



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XIII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JULY 3, 1863.

No. 47.

THE HERMIT OF THE ROCK.

A TALE OF CASHEL.

BY MRS. J. SADLER.

CHAPTER XVII.—SUNSET ON THE ROCK, AND PHIL MORAN'S STORY.

The first July sun was sinking behind the western rim of the mountains that gird the Golden Vale when the Effingham carriage was again in waiting at the foot of the Rock of Cashel...

Castle-Oliver Mountains, with the magnificent Galtees standing in front of them on the great champaign country nearer to the Rock of Cashel. Dim and far were some of these mountain ranges...

'What a scene for a painter's eye!' said he glancing over the splendid panorama. 'It is, indeed, my lord, a fair scene for painter or for poet,' Harriet replied...

'Then if, while scenes so grand, So beautiful, shine before thee, Pride for thine own dear land Should haply be stealing o'er thee, Oh! let grief come first, O'er pride itself victorious— Thinking how men hath curs'd What God has made so glorious!'

'Truly it is a fair land,' said the Earl thoughtfully, 'and a fertile land, too,—strange that misery should be the lot of multitudes of its people.'

'To you, Lord Effingham,' said Harriet, with an earnestness of look and tone that surprised her auditor, 'to you, I should think the causes, or rather the cause of this so strange anomaly, might be plainly manifest—but,' she blushed—smiled at her own thought—and said in a tone of assumed levity—'but here I am talking in a way that must give your lordship a poor opinion of my modesty—to say the least of it. But the truth is, my lord, that I am somewhat of an enthusiast in my love of this native land of mine, once so great, now so fallen—so rich in memories, so rare in beauty, so pitiable in misfortune.'

'I can understand your enthusiasm,' said Lord Effingham; 'perhaps were I, like you, of Irish birth and Irish breeding, I might feel somewhat as you do.'

Harriet was silent a moment, but, as though feeling the silence awkward, she hastily resumed in a somewhat subdued tone—

'There, in the vale below us, is Hore Abbey, once a famous Dominican establishment, and a dependency of the great Abbey of Cashel, the two houses being connected, it is said, by a subterranean passage; some miles beyond lies Holy Cross, perhaps one of the most beautiful ecclesiastical ruins in the Empire, built by Donogh O'Brien, the warlike King of Munster, for monks of the Cistercian order: beyond that again, away to the northward, on the confines of the Kings County, lies storied Toomavara, where, of old, the Knights Templars had a preceptory, the ruins of which are now barely visible—alas! the soil of Ireland is covered,

'From the centre all round to the sea,' with remains of ancient greatness, attesting her historic fame.'

Lord Effingham's answer, whatever it might have been, was prevented by the approach of Mr. Esmond and the elder ladies, obsequiously followed by Bryan.

'We were looking for you, Effingham,' said Lady Pemberton in her cold, listless tone.

'But Lord Effingham was not looking for us,' pointedly said the Honorable Mrs. Pakenham.

'Certainly not, Mrs. Thomazine Pakenham!' said the Earl very composedly. 'I was well entertained by Miss Markham's account of the antiquities scattered over the wide plain before us. And I was about to observe when you came up, what a pity it is that this fine country of Tipperary, with all its beauty and fertility, and the wealth of old renown, should yet rest under the black cloud of murder and assassination.'

'Very true, my lord, very true,' cordially assented Mr. Esmond.

'And poverty, my lord,' subjoined Moran, who had just come up with his party in time to hear the Earl's observation. 'Mr. Esmond can tell you that the greatest plague of Tipperary is—beggarmen—tall strapping fellows who patrol the country by night and by day with bag on back, and murderous designs in heart.'

'Pshaw, nonsense!' said Mr. Esmond. 'Don't mind Moran, my lord, he is always midway between jest and earnest.'

'Well, but you won't pretend to deny, will you? that you have been waging a sort of crusade against the men of the bag and staff ever since a memorable night when one of them—saved your life.'

'And another wanted to take it. Well, I don't deny it, Phil—I mean Mr. Moran—you know I never deny the truth. But with all my crusade, as you call it, and the active exertion of