



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XV.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MAY 5, 1865.

No. 39.

THE TWO MARYS; OR, THE O'DONNELLS OF INNISMORE.

CHAPTER X.—MARY AT INNISMORE—DEATH
AMIDST THE MOUNTAINS—THE CLOISTER.

A lovely summer evening was that on which Mary O'Donnell again beheld the old tower of Innismore rising above the valley in which the Castle was situated; whilst in all their sublime grandeur frowned the heather-clad mountains;—the sun was just setting, and its last rays shed a golden light on the fertile and luxuriantly wooded valley, now buried in such calm repose. The building was raised some two hundred years since, on the site of a very ancient structure, one tower of which still remained. The rays of the sun glittered cheerily on the white granite walls of the edifice, and though the sudden illness of Mrs. O'Donnell was the cause of Mary's summons hither, still she felt that pleasure we experience on our return homewards.

Old Connelly, a trusty and faithful servant of the family, was the first to bid her welcome, with his—'Isn't it well pleased we all are to see your purty face again, Miss Mary, for the mistress has been looking after ye since long fore-noon the sun set the evening, and its sorra ill she is, but—'

The old man was interrupted by the light footed Bridget, who hastened forwards to conduct Mary to her mistress's room, and led the way through a staircase of carved oak, to the rooms occupied by her mother, as she was wont to call the good lady of Innismore.

Mrs. O'Donnell was, indeed, very ill, still the physician hoped the crisis was past, and the arrival of the affectionate girl, whom she loved as if she were her own, called up a smile on the wan and suffering face.

Mr. O'Donnell was seated by the bedside, his usually good humored, pleasant countenance, all the worse for the nights and days of anxiety he had lately passed, and he, too, pressed a fatherly kiss on the fair young forehead of the daughter of his adoption.

'Now, darling mother,' said Mary, pillowing the invalid's yet throbbing head upon her gentle bosom, 'you must have no one to nurse you but me, and you must soon get well again under my care; and when you can listen, I have much to tell you of your English friends.'

But Mrs. O'Donnell thought she could listen then, and so before the moon had shed its pale rays over yonder mountain, at the foot of which the Castle rose, much had been told of home scenes and home friends in England, and almost one of the first named, on account of her connexion with the General O'Donnell, was the unfortunate Maria Flohrberg.

'But what can Margaret have written to me about soon,' said Mary to herself, as the very next morning, on taking her place again in her dear old sitting room to do the honors of the breakfast table, she perceived a letter there bearing the London post mark. It contained a few brief lines; told her of the scene that had taken place at the Montagues, the loss of the bracelet, the suspicion that had fallen on Fraulein, and ended with telling her that she should write again on the following day.

In no small anxiety did Mary watch for the second epistle. She received it in due course, but this time it was in the hand-writing of the barrister.

We need not, of course, repeat its contents, with the nature of which the reader is already acquainted; everything was explained, and the concluding lines were as follows:—

'The trial will come on probably in about six weeks from the present time, and you, my dear Miss O'Donnell, will be subpoenaed as one of our principal witnesses, for we expect much to hear from you; that you were with Fraulein at the very time in which it was stated she pledged the bracelet. If, as we hope, and believe you can state this on your oath, your evidence alone will be amply sufficient for the acquittal of poor Maria Flohrberg.'

This epistle caused no small uneasiness at Innismore, for Mrs. O'Donnell was very ill, but still she might be quite recovered long before the time specified; and to relieve, at once, the minds of her friends from all doubt, Mary wrote as follows:—

Innismore.

'Dear Sir—I can say on my oath, that Maria Flohrberg and myself were chatting together, in her chamber, from a quarter before, till a quarter after, eight, the evening previous to my leaving home. I had been with her for an hour, earlier in the evening; we went out together a little before seven; I parted from her at the top of Regent Street, and a very little later, thought that being faint and ill, a few peaches might be an acceptable offering; I purchased them, and returned almost immediately, but Maria had arrived home before me; she had just finished a short note. She also told me the reason why she had been out at that evening, and of the

fortunate termination to her trouble. I can swear to the time, because not only did the church clock chime the three quarters after seven, but the timepiece in Maria's room pointed to the same hour. I shall be quite ready, my dear sir, whenever you call upon me,' continued Mary, 'From what I have heard, I think giving one's evidence in a court of justice must be a most painful task, and a species of torture I could willingly dispense with; but I hope to come off with credit, and trust that you will find me a very clearheaded witness. Give my best love to your mother and sisters, not forgetting our poor Fraulein. I was much shocked at the contents of the note I have just received.—Yours very truly, MARY O'DONNELL.

Slowly but surely Mrs. O'Donnell recovered from an illness which had brought her almost to the verge of the grave; but a naturally vigorous constitution had enabled her to triumph over it, and the care and solicitude of Mary was at length crowned with success, by beholding her friend again occupy her accustomed place in the library, or the ordinary apartments of Innismore.

On one fair September evening, only one week before the time when the subpoena that morning served upon her told her she must be in London, to give her evidence in the approaching trial of Maria Flohrberg, Mary was seated alone in the library with Mrs. O'Donnell; the moon had just risen; every article in the room was seen as clearly as in the full light of mid-day, and its mild soft rays fell full on the pale face of the yet scarcely convalescent Mrs. O'Donnell. Mary had read aloud till the sun had set, and was now speaking of a subject near to her heart, the approaching trial; her fear, for she did fear her entrance in a court of justice, when the silence of the evening, hitherto undisturbed, was broken by a low plaintive voice warbling the following words, some little distance off; the voice sometimes sounding close at hand, then again dying away in a plaintive feeble wail, lost, as it were, among the distant hills:

'My zone, sad life was ever full of sorrow,
If e'er I had a joy, it knew no sorrow:
If e'er I loved, my love would end in woe,
And prove the deepest grief this heart could know.'

'Ah, yes! 'twere torture far beyond belief;
To know that love for me could work much grief;
That I amid these rocks and glens may sigh
Throughout the live-long day, at eve may-nap to die.'

'Alone, unshared, for, not one tear to lave
The spot where wretched Ailey finds a grave,
My husband false; my child she knows not I
Am watching near, yet all alone to die.'

Mary had sat with folded hands and parted lips, bending forwards, eager to catch each word that fell from the lips of the songstress; at first she had paid but little attention, but suddenly a chord was touched which had long since ceased to vibrate in her affectionate heart; she had heard that air to which the words were sung in far other scenes, on the waters of the broad Atlantic; far, far away in a penal settlement; again in this the land of her nativity; but ever, ever amid sorrow and suffering. The voice, too, was not unlike; and yet the lips of her of whom she thought, had long since been closed in death;—yet again the strain is borne on the evening air, and the name of Ailey falls upon her ear, the remaining words feebly dying away as it sung at a considerable distance.

She had sat, as it were, speechless, transfixed; but suddenly she bounded from her seat,—'Mother, I come, I come,' shrieked the girl, and Mrs. O'Donnell (ah! well she knew who had sung those words) saw but the flutter of her white robe as she rushed through the open window into the valley beyond.

And still fell on her affrighted ear those words uttered in that heart-thrilling tone, 'my mother, my mother,' as Mary rushed through the valley and glen, round by the hill side and beneath the overhanging rocks in her wild despairing search.

Mrs. O'Donnell tottered to the bell rope, and bid the affrighted servants hasten in all directions in search of their young mistress.

The distracted Mary had already searched fruitlessly for the mother whom she was convinced still lived, and was now aided in her search by the servants. A horrible fear took possession of her soul; what if she had perished by falling into one of the many pieces of water which abounded in that fertile spot.

Suddenly a thought struck her, and in a rich deep voice she sang the last line of the ballad. Her idea was a happy one; the wanderer feared not that she should be repelled, for, lo, again, but very feebly, oh! so feebly, as if it were the last effort of expiring nature, fall upon the air, the words,—

'Am watching near, but all alone to die.'
For one moment Mary stood irresolute; but yes, the voice must surely come from beneath that overhanging rock, and the girl awakes the echoes amidst the distant mountains with the heart stirring words, 'Mother, Mother.'

Onward she flies till she reaches that friendly rock, she feels, she knows she will surely find the dying wanderer there.

Look down ye holy angels and rejoice, for the soul of the outcast has made its peace with God, and she is not to be denied one long and last embrace from the dear one from whom she had so long been severed.

The moon shone forth in unusual splendor, not the smallest fleecy cloud passing over its disk to mar its brilliancy; the parent and child are alone; the warm arms of Mary cradle the dying mother; the head, already damp with the dew of death, reposes on her gentle bosom; and hot tears fall on that cold face, every feature of which has, in the long lapse of years, been fondly treasured in the heart of the loving child.

'Ah, mother, mother! they told me thou wert dead, long, long years since,' sighed Mary;—'oh, why was this?'

'My love, for thee, Mavourneen; my love for thee,' feebly gasped the dying woman; 'to see thee made a lady; to spare thee coming under thy mother's ban, I made thee think that I was dead; and now, glory be to God,' said the dying woman raising her attenuated eyes to heaven, 'I can kiss and bless thee my own heart's treasure, before I die, and Ailey is content; that air thou dost remember, Mavourneen, and the blessed Mary hath heard my prayer.'

The sacredness of the scene was respected by the servants, but Connelly stepped forwards.

'His mistress wished,' he said, 'the dying woman to be brought to the Castle: she had already sent for the services of the parish priest; couldn't they be after carrying her to Innismore.'

But no, it might not be, for Ailey could not bear removal; but close, quite close at hand, much nearer than the Castle, was the cottage of Bridget's mother, and thither they carried Ailey, and the priest was soon at his post, to strengthen the dying one with the last sacraments of the Church. She lingered through the night, but ere the sun had gilded with its golden rays the tall summit of the mountains, the soul of Ailey had passed to its rest, her head pillowed on the shoulder of her child.

Why is that the outpouring of parental love, so often returns in so thin a stream from the heart of the child? Why is it that so often it is found so strong in its descent, so weak and feeble in its upward current? But not so was it with Mary.

It was well for her after-peace of mind, that her dying mothers in the few hours which she spent with her newly-found child, dropped no word by which she made known to Mary the stern repulse she had met from Mrs. O'Donnell, in the vain effort she had made to see her child; if she had, it were difficult to say whether or no Mary could again have borne to reside at Innismore. Still, humanly speaking, Mrs. O'Donnell could not be blamed for having kept the unfortunate Ailey so strictly to the performance of her promise; she naturally dreaded the child whom she had adopted should become by contact with its unfortunate, weak, and erring mother, a sharer in that mother's misery.

A few days later then, the remains of poor Ailey were conveyed to their rest in the churchyard of Innismore, and it was, perhaps, well for Mary that she should be denied the power of brooding over the death of her mother, and dwelling on the miseries which had preceded it, by her almost immediate departure for London. Yet there was one visit to be paid first, for Mary's resolution, made long since, scarce needed the last overwhelming trial to render it firmer than it had previously been.

Not far from Innismore was a humble Convent of Carmelite Nuns, with whom Mary had been educated, and now pale and tearful, clad in robes of deepest mourning, she sought the Prioresse, in order to enquire if she could be admitted into the house, on her return from London.

'Mrs. O'Donnell then is dead, my dear child,' was the first remark of the Nun, who knew the secret of Mary's birth, and that the name of O'Donnell did not belong to her in her own right; and who had heard of the death of her mother, when Mary was first a pupil in the convent school.

With much surprise then did she listen to the story unfolded to her by Mary, who added—

'You may well understand that Innismore is no longer a place in which I can bear to dwell, associated as it will ever be with such painful remembrances. I have now to visit London—I am summoned thither as witness in a criminal court, and would wish not to visit Innismore, but to come here on my return to Ireland instead.—I have the consent of my benefactors for so doing.'

'God has led you to himself by the path of suffering, my child,' said the gentle Nun, 'and if it be His will, that after the ordinary term of novitiate has expired, you should make your profession amongst us, your wounded heart may yet taste a peace which you have not known in the world. Come with me, Mary, the community even now are at recreation; some you will remember; of course the lapse of six years will

have wrought a change; others have been removed by the hand of death, a visitation, as you know, terribly felt in a community which is a little world in itself; and you will also recognise new faces amongst our Novices and younger Nuns; they will gladly welcome their new sister.'

As the Nun spoke thus, she passed from the reception room into the gallery without, down a spacious staircase, and through the quiet cloisters, paved with marble, till she reached the gardens, where the chief part of the community had adjourned.

The appearance of a beloved Superior was the signal for the Nuns to join her, and Mary, their former, docile, clever pupil, was warmly welcomed by those who of old had been her preceptors, whilst the younger Nuns, to whom she was a stranger, came forward to tender her their kindly salute.

With a full heart and tears welling into her eyes, Mary looked upon the quiet group; here, she thought to herself, is quietude and peace, where the soul may at last find rest; she knew, too, the histories of some amongst the sisterhood, how two or three were daughters of noble families, who had been reared in the lap of luxury, but who felt a void within their hearts which the world could not satisfy, who felt themselves called, as it were, to serve God in religious seclusion, and by cutting asunder human ties did but anticipate the severance which, sooner or later, the hand of death would effect. Others there were, too, whose hearts, like her own, had ached under the pressure of earthly sorrow, or who, perchance, had found this life one arduous struggle; who, delicately reared, had only poverty for their inheritance; these latter sisters had, mayhap, sought religion with a less perfect intention, but there they were nevertheless; and even as when two children make to some fond parent an offering of affection, the one, mayhap, a lovely rose, the other, some wild wayside flower, yet both are accepted with love; so, may we hope, that the great Father of all would reject none of these. His children, whether they bring Him hearts full of love, but untried by worldly care, or, whether they are those who have tried the world, and whom the world had sorely tried, too, and who seek the cloister's calm and quiet shade with aching hearts which long for rest and peace, hearts which trouble, and sorrow, and disappointment, and wreck of earthly hope, or perchance, the death of some dear one, on whom their affections were too firmly fixed, for—where the treasure is, there will the heart be also,—hath led the soul to God.

Yes, there in that large community are, perhaps, more than two or three of the classes we have named. Here is the rich lady, now transformed into the humble sister; there the countenance once traced with the lines of care and anxiety, now wearing an expression of calmness and peace; wearing the same austere and simple habit, rising at the same early hour, sleeping on the same hard couch, partaking of the same diet, subject to the same observances, passing their lives—monotonous if you will—in the same manner; yet in the world how different was their fate.

Mary O'Donnell was, naturally, full of vivacity, impetuous in temper; well, this she will have to moderate somewhat; she was very cheerful too, in disposition, and were it not the case, her convent friends would scarcely have received her, for a moping, melancholy person, in a convent, would surely drive the sisterhood mad.

Yet ever, ever as she walked beneath the shade of the avenue of lime trees, leading from the grounds to the cloisters, came before her mind's eye the agonized dying face, she saw a few nights since, beneath the rocks of Innismore, ever in her ear rang—and will till the day of her own transit from time to eternity, as a death-rattle—the words,

'She knows not I

Am watching near, yet all alone to die.'

Yes, there are things in the memory of some amongst us, which we can never forget. If our friend Mary were to live for a hundred years, she will ever remember the horrors of that night.

CHAPTER XI.—A LETTER FROM ENGLAND.—THE FRAU FLOHRBERG MEETS WITH A RICH RELATIVE.

'An odd thing, this,' said General O'Donnell to his wife, 'here is a letter in a strange handwriting, bearing the London post mark, and directed to my care, to be forwarded to our friend Von Sulper, well; he added, 'there is a delay in its having been sent to Coblenz, in the first instance, so Herr Von Sulper shall have this letter at once; as soon as I have breakfasted I will take it to him.'

The letter was from Herbert Mainwaring, begging the Herr Von Sulper to be in London at the time of the trial, as he would form an im-

portant witness in the case in question, on the side of the accused, it being himself who had given Fraulein the money, wrongfully supposed to have been part of the cash received when the bracelet was pledged.

The morning then, was not very far advanced when General O'Donnell emerged from his house in Vienna to seek his friend, who was still lounging over a cup of chocolate, when he entered his room.

'A letter from London, my good friend,' said the General, placing it on the table as he spoke.

'From London!' replied Von Sulper, in much astonishment, 'and forwarded from Coblenz, I see,' he added, glancing at the superscription, 'for it is addressed to me there, to your care.—What can this mean? I have no London correspondent that I am aware of.'

He opened the letter, read on in extreme amazement, then laying it down, still but half read, he exclaimed—

'Good heavens! General, I am requested to return to England, immediately to give evidence in a criminal case, in which your poor little friend the Fraulein Flohrberg is concerned.'

'What is it you say?' said the General.—'What on earth can you have had to do with Maria? Why you never saw her till you met her on visit to my wife at Coblenz.'

'I met her since then, however, in much distress, in the streets of London,' replied the gentleman. 'But let me quietly, if I can, read the rest of my letter, and I will then tell you all I know of poor Fraulein's troubles.'

He did read the letter through, very carefully, pushed his cup of chocolate away, and ended by giving the letter to the General, and pacing up and down the room in a state of extreme agitation.

The General perused it, too, and agast with horror at finding of what a crime his poor protege was accused. When he had finished the perusal, Herr Von Sulper stood before him, and in a serio-comic tone and manner, exclaimed—

'See, General, what a pretty mess I have got myself into by my knight errantry in succoring distressed damsels; yet, go I must; even if I could refuse, what a wretch should I be, for, if they bring in a verdict of guilty against this poor young person, the sentence will be transportation for a long term of years.'

'I am much distressed at all you have told me,' replied the General, 'but how, or in what way, may I ask, did you become acquainted with Maria, so as to be involved in this sad affair?'

Herr Von Sulper then told his friend the circumstances under which he had met with Maria, and added, 'I was looking out for a cab to convey me to the steamer, when I met the Fraulein; before I parted from her I looked at my watch, and found it was a little more than half-past seven; I had gone some little distance, and remembered I had forgotten a small parcel; I hurried back to the hotel to get it and returned. What I then thought a strange similarity as to dress, now flashes across my mind, as a most remarkable coincidence; within a few paces of a pawnbroker's shop, stood a woman whose height and dress exactly corresponded with that of Maria Flohrberg; I went up and spoke to her, but, as she raised her veil, I discovered my mistake; and I could identify that face whenever I might come across it, or amidst a thousand others.'

'Poor Flohrbergs poor Flohrbergs,' sighed the General, 'how unfortunate they always are, this news will kill my poor friend should he hear of it; he is a worthy creature, and loves Maria as if she was his own child, which, in fact, she supposes herself to be, though I and all old friends know the reverse.'

'Not his child?' exclaimed Von Sulper.—'Why what could induce such a poor man to burden himself with the child of another person?'

'She is his wife's niece,' said the General; 'was left a mere infant between two and three years of age, to the care of a maiden sister, by her dying brother, his wife having, before her husband's illness, left his roof, and gone, no one knew whither; the real duties of a mother had been discharged, from the child's infancy, by its aunt; and so it came to pass that, when Flohrberg, the serving under my own command, married Fraulein Von Alstein, a native of Munich, they decided, as there was little to be said in favor of her parents, that the little Maria should be brought up to consider them as her own, and so—'

But here the General was interrupted, the countenance of his friend had assumed an ashy paleness; he staggered as a man might under the influence of liquor; and said,

'Repeat that name, my friend: Is it possible you said the lady's maiden name was Von Alstein? Tell me her Christian name.'

'Ida,' said the General, 'I have heard Flohr-