



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. X. MONTREAL, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1860. No. 27.

THE LAST IRISHMAN.

(Translated from the French of Elie Berthet, by C. M. O'Keefe, for the Boston Pilot.)

CHAPTER XX.

The events which we are now about to relate occurred shortly after those described in the last chapter.

Towards the end of a fine summer's day, two men, having the appearance of linen-hawkers from the county Antrim, stopped to rest themselves near a village in the county Wicklow, not far distant from one of the grand entrances of which is Powerscourt House; they were gazing with an air of profound interest at the scenes of the principal events in our preceding narrative.

Very few changes had taken place in the valley. The village was as poor as ever, and St. Patrick's Chapel seemed waiting in expectation of the next high wind to tumble down to the bottom of the slope, on which it was perched. To make amends for this, the landscape presented a laughing and delicious aspect in the direction of Powerscourt House. The tall trees of the park, covered with foliage, intermingled with flowering shrubs, filled the air with perfumes.

Through the iron bars of the gilded gates you might catch a glimpse of its elegantly kept walks—its verdant groves—its snow-white statues, and the classic vases which decorated its parterres. What was most remarkable was the new habitation which had succeeded the dwelling of the ancient lords.

Instead of the Italian villa, a Gothic castle raised its sculptured front—a masterpiece of imitative architecture; turrets, and towers, and chiselled windows, and grotesque carvings, rendering it a graceful miniature of the grim edifices built for warlike purposes by the stern barons of the middle ages.

Even the means of defence employed in former times were imitated in this castle; it was surrounded by a fosse, and protected by a drawbridge, and was thus secured from a sudden attack like that which proved fatal to the former edifice.

Notwithstanding these indications of secret suspicion, the new edifice was filled apparently with joy, festivity, noise, and pleasure. On the fine evening which we alluded to, the greatest animation enlivened the park and the castle; elegant vehicles and prancing amazons might be seen glancing through the alleys in every direction.

Handsome gondolas, laden with brilliant cavaliers and fashionably dressed ladies, glided over the artificial lake: the warm breeze wafted the sound of the harp, and the voices of some distant concert occasionally through the woods and over the waters.

the night? You were well acquainted with my master's predecessor who used to travel this road, Mr. Davidson of Belfast.

"You may say that. Faix, I knew him well, yer honor. Many a good tumbler of punch he emptied under my roof. Oh, it's well I knew him—many's the handsome ribbon he made me a present of. But where is he now, sir? It's many a long day since I seen honest Sam."

"He is dead, my good woman," replied the pedlar in a deliberate tone, "and my master, Mr. Frank Foster, from the county Antrim, whom you see beside me here, has succeeded him in his business. My name is James Kennedy, and I am principal foreman to Mr. Frank Foster; we intend to lodge with you now and then, as Sam Davidson used to do; and if you'll treat us well, you'll be nothing the worse of it, so far as a yard of ribbon or the making of a gown may go."

The eyes of the old hostess glittered with delight; but she seemed to feel some scruples of conscience. "Come in, come in, Mr. Kennedy," said she; "never fear, I'll thrate ye as well as I can; but there is so little travelling in these parts that the Public is not as good as it used to be, nor so well furnished as I could wish."

"Oh, if that's all that ails you, Mrs. Flanagan," said the pedlar, "you'll find it not very hard to please myself and my master."

"Good luck to yer honors. Come in, gentlemen! You can put yer packs in the inside room, where there is a good feather bed; and I'll have rashers an' eggs for yer supper."

They entered the house where they found several persons seated—a few men and elderly women, who got up hastily to make room for the new guests, while Kennedy continued as talkative as ever, and his master as silent as rich Ulstermen usually are.

"Well, Mrs. Flanagan," said Kennedy in a careless tone, "they say right good potteen is made in the glens of Wicklow in spite of the devil and the guager, at least Sam Davidson often said as much; and Sam was not a man to tell lies."

"Oh, Sam was right, an' he was wrong," said the widow; "time was, an' we used to make potteen; but that's years an' years ago, yer honor. Last year we got a new priest—a Capuchin friar called Father Mathew. He preaches night, noon, and morning that neither man nor mortal should touch brandy, wine, nor whiskey. The short and the long of it is that Father Mathew has nearly ruined poor widow Flanagan."

"The never a publican we meet," said Kennedy, "but hates Father Mathew. Nevertheless," he added, "glancing down the room, 'the parishioners can't be all tee-totalers. Them worthy old women who are setting there beyond must need a toothful of whiskey to fasten the life in them now and then. And surely a working man, like them honest fellows there below, want a drop of the native to keep out the cold afther their hard days work. There's no use in talking, people can't do without the stingo, let Father Mathew say what he likes, and if he was talking for ever."

