Having expressed to him the great pleasure with which I accepted his confidence, he began as follows:

"The marchioness of Rosline, my mother, had been several years a widow when she was united to the duke of Salisbury. Arthur, who was the only child of her first marriage, was about six years old at the time of the second. Of this union I was the third child; and my paternal uncle, Lord Donovan, wished to educate me, intending to leave me his whole fortune, for he was not married. My parents consented, and as my mother was too ill to nurse me, he brought me a nurse to Ireland. My early childhood was passed at Lord Donovan's sister's, a very aged lady, who brought me up with equal care and tenderness. I was afterwards sent to the university, which I left at the age of fifteen. The protectress of my early infancy being dead, Lord Donovan wished me to travel with him. I had never seen my parents. Of all my family, my brother Arthur alone corresponded with me.— My other brother had died at an early age, my sister Caroline was receiving a Catholic education, and my father had been travelling since the year after my birth. Arthur wrote regularly; gave me much advice, and many marks of a sincere affection; he had even promised to visit me at Glasgow, when Lord Donovan's tour thwarted his design. This I felt keenly, for every feeling of my heart was concentrated in the desire of knowing Arthur. After passing eighteen months in France, we went to Bayonne, where Lord Donovan intended to make some stay. We resided with the marquis of Aranda, with whom Lord D. was well acquainted. The first nobility of the city assembled at his house every evening.

"It was there I was introduced to Senor Don Silva, the marquis' brother, a young man about twenty-five years of age, who had a short time previously entered the ecclesiastical state. Don Silva gave me a very welcome reception, and manifested much affection. We often conversed together, promenading the extensive gardens of the mansion, which extended delightfully along the coast; and it pleased him to speak of Scotland, and of every thing that might fix my thoughts on those who were dear to my heart.— I began to feel the need and the charm of friendship. I wrote a long letter to Arthur, all warm with the desire of seeing him; requesting him to send me some of his hair, and to write oftener; I spoke to him also of Don Silva. Lord Donovan did not approve of my intimacy with the latter; he feared that we might converse upon religion; and he advised me to be upon my guard, and to avoid all conversation upon that topic.— I promised; and with the less difficulty, as Don Silva had not, so far, said a word about it.

"Each day strengthened our friendship, and made me enjoy a happiness which until then had been unknown to me. One evening, in passing through a gallery, I remarked a painting which represented the souls in purgatory, in the midst of flames, stretching out their arms to the Blessed Virgin, who, high in the air, seemed longing to break their chains, and deliver them. This picture recalled a singular dream I had had whilst at the university, and which had been too visibly impressed upon my mind to be effaced from my remembrance. I saw myself suddenly surrounded by vast precipices, the depths of which my eye could not reach, and from whence gushed forth whirlwinds of flame. One only little plank, thrown across these abysses, yet supported me, and even trembled under my feet; when a moment after a brilliant light presented itself to cheer me. A sort of temple, with vaulted roof, and dazzlingly illuminated, struck my view as I looked beyond the precipice. Making an extraordinary effort, I rushed forward to this secure refuge, when delivered from all danger, filled with joy and full of confidence I awoke. Never can this dream be effaced from my memory.— Don Silva having joined me in the gallery, where I had remained some time, I related my dream to him.

"There might be a very plain allegory drawn from it," he said, and without explaining himself further, he changed the conversation.

"The next morning I joined Don Silva in the garden before breakfast. He held a book in his hand, which, on seeing me, he closed, and we walked together some time in silence. He appeared very thoughtful; yet two or three times he tore himself from his reflections to remark the splendor of the rising sun, and the beauty of na-

ture, which appeared in an enchanting garb.— Then, after a long pause, he said: 'Have you ever thought seriously, my dear Hidalla, that you have a soul?'

"This question, and the grave manner in which it was put, drew from me an involuntary smile. 'Had I been ignorant of it?' I replied affectionately, 'our friendship would have taught me it.'

"And do you believe," added he, "that it is inferior, or superior to your body?'

"Is not the soul immortal," said I, "while the body is subject to decay?'

