



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XIX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1868.

No. 20.

NELLIE NETTERRVILLE;
OR,
ONE OF THE TRANSPLANTED.

By the author of 'Wild Times,' 'Blind Agnes,' etc.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued)

She was met at the door by 'Maida,' who nearly knocked her down in her boisterous delight at beholding her again, and she was playfully defending herself from the too rapturous advances of her four footed friend when Roger ran his fishing boat alongside the pier, and, evidently mistaking Nellie for some bare footed visitor of Nora's, called out in Irish:

'Hilloo, ma colleen dhas! run back to the tower, will you, and tell Nora to fetch me down a basket, and you shall have a good handful of fish for your pains, for I have caught enough to garrison the island for a week.'

Guessing his mistake, and enchanted at the success of her masquerade, Nellie instantly darted into the kitchen, seized a fishing-creel which was lying near the hearth, and rushed down to the pier. Roger was still so busy disentangling the fish from the net in which he had caught them, that he never even looked at Nellie until he turned round to place them in her basket. Then for the first time he saw who it was whom he had been so unceremoniously ordering about upon his commission. Had Nellie been rich and prosperous, he would probably have laughed and made exceeding light of the matter; but poor, and almost dependent upon his bounty as she was, he flushed scarlet to the forehead, and apologized with an eager deference, which was not only very touching in itself, but very characteristic of the sensitive and generous hearted race from which he sprung. 'But, after all,' he added, in conclusion, smiling and laying his finger lightly on the folds of Nellie's mantle—'after all, how could I dream that, her weeks of weary wandering only just concluded, Mistress Netterville would have been up again with the sun, looking as fresh and bright as the morning dew, and masquerading like a peasant girl?'

'But I am not masquerading at all,' said Nellie, laughing, and yet evidently quite in earnest. 'I am as poor as a peasant girl, and mean to dress like one, ay, and to work like one too, so long as I needs must be dependent upon others.'

'Not if I am still to be master here,' said Roger very decidedly, taking the fishing-creel out of her hands. 'Like a wandering princess you have come to me; and like a wandering princess I intend that you shall be treated, so long as you condescend to honor me by your presence in this kingdom of barren rocks.'

'But the fish,' said the laughing and blushing Nellie; 'in the meantime what is to be done with the fish? Nora will be in pain about it, for she told me last night that there wasn't a blessed fish in the bay that would be worth a 'threepence' if only half an hour were suffered to elapse between their exit from the ocean and their introduction to her kitchen.'

'Nora is quite right, said Roger, responding freely to the young girl's merry laugh; 'and it has cost me both time and pains, I do assure you, to impress that fact upon her mind. But Maida has already told her all about it; and here she comes,' he added, as he caught a glimpse of the old woman descending towards the pier. 'So now we may leave the fish with a safe conscience to her tender mercies; and if you are inclined for a stroll, I will take you up to yonder rocky platform, from whence you will see the Atlantic, as unfortunately we but seldom see it on this wild coast, in all the calm glories of a summer's day.'

CHAPTER IX.

To this proposition Nellie joyfully assented, and he led the way accordingly up a rocky path winding westward toward the cliffs. Once or twice he turned as if to give her aid, but Nellie skipped like a young kid from rock to rock, exulting in her independence; and finding that she declined assistance, he went on in silence until they reached a point among the cliffs, high enough to give them a full sea view toward the west.

The Atlantic lay beneath them, rolling in its mighty volume of deep waters, and dashing them against the cliffs below with the strength and calmness of a sleepy giant. Nellie had often seen the sea, that narrow strip of water, namely, which separated her own birth home from the birthplace of her kindred; but of the mighty ocean, with its thousand voices coming up from the deep caves below, its murmurings and whisperings, its infinite variety of tints and aspects, its lights and shadows, its clear green depths, and crystal purity, such as no smaller sheet of water can ever boast of, she had never dreamed before; and as her eye roamed over the smooth expanse until it reached that uttermost point where sea and sky seem to blend together, a sense of vastness and power fell upon