A murmur of assent rose among the guests; they all cordially approved of the pedlar's philosophy. Jenny undertook to reply.

"Your honor is very right, Mr. Kennedy;—there was never any luck in the country since the tee-totalism came in vogue. But how can the likes of us drink the whiskey when we have not a penny piece to keep the devil out of our pocket."

Mr. Foster, the master pedlar, inclined his head to his assistant's ear, and uttered some words in an under tone. Kennedy nodded his head in token of approbation.

"Mrs. Flanagan, I'm sure your whiskey is good, for the longer it's kept the better it grows. Now, here is my master, who wants to pay his footing in this village, and desires me to order a glass a piece for every one present."

The company exhausted their eloquence in thanks and blessings. Mrs. Flanagan lost no time in complying with the commands of the generous Ulstermen, and every one present was quickly discussing the "mountain dew," the delicious beverage of which they had been long deprived.

Jenny was unusually eloquent in praising the generosity of the strangers. "I hope your honors will have luck in selling your goods; but there's great poverty in the village. Except Mr. Bruce, the parson, and the Rev. Mr. Quigley, the new parish priest, sorrow bit of me knows any one that's likely to buy a yard of your linen, or a silk handkerchief, or anything."

"Then the tenants, I suppose, are as poor as ever on Lord Powerscourt's estate," said Foster, speaking for the first time.

"Oh, you may say that," answered Jenny, desirous of paying for the whiskey she had consumed by supplying the information which Foster required. "The distress of the people is increasing every day. If they could go to Ame-

rica, not one of them would stay in Ireland."

"And what can be the cause of this frightful distress?" asked Foster.

"Well, sure there's the potato rot, sure, that of itself is enough to distress the poor, and then his lordship is twice as hard to the tenants since the last rebellion. Besides they have entirely changed in the manner of managing the land.—A poor man long ago could have a ridge of potatoes for con-acre—now they want let a poor man have a bit of land at all. He must live on his wages, and it is not every day he can get them. Then, there's no security for the farmers if they make any improvements, and they want employ the people in making improvements for fear his lordship should come down on them some fine day and confiscate all they have made."

"I never thought old lord Powerscourt was so bad," said Foster.

"Neither was he, but sure, your honor, the old lord is dead these two years. He died two months after his daughter's marriage."

The pedlar bounded from his seat.

"Lord Powerscourt dead, and his daughter married!" he exclaimed, in an altered voice, in evident astonishment.

"Oh, that's an old story, your honor. Lady Ellen married Sir George, her own cousin, who, after the old man's death, became Lord Powerscourt."

Foster fell back as if he were struck with epilepsy. His comrade touched his shoulder and compelled him to swallow a glass of whiskey.—During this conversation the people gradually left the tavern, prompted by that natural politeness which is so remarkable a trait in the Irish character. No one remained in the hall except the widow Flanagan and her two female friends, who, in the increasing darkness, had not noticed the singular distress of the pedlar.

CHAPTER XXI.

"People in our business," said Kennedy, with a careless air, "would fain know everybody—especially the rich, for they make the best customers. We must be always ferreting customers out. It is no ways surprising pedlars should inquire about rich young ladies."

"There's many a thing it's dangerous to speak about, Mr. Kennedy," said the old woman. "But between ourselves, the whole country was talking when Lady Ellen married Sir George. They say she can't bear the sight of him."

"Sure they say she was run away with before she was married," said Jenny's companion.

"You have a very bad tongue," said the widow Flanagan, who, while turning her griddle-bread, did not lose a word of the conversation.

"A lord's daughter may do what she likes. If Lady Ellen never married Sir George, who would inherit the title and estates of Powerscourt? Sir George would have to pay fifty thousand pounds sterling as a dowry with lady Ellen if he did not marry her, and they say he hadn't a penny, and the building of the new castle cost a power of money. The old lord could see no other means of keeping the estates in the family than the young people to marry one another. He succeeded at last, but his difficulty was great, but they lead a very pleasant life for all that."

"Oh, yes, but the people say they're never so happy as when they're far asunder; and when my lord is running horses at the English race-courses my lady is spending her time with a house full of company—young men and rich ladies, for ever laughing and dancing, and enjoying themselves with concerts, and balls, and boating, and hunting. Their heaven is in this world, I don't know what it will be hereafter.—My lady sets the example, and that's not the way she'd go on, sure, if she was very sorry for her husband's absence."