"True," resumed Don Silva, "but it appears to me that you judge the latter worthy of every care and sacrifice, and your soul deserving of none; for, in fact, what have you done for it?'

"I blushed upon perceiving the grave and important subject he had entered upon. Kissing my hand, he observed, 'If I loved you less, my dear Hidalla, I would seek less earnestly to fathom your conduct and sentiments; but I love not only the superficial qualities of Lord Salisbury; a thousand times more do I cherish that immortal soul, destined to be my companion in the enjoyment of unspeakable happiness during all eternity; and tremblingly do I behold it astray, abandoned, without support, without a guide in paths bordered by precipices, and surrounded with dangers.'

"I smiled. 'Don Silva, I know that Catholics are very pusillanimous, and ever afraid of shipwreck; but we are not so uneasy, and I believe that many more among us will arrive at port.'

"What port did they reach who were not in the ark at the time of the universal deluge?" he asked with a deep sigh.

"Let us quit this subject," I observed immediately, "I can neither reply to you, nor am I disposed to yield; I have always avoided discussion on religious matters."

"Hidalla, if the sacrifice of my life could induce you to reflect seriously even for one hour on the salvation or perdition of your soul, I would soon prove to you that I love you."

"I looked at him with still increasing surprise; not being able to imagine it possible that he should feel so deeply interested in an affair, which appeared very insignificant to me; for I had heard that all religions were good; and I held to mine only from habit and from a certain connection instilled into my mind in childhood, that it was not right to change one's religion. I observed that Don Silva's eyes were filled with tears, which he tried to conceal from me. We walked along in silence, and returned for breakfast, without having renewed our conversation on religion, or entered upon any other. Don Silva ate nothing: he was thoughtful; and, in spite of myself, I could not divert my mind from our morning's conversation.

"About ten o'clock, the marquis of Aranda invited us to visit the galleys. Don Silva had gone out. We accepted; Lord Donovan, several other persons and myself. The sight presented to us affected me very much. Mass having been announced as about to be celebrated in the chapel contiguous to their post, the slaves, who had hastened their morning's task, were permitted to be present. The number was greater than I had supposed. The marquis offered us either to assist at mass, or to go through the ships. I alone accompanied the marquis to the chapel. I was both surprised and pleased on perceiving that the sacrifice was offered by Don Silva. I had never before entered a Catholic church. This was built in a kind of grotto, and received its only light from a vast number of lamps. I here so perfectly recognized the temple which had offered me an asylum, in my dream, that I became violently agitated. Every thing that surrounded me bespoke recollection; Don Silva appeared less a man than an angel. I was, as if transported into some far region; all around adoring a God who annihilated himself for his creatures. At the moment of the elevation, I prostrated myself with the rest; and, without being able to comprehend the feeling which possessed me, I remained so penetrated with the real presence of the Divinity whom I had not yet adored, that I remained, as it were, overwhelmed before the majesty of God. The sacrifice being concluded, they prepared to leave. The marquis, surprised to see me motionless, came and led me out. He entreated me to say nothing of what had passed to Lord Donovan. Such was my intention; and further, to return once more to mass in the chapel. I waited about half an hour for Don Silva; and, as our party were still on the ship, I walked some distance with my friend alone. I burst into tears, unable to define the emotions of my heart, which was so full and so oppressed, that it seemed scarcely sufficient to contain its varied feelings. I begged Don Silva to allow me again to assist at his mass; this he granted with joy, for he perceived in me the effects of divine mercy.

"In the evening, when alone in my chamber, I made a thousand reflections on the morning that had passed. I feared to indulge my thoughts and my mind, filled with a thousand prejudices,

recoiled with horror at the mere idea of becoming a Catholic. I formed the resolution of avoiding forever all connection with those who professed this religion, and to enter no Catholic church except Don Silva's. Full of these projects I spoke next morning to Lord Donovan about quitting Bayonne; he proposed my leaving with one of his friends who was expected to arrive every moment, who would remain but a few days in the city, and then depart forthwith for England.

"About eight o'clock, I went to Don Silva's room to inform him of this. Not finding him there, I was told that he was in the chapel;— there being one in the interior of the mansion which I had never seen. I approached the entrance, and hesitated a moment, fearing my weakness; but quickly laughing at the thought, I gently opened the door. Don Silva was serving the mass of a clergyman whom I had seen several times at the marquis of Aranda's. Notwithstanding all my designs, I had not strength to quit that holy place; the preface was just advancing; I fell upon my knees, and conjured the God of the Catholics, if he were really present in this sanctuary, to enlighten and touch my heart. The same emotion, as on the previous day, again took possession of me at the consecration. I prostrated myself, and unable to bear the violence of my sensations I was almost fainting. There were in the chapel only the marquis and two domestics. The marquis led me to my chamber, where, after some moments' repose, I asked for Don Silva. He came immediately.

"As soon as we were alone, I cast myself at his feet. 'Bless me, first of all; for I am truly unworthy of your society, and I deeply feel that I have been guilty of culpable presumption in presenting myself at the awful sacrifice of your religion, bringing there an unbelieving and profane heart. Have pity on me, Don Silva, and tell me what I ought to do.'

"He raised me affectionately. 'Let me instruct you in the way of eternal salvation.'

"At this moment Lord Donovan entered, and, without seeming to observe Don Silva, 'Prepare yourself,' said he abruptly, 'Admiral Howard leaves in an hour. He will conduct you to Oxford, where you will complete your studies.'

"He left the room without waiting for a reply. I was for an instant confounded; then, resuming courage, I exclaimed: 'It matters not, if God has begun my conversion he will finish it; if it is not his work it ought not to succeed.'

"Don Silva pressed my hand. 'Fear only your own weakness and irresolution, and human respect. Fear everything from yourself, and hope all from Jesus Christ. May the all-merciful God deign to bless and strengthen you.'

"Whilst my servant was preparing for my departure, I went to take leave of the marquis of Aranda, and I returned with Don Silva to my room where we conversed together awaiting Admiral Howard. Don Silva asked me if I had never been touched at the faith and confidence with which many of those unfortunate galley-slaves addressed the God of sinners as well as of the just? 'Ah! you cannot imagine,' he added, 'what inexpressible delight I enjoy with them; offering consolation to those whom despair maddens; instructing souls that have often neither faith nor hope. Many of these unhappy beings have died since my entrance into the holy ministry. I have had the happiness of preparing them for death, and of seeing them almost always animated with the most edifying dispositions. I must even confess that it was the death of one of these slaves which I witnessed through curiosity, that gave me the first idea of embracing the ecclesiastical state. He passed so suddenly from raging fury to sentiments of lively repentance, that I comprehended for the first time the extent of the mercies of God, and the ineffable happiness of those whom he calls to be the ministers, and, as it were, the depositaries of these mercies.'

"Each word of Don Silva fell upon my heart as a dew of grace and light; and I only felt sadness when thinking of our approaching separation. In the evening I received a note from Lord Howard in which he excused himself for having to defer his departure one day, on account of an indispensable letter which had not yet arrived, and compelled him to await the next post. This short delay filled me with joy, and I passed a part of the night in conversation with the guardian angel, who was the instrument which divine goodness had deigned to make use of in my regard. In the morning I received a letter from Arthur; it was more affectionate than ever; he begged me not to seek in strange lands a friend whom heaven reserved for me in the most attached of brothers. He concluded by assuring me, that before long he would be in Scotland, and that he would come himself to restore me to my family, where I should be received with open arms. He sent with this letter a chain of his hair as a present to me, and a cross of sapphire which he requested me to offer to Don Silva. I hastened to beg my friend's acceptance

of the cross, who refused it, alleging that he wore no jewels, and that this was too valuable for the state which he professed; he entreated me at the same time not to part with it, and I promised him that I would not. Towards noon, Admiral Howard called for me. I shed many tears on leaving Don Silva. Lord Donovan was colder and more unbending than usual; I was not surprised at it; he knew what had happened to me at the chapel, and also at the church of the grotto. The marquis of Aranda embraced me, and said, in a low voice, 'If you should one day have the courage to enter the true church, and if your faith bring misfortune upon you, come to me; you will find in me a father, and in Don Silva a brother inviolably attached to you.' I replied by an abundance of tears. We took our departure, and, after a happy voyage, arrived at Dartmouth. Whilst Admiral Howard gave orders for the general disembarkment, I walked, sad and thoughtful, along the shore; the desire of soon seeing my brother and all my family, struggling with the thought of renouncing all to save my soul. I observed a little vessel just setting sail for Rochefort; my courage revived, or rather victorious grace triumphed over my irresolution. I had not a moment to lose; the sails were unfurled. I advanced quickly to the vessel, asked for the captain, and besought him take me on board.

"He enquired my name. 'Count Hida; ask me no further, receive me into your ship, and accept this ring as a token of my gratitude; you will oblige an unhappy man.' Surprised, he refused my offered reward; it was worth from eight to ten thousand francs. 'You do not know the value of it,' said he, smiling, 'and I will not take advantage of your inexperience.'

"Take it," I eagerly replied, 'for the service you are going to render me is inestimable.' He persisted in his refusal, and led me to his room in the vessel which immediately set sail.

"I shed a torrent of tears on losing sight of my native land; but grace, which so evidently directed me, sustained me. The captain, affected by my emotion, tried to console me without interrogating me on the subject of my grief. 'Are you a Protestant, sir?' I asked.

"No, thank Heaven, I am a Roman Catholic."

"I can then speak with confidence to you," I replied, delighted to learn that he was not a Protestant. 'I shall conceal from you my name, but will tell you that, impressed with the truth of the Catholic religion, I abandon my country and family to embrace that unchangeable faith. My tears are wrested from nature by the sacrifice it is obliged to make, but my resolution is not the less immovable.' The captain affectionately embraced me; he took very particular care of me during the voyage; and as he could remain but a few days at Rochefort before setting out for America, he manifested great regret as not being able to be more useful to me, I told him that I was going to join a clergyman, my friend, who would instruct and strengthen me in the faith. He then gave me a pocket-book, saying: 'Here are two checks of a hundred pounds sterling, payable to the bearer; they may be useful to you; do not refuse me, and when you are in possession of your estate, you can refund me the money, and if I should be no more, you can give it to my family, who reside at Newry, in Ireland. Every one there knows Mr. Macdougall, the privateer.'

"I accepted the offer of the generous Irishman, and we separated; I left the same day for Biarritz, distant two leagues from Bayonne; from thence I wrote to Don Silva these few words: 'A young Scotchman, anxiously desirous to save his soul, and to embrace the truth, presumes to address himself to you, Signor Don Silva, by the advice of Lord Hidalla of Salisbury. Important reasons prevent him repairing to Bayonne; would it be presuming too much on your tender charity to hope that you will sacrifice a fortnight to instruct and enlighten a soul which Jesus Christ has redeemed with his blood?'

"The zeal of Don Silva responded to my expectations; the next morning I was in his arms. 'I am yours,' I exclaimed, 'I belong to the true religion; dispose of me for life and death.' He could not believe what he saw. I informed him in few words how I had quitted Dartmouth. 'I will be a Catholic,' I added, 'and if my father regards me no longer as his son, he for whom I have left all will take care of me.'

"Don Silva shed tears of joy and affection. He hired a small house in a village near the city, and he came frequently to visit me. I was very soon instructed; I believed firmly, and my soul embraced with ardent love the mysteries of faith. I was entire days at the village church; no sacrifice seemed painful when I thought of my immense gain. Anxiety for Arthur, the desire that he should no longer wander in error was all that troubled me. This was my continual prayer. I wrote to him, yet without acquainting him with my conversion, that I had powerful motives for leaving Lord Donovan and Admiral Howard,

but that I would shortly return to throw myself into his arms, and restore to him a brother, as submissive as affectionate and devoted.

"As soon as I was sufficiently instructed and prepared, I went to make a public abjuration at Bayonne. I then paid a visit to the marquis of Aranda, who congratulated me in the most affectionate manner on my happiness. Don Silva was forced to make a journey to Paris, whither I accompanied him. It was there that I met the duke of Medina, my maternal uncle. His daughter, Dona Maria, made me acquainted with Matilda Walsingham, Henry's sister, now the wife of my brother Arthur; I saw her several times also at the duchess of Guise's. My brother Arthur had just left France when I arrived at Paris; this sensibly afflicted me. Matilda was a Catholic, and very much attached to her faith; I even then formed the wish that heaven would make use of her to enlighten Arthur. I was loved in the family of my uncle, as one of his household. He wished me to accompany him to Spain, and had me appointed page to a prince who was about returning to that country. Don Silva delighted to leave me in a family professing my own religion, urged me to accept the duke's offer. We parted, promising to maintain an uninterrupted correspondence. I then wrote to my brother Arthur and made an entire avowal of my conduct; I told him also that I retained the little cross which he had sent to Don Silva, and that I was resolved never to part with it. I solicited as a favor a reply, but I received no further intelligence, nor remembrance from my brother; and I doubted not that my abjuration had raised an eternal barrier between us. I hastened, before setting out for Spain, to send to the wife of Mr. Macdougall in Ireland the sum I owed this generous man. I added some presents for Mrs. M. and a letter, expressing all the fulness of my gratitude, and the happiness I enjoyed in my new faith.

"Meanwhile I had a strong desire of seeing Arthur. Determined not to settle in Spain, I obtained my dismissal from the situation which attached me to the court, whose dangers and temptations moreover I feared. I went to pass some time at Castel-Abey-Elia; this was the name of one of the duke of Medina's estates. The duke had set out for Las Montes, his castle, but a short distance from Madrid, and I promised after a short time to meet him there. I was still at Castel-Abey-Elia when I received a letter from the duke, requesting me to hasten my arrival, as they only awaited my presence to celebrate the marriage of Dona Maria with the count of Castro, governor of ——. I hastened without delay, but a slight indisposition detained me seventeen leagues from Madrid.— When I recovered, I was handed a letter which had arrived several days before. It was a challenge; there was no signature; the writing was unknown to me, and the day and hour appointed were gone by. It gave me little trouble, and I left for —— on horseback, attended by only one servant. I found myself late in the evening in a dense forest, a short distance from the town whither I was going. Uneasy at meeting no one, I quickened my pace, when the sound of a pistol, fired in the distance, made me urge yet more my horse's speed. I perceived an old man surrounded by three assassins. I rushed to his aid; two others came to join the assassin; and I, with my servant, combated the five. I lost sight of the old man; this made me hope that he had escaped. Although wounded, I rallied my strength, and throwing my purse to the highwaymen, they fled seeing me determined to sell my life dearly.

"Alone, uncertain what route to take, I guided myself by the light of the moon. My servant I discovered dead at the foot of a tree.— Not being able to be of use to him, and not finding the stranger, I threw myself on my horse, which was not far from me, and took the road to the village of ——. On arriving at the inn, I was told that Lord Hidalla of Salisbury had been assassinated in the forest with his servant; and that Count Tancredi, dangerously wounded, had been borne to this same inn. I knew the count only by name, and as the personal enemy of my family. I resolved to let them still believe me dead, and not make myself known. I asked to be shown to Count Tancredi, and I recognised in him the venerable old man whom I had seen in the forest. He was quite sensible, but suffering very much, and extremely agitated.

"Heaven, no doubt, has sent you here for the consolation of my last hour," said he, as soon as he perceived me; and requesting those present to retire, 'Hidalla,' he continued, for he knew me, having seen me at the duke of Guise's without my having observed him, 'you are of a family, the enemy of mine; you have a personal injury to avenge, but you are a Catholic. Your enemy is dying and unhappy; you can render him an important service beyond all price. The hereditary animosity of our houses will yet elicit your generosity, and your enemy will be indebted to you for a more tranquil death?'