her soul which almost oppressed her. For a few minutes Roger watched her as she stood there in hushed and breathless admiration; but just as the silence was beginning to be oppressive, he broke in by saying softly, 'Yes, yes! it is all bright, and smooth, and shining now; but I have stood here on an autumn evening, and watched it when it was black and swollen, brimful beneath the coming storm—when the wind seemed almost a living power—a thing to be seen as well as felt—as it swept over that mighty mass of waters, mingling its hoarse voice with theirs, and forcing on their waves, as a general force on his troops, until it dashed them in a frenzy of fruitless valor against the beetling cliffs beneath us. And, in truth, I almost prefer it in those moods,' he added, like one thinking his own thoughts aloud, 'for then it looks simply like what it is, a huge monster ever greedy for its prey, whereas, now, in this lazy sunshine, it seems to me nothing more nor less than a great smiling treachery, wooing its victims toward it, only that it may afterwards the more thoroughly engulf them.'

'It is a great, beautiful terror, even as it is to day,' said Nellie breathlessly. 'What a height we are above it! It makes me giddy only to look down.'

'Do not look, then,' said Roger anxiously, 'but rather turn toward yonder isle, which is only separated from the mainland by a narrow strip of water. There are cliffs upon that island which look westward over the ocean and rise eighteen hundred feet above it, and the inhabitants will tell you that, when the weather is calm enough, you can see from thence, at the setting of the sun, the 'Hy Brysail'—the enchanted isle, the 'Tir-na-n-oge,' or land of eternal youth and beauty, to which death and sorrow never come, and where (so the old legend tells us) a hundred years of this mortal life pass swiftly as a single day. Few, as you may well suppose, are the favored mortals who have ever reached it, and fewer still, if any, who have ever come back to tell the tale of their adventures.'

'It is a pretty legend,' said Nellie, straining her eyes over the ocean as earnestly as though she seriously expected to discover the fairy island of which he spoke floating on its bosom.—'Have you ever really seen anything like land in that direction?'

'If you choose, we can go some of these days on a voyage of discovery,' said Roger, smiling at her seriousness; 'only, if we do find 'Hy-Brysail,' I warn you that we will have to stay there. Such is the law by which adventurers to its shores are bound. It does not seem a hard law either, does it? Would you object to it, Mistress Netterville?—to be young and beautiful for ever! Sorrow forgotten as if it had never been, beneath the spells of that magic land!'

Nellie drew a long breath, and her blue eyes grew well nigh black with suppressed feeling as she looked westward towards the ocean. But she did not answer.

'Well,' he said, finding she would not speak, 'will you try the adventure with me, or do you still prefer earth and its passing showers to this land of eternal sunshine?'

Nellie sighed—it almost seemed as if she was making a real choice; and when he playfully repeated, 'Have you decided? which shall it be—this old kingdom of Grana Uaille or Tir-na-n-oge?' she quite seriously replied:

'Not Tir-na-n-oge, certainly; though a year ago, perhaps, I might have chosen otherwise.—But youth and its sunshine is not real happiness, after all, although sometimes it looks very like it; and even if it were, there is something to me in a life of happiness, simple and unalloyed, less noble, and less like the choice of a soul predestined to eternity, than in one of sorrow bravely borne.'

'Sorrow has done its work well for you at all events,' said Roger, moved to a higher feeling of reverence than, two minutes before, he would have thought it possible to have entertained for a creature so young and still so childish.

'We to the soul upon which it does not, once that soul has been delivered to its guidance,' Nellie answered softly, and almost as it were beneath her breath.

Roger gazed upon her silently. It seemed as if she were changing beneath his very eyes from a bright, impulsive child into a woman of deep and earnest feeling—a woman in every fibre of her fine, strong nature—and yet still, in the untired freshness of her sixteen years, as innocent and confiding as a child.

'Then you prefer a happiness which would bring with it the zest of contrast?' he added, as if to probe her further.