"There's no use in talking," said the other old woman, "but there never was a lord's castle yet but there was some queer story or other hanging about it. They say there's some handsome Frenchman up in the castle, and she's never out of his company. But why should I be sinning my soul talking about them?"

"Is not lady Ellen very good to the poor," asked Foster.

"She used to be kind to the tenants. Now that she has the estates in her own hands she ought to be better than ever."

"When she was young she was good," observed Jenny, "but now that she is married she's not what she was. Besides she has always such a lot of titled people and liveried servants about her there is no getting near her. She's the pleasant lady, God bless her; she never thinks of anything but laughing and singing, and amusing herself. She spends oceans of money in carriages and horses, and dresses, and Lord knows what, and has no money to spare for the poor. There was poor Dick Mahoney, the farmer that hanged himself, when he went to her and explained his distress, it's what she offered her half a crown. 'Your story will make me melancholy all day, Mahoney,' says she, 'I don't like to

hear stories of misery,' says she, and away she goes with the Frenchman to walk in the garden, and next day poor Mahoney hanged himself."

Foster clapped his hand on his forehead as if he had got a blow on his head. To hinder the women from observing his master's emotion, Kennedy exclaimed—

"We were thinking of going up to the castle with our packs; but from what you say I suppose it's no use."

"Oh, true for you, Mr. Kennedy, the never a use. The servants would only slam the doors in your face. Besides, my lady does not need your merchandize. She buys her dresses in Paris and London, and scorns to wear anything made in Ireland. Believe me, it's better for you to pass the castle by."

During a few seconds, silence prevailed in the cottage. Kennedy turned to his master as if he were consulting him with his looks.

"No, no," said Foster, making an effort, "after coming so far for the purpose of seeing her, I'll never consent to go back until I have realized my object."

"Ah, you ought to follow this woman's advice, your honor," said Kennedy in a tone of regret. "But since you insist upon it—do you mind, good woman, my master doesn't wish to lose his time in coming to this country. Sure if we sell nothing to the lady we might sell something to the lady's maid, or some other members of the household. Could not some of you find the means of introducing us into the castle? You must be acquainted with some influential servant or other. My master would willingly give the makings of a gown to any one who would introduce him into Powerscourt House."

The covetousness of the three old women was excited to the utmost degree by this promise.—Clothed as they were in second hand rags, a new dress had unspeakable attractions for them. Unfortunately this splendid object was quite unattainable to two of the number.

"Wirra sthrew," exclaimed Jenny, "it is not a poor hag like me that will get the fine dress. All the servants in the castle hate poor Jenny. The other day, when I was waiting near the gate to see the ladies and gentlemen coming out to beg a half penny for tobacco, Mr. Cleary, the old valet, who is now major domo, threatened me with his cane if he ever saw me again at the gate. He's the biggest villain on the face of the earth, the tame Cleary. He assisted the rebels in burning the house, and then persuaded my lord it's defending it he was all the time."

"And that rascal, Tyler, that's now the steward, is worse than Cleary," said Betty. "Every one knows how he acted to Count O'Byrne—he was cap in hand to him when he was leading the rebels, now he's the greatest loyalist in the whole country. When Tyler saw me the other day gathering a bit of brussa inside the gate he threatened to send me to jail if he ever caught me again upon the grounds."

"Come, come, if you can't get the gentleman into the castle you should not be bothering him with your ramash. Who knows but what I'll be able to do something for him myself. I know Mrs. Jones, the lady's maid. She's a good sort of body—without the least pride in the world.—I'll ask her if she can't give us some little help in this business."

"Oh! faix you'll surely get the gown," said Jenny, with jealousy in the tone of her voice, "you're always in luck."

"Yes, yes," said Betty, "Mrs. Flanagan always makes a poor mouth, but if any luck is stirring, she is sure to get her share of it."

"Come, come, neighbors," said Mrs. Flanagan, "let us have no bad words in the gentlemen's presence—decent gentlemen like them.—Their supper is ready and they'd like to eat it in peace. Good evening, neighbors. I have not got the new dress yet, and never will maybe, but I'm quite sure when I do get it I'll deserve it better nor you. I defy man or mortal to say 'ill you did it' against widdy Flanagan. Envy and detraction is what she was never guilty of—not all as one as other people."

So saying she conducted the two harpys with scant ceremony to the door. They stambled their way through the street growling at Mrs. Flanagan, who gave them a push. They gratified the malice of their cankered hearts when they found themselves alone, by indulging in calumny at the expense of the hostess.

The pedlars meantime at their supper in silence by the dim light of a "dip candle," which Mrs. Flanagan placed on their table. Kennedy did ample justice to Mrs. Flanagan's cookery, but Foster trifled with his knife and fork, he did not appreciate the culinary skill of his hostess.—When the meal was concluded they entered the neighboring chamber in which they intended to pass the night, and the widow, after supping on the remnants of their meal, retired likewise to her humble pallet.

The pedlars commenced an earnest conversation in an under-tone, which was kept up during

two or three hours. Then one of them left the house, and when he came back it was near day.

The object of the pedlar in leaving the house at such an unseasonable hour was very mysterious. It was whispered that a laboring man who had been up all night in search of a doctor to attend his wife, had seen a black shadow gliding from the church yard, and then loitering down, like himself, to the village. The poor man who gazed on this apparition, trembled in every limb and was anxious to fly for his life, but his weary feet refused to obey his mental purpose. In spite of his fatigue and hurry he followed the apparition noiselessly, and even managed to draw very near the phantom. It had the appearance of a human being—you would fancy it was a tall man, wrapped in a mantle and wearing a broad brimmed hat. From time to time it stop and uttered sobs and cries as if it were a banshee.—The phantom paused a long time before the principal entrance to Powerscourt demesne. From the spot it proceeded up the main street of the village until it reached the Priest's house.—There it knelt upon the threshold, and cried just like a banshee. Rising slowly, it moved to the Catholic chapel and finally vanished in the graveyard. The peasant returned to his cabin, firmly persuaded that he had seen the spectre of one of the old Irish kings permitted by Divine Providence to revisit the scenes of his sufferings and wars.

Let this be as it will—the day was rather advanced when the pedlars issued from their apartment. Kennedy was as cheerful as ever, but Foster seemed sadly fatigued—his eyes were red and his cheeks pale. They found Mrs. Hanigan in a very best dress—just returned to all appearance from a morning excursion.

"Good morning, gentlemen! Go and look for the dress you promised me. By dad I have been working for you this morning. Faix I had great luck. You're to see my lady!"

"How?" exclaimed Foster, "have you got permission for us to enter the castle?"

"Well, then, not exactly the castle, but sure it's just the same. I went this morning to visit Mrs. Jones. I told her that you had a bale of the finest soft goods ever human eyes beheld, and that you wanted to show them to my lady. At first Mrs. Jones said it was impossible—for that my lady had given express orders that no strangers should be admitted on any account, no matter who they were or where they came from. But I coaxed her and wheedled her and at last she consented. My dear Mrs. Flanagan, I am loathe to refuse you anything says she. My lady gave me orders last night to get ready the breakfast this morning in the pavilion of ruins. She is to take one friend with her—I suppose one of the ladies. I'll leave the wicket open, and your pedlars, Mrs. Flanagan, says Mrs. Jones, can come in. They can come to the pavilion and unroll their merchandize, for I really want a few trifles myself, and when my lady sees them unrolled, I have hopes she'll be tempted by the sight of them. You see, Mrs. Flanagan, says she, I'm running a great risk, says she, but you were very kind to me and to my mistress too, says she, when we were living in Parson Bruce's, says she, and so, says she, I'll let you in, come what may, says she. I thanked Mrs. Jones as you may well believe, and I'm quite out of breath running to tell you the news. But there's no time to be lost. Make up a nice bale of your best goods and I will guide you myself to the little wicket in the park."

"I know it well," said Foster, "it's a fatal place and calls up unpleasant recollections."

"You know it?" exclaimed Mrs. Flanagan, in surprise.

"Men like us must know everything," said Kennedy. "Pedlars could never get on if they did not know more than that. But come with me, Mrs. Flanagan, I'll give you a beautiful dress, and I'll give you a shawl along with it—to fasten the life in you during the cold weather."

"A shawl!" screamed the landlady transported with joy, "I'll be grand as a horse. I'll be the envy of the whole parish next Sunday at Mass. Ah, then, let us see it," &c. The old woman literary jumped with joy.

A few moments afterwards the two pedlars were moving towards Powerscourt House, while Mrs. Flanagan was running breathless to her neighbors delirious with pleasure to show them the present she had received. Kennedy carried the pack and Foster went before him wrapt in thought. They had found the wicket open as the landlady had stated and entered the park without difficulty.

They first took the handsome green alley which Richard O'Byrne penetrated one night at the beginning of our story when dogging his brother and sister. The season of the year was nearly the same, and everything seemed unaltered in this place of pleasure. The same romantic landscape smiled with the same aspect—the same walks opened through the same acacias, and the