'I would prefer, at all events, a happiness founded upon duty,' she answered gravely; and then, as if half-ashamed of her own earnestness, she asked him lightly:

poor creatures, by their very condition as a conquered race, must necessarily be?'

'For that very reason!' he answered quickly; 'for that very reason! Men despised as savages and treated as wild beasts, will either brood over schemes of real vengeance or soothe themselves with dreams of unreal bliss. Is it wonderful, therefore, that these poor people, with their dreamy and imaginative natures, should sometimes look wistfully over the broad ocean, and fancy they see a land where (if once only it could be reached) flowers, and joy, and eternal sunshine, would console them for the misery endured among these barren rocks, in which they have been forced by their enemies to seek—I was going to say, a home—it would have been far more correct to have said—a prison?'

'Nay, but now it is you that are unjust,' said Nellie, smiling—'unjust to this fair land you live in. The kingdom of Grana Uaille can in no sense of the word be called a prison; and even were it ten times less beautiful than it is, to me it would still remain the one bright memory left me to look back to in this great year of sorrow.'

Roger turned quickly round, but Nellie met his eye with such a look of frank candor and unconsciousness as to the possibility of any hidden meaning being attachable to her words, that he felt tacitly rebuked beneath it, and merely said:

'Ay; but Mistress Netterville, I was talking of a home.'

'Home!' said Nellie softly—'home, after all, is but the place where the heart gathers up its treasures. These were almost the last words my dear mother said to me, and now I feel their truth; for if she were but once more at my side, the barrenest island in Clew Bay would become to me, I think, at once as homelike almost and dear as Netterville itself.'

Again Roger seemed on the point of saying something, but again he checked himself and was silent.

Nellie saw the flush upon his brow, and interpreted it her own way.

'You are not angry, Colonel O'More,' she said, with the simplicity of a child; 'surely you do not fancy, because I spoke of Netterville, that I am ungrateful for the kindness which has made this island a second home to me.'

'No, indeed,' he answered, with a smile so bright that it must have reassured her even if he had not said a word in answer. 'No, indeed. I was, or at all events I am, only thinking how I can best persuade you and Lord Netterville to consider this island as your home, even in the absence of its lawful owner.'

'Absence,' said Nellie; 'are you going then, and wherefore?'

'Wherefore?' said O'More quickly. 'I marvel that you cannot guess. Because, Mistress Netterville, though I live upon this island, and though its inhabitants acknowledge me as their chieftain, it is yet a sorry fact that I am poor, poorer in proportion than the poorest of the number; an outlaw besides, with every man's hand and sword against me, and nothing but the traditions of past greatness to soothe, or, which much oftener is the case, to add bitterness to the meanness of my present station.'

'Why call it meanness?' said Nellie, flashing up. 'You have fought and lost for your king and country, as we all have fought and lost; and your enemies may take your lands indeed, but they cannot rob you of the glory of the cause for which you have contended, nor can they make you other than you are, a descendant of brave old Grana Uaille and the inheritor of her kingdom.'

'Kingdom!' said Roger, with a little bitter laugh. 'Turn your eyes inland, Mistress Netterville, and look from the northern point of Clew Bay southward toward the spot where Croagh Patrick casts its shade upon the bright waters. That was the old kingdom of Grana Uaille, and my inheritance upon the day that I was born. My earliest recollections therefore are connected with this wild land, and every rock and cave in its fair winding coast-line was as familiar to me in my childish days as the toys in their nursery are to more tenderly nurtured children. But they sent me at last to Spain for that education which would have been denied me here, and I only came back (while still a mere raw boy) to fight under the banner of my kinsman. I will not trouble you with a history of that war; you know it, alas, too well already! But when Preston took refuge in Galway, and the other chiefs of the confederation dispersed in different directions, I made the best of my way hither, hoping, amid the wilds and fastnesses of my own country, to be permitted to remain at peace. Rumors reached me on the way of the great scheme of the transplantation, and of the numbers flocking from the eastern counties to usurp, against their will, the possessions of their poorer brethren in the west. Soon after that, came tidings that the enemy had reserved the coast-line for themselves, then that they had

swarmed over into some of the Clew Bay islands, and then, at last, that they had taken possession of and fortified Carrig-a-hooly, the old Castle of Grana and the spot where I was born. Still I pressed unhesitatingly forward, for I remembered the 'Rath,' and knowing that it was, or used to be, almost a ruin, I hoped it would have escaped them, and that I might find there a refuge and concealment for the moment. Mistress Netterville, you can guess at the result. I went as you went, and found as you found, that it was occupied already. Major Hewitson—'

'What of Major Hewitson?' a voice asked impatiently at his elbow. Roger turned and found himself face to face with Henrietta, who had glided so quietly up the mountain path that neither he nor Nellie had an idea of her presence until she announced it by this question.

Remembering her kindness of the day before, Nellie's first impulse had been to greet her eagerly; her next was to retreat a step behind O'More, with an uncomfortable though only half acknowledged consciousness that she herself would be considered by Henrietta as one too many in the coming conversation. There was, in truth, a flush on the young lady's brow and a sparkle in her eye, by no means inviting to familiarity, and without seeming conscious even of Nellie's presence, she repeated the question angrily to O'More:

'What of Major Hewitson! What of the owner of yonder castle?'

Roger looked at her steadily, then removing his cap, and speaking in his most courtly tones, he answered quietly:

'Nothing, Mistress Hewitson, nothing at least, unfit to be said in the presence of his daughter.'

'That won't do,' cried Henrietta passionately, 'that won't do. I heard his name as I came up and I will know what you were saying of him.'

Roger laughed a bright, merry laugh, which Nellie thought no ill humor could have resisted, and he answered frankly:

'Nay, for that matter, Mistress Hewitson, if you insist upon it, you are quite welcome to hear not only all that I did say, but all likewise that I was about to say on the subject of your father. I had just observed to Mistress Netterville (whose person you seem somehow to have forgotten since yesterday) that I found Major Hewitson in possession of my last refuge on the mainland, and I was going to add that as he had thus made his fortune at my expense, I trusted he would not endeavor to prevent me seeking mine, where in these days Irishmen most often find them, under the golden flag of Spain.'

'Spain!' Nellie's heart leaped up suddenly, and then grew very still. Thus, then, was the meaning of that word 'absence' which had already startled, and even against her will, disturbed her. This was his meaning. He was about to leave Ireland for ever, and make a home for himself in his mother's land. Nellie's heart leaped up, and then grew very still!

When she returned to a consciousness of the outward world around her, Henrietta was saying eagerly:

'Do not wait to know what he may think upon the subject; but go at once. Remember you are an outlaw, and that an outlaw is one whom the law permits to be hunted like a wild beast, and slain whenever or wherever he may be taken.'

'And this, then, is the fate which your worthy father is preparing for me?' Roger asked in a tone of bantering politeness, which, considering the circumstances and Henrietta's evident excitement, Nellie could not help thinking almost unkind. 'It is thus, like a wild beast, as you rightly term it, that he is about to set upon me and slay me unawares.'

'I do not say it! I do not know it!' said Henrietta, almost sobbing. 'I only say—only know that there are fresh troops of soldiers coming in to-day; that there have been, for at least a week past, prayer-meetings and preachings and waitings on the Lord, things which all portend a coming danger, and one that probably will point toward you. Colonel O'More, be merciful; take my warning for what it may be worth, and ask no further questions. Remember, that, if I think not with my father in these matters, I am still, at all events, his daughter. And now I must begone, for with all my skill at the oar, and little Paudeen's to boot, I shall have hard work to get back in time for the mid day meal, and the long and weary homily by which it is seasoned and made pleasant to unbelievers like myself.'

Henrietta turned as if to depart, but yet she did not. She seemed to be struggling hard with some hidden feeling, and at last, with an effort so violent that it was visible, at least to Roger's eyes, she flung her arms round Nellie's neck.

'I know nothing of you but your name, young mistress,' she said in a smothered voice; 'but I know, at least, that I and mine have wrought you a great injustice. That injustice,

unhappily, I have no power to repair; but yet, if ever you have need of any help, that I can give, and will come and ask me for it, believe me, instead of heaping coals of fire on my head, you will be giving me the only real happiness I can feel, so long as I know that by my residence in these lands I am usurping the rights of others.'

Henrietta almost flung Nellie from her as she finished speaking; and then, without another word, either to her or Roger, she took the downward path of the cliff, and was out of sight in a moment.

The two whom she left behind her continued silent, until they saw the 'corragh,' or small boat, in which she had come, and which had been waiting for her beneath the cliffs, gliding once more out into the open bay; then they also turned their steps homeward, and Roger, with no small dash of enthusiasm in his manner, exclaimed:

'Brave girl! would you believe it, this is the second time she has given me notice of a snare! only the first time,' he added, with perhaps some intuitive guess at the sort of questioning that might be going on in Nellie's mind, 'only the first time it was by Paudeen, who sails her boat, and who, she well knows, may be trusted in all that regards the safety of his chieftain. But what is the old white-haired gossamer up to now, I wonder? I own I am fairly puzzled!'

'We are not, I trust, the cause of this fresh trouble to you?' said Nellie timidly.

'Oh! no; I think not; for your sake I trust not,' he answered thoughtfully. 'It seemed to me to be altogether personal to myself; for if it had been about the priest, I think she would have said so.'

'The priest! where is he?' Nellie asked. 'I did not even know that there was one upon the island.'

'Not upon this island, but on another, as you shall see to-morrow if you choose to make one of his Sunday congregation. But yonder is your grandfather watching for you; had we not better go and join him?'

Nellie assented, and quickening her pace almost to a run, she was in her grandfather's arms ere Roger, who came on more leisurely, had time to join them.

Lord Netterville gazed longingly into Nellie's face, and smiled as he saw the bright color which exercise had called into her pale cheeks. Then he turned courteously toward his host. Perhaps he had some vague idea in his old head that the fate of his grandchild was to be henceforth, in some way or other, connected with that of Roger; perhaps he was not himself aware of the significance of his action; but this at all events is certain, that, instead of relinquishing Nellie's hand, he kept it tightly in his own, and when the young chieftain approached to greet him, laid it silently in that of Roger.

There was enough in the action itself, and still more in the way in which it was done, to send the blood scarlet to Nellie's brow, and she struggled to release her hand. For one moment, however, Roger held it, gently but firmly, before he made a movement as if he were about to raise it to his lips; instead of doing so, however, he dropped it quietly, and said in a low voice:

'Not now, not yet; but when you are once more at your mother's side, will you permit me to remind you of this moment, and to ask for the treasure which I now relinquish, at the hands of her who is your only lawful guardian?'

CHAPTER X.

Early the next morning Nellie found herself gliding over the waters of Clew Bay in one of the native corraghs of the country, under the protection of her host. He was captain and crew all in one, and she was his only passenger; for it had been decided on the previous evening that Lord Netterville was not in a fit state to endure the fatigue of such a voyage; and with old Nora to look after his creature comforts, and Maida to guard him in his lonely fortress, Roger assured his granddaughter that she need have no scruple in leaving him during the two or three hours required for their enterprise. And Nellie had readily obeyed; for, if the truth must be told, she had begun to rely implicitly upon his judgment, and to submit to it as unquestioningly as if she had been a child. The little shyness, produced by Lord Netterville's thoughtless action of the day before had entirely worn off, partly because she herself had striven womanfully against the feeling, but chiefly because Roger, thoroughly comprehending how needful it was to her comfort that, during her residence in his lonely kingdom, she should be entirely at her ease in his society, had adapted, as if by instinct, precisely the affectionate, brotherly sort of manner which was of all others the best calculated to produce this result. Nellie therefore gave herself up without a thought to the pleasant novelty of a brotherly sort of petting and protection which seemed to call for nothing more than quiet acceptance on her part; and she listened to Roger with the keen and unswayed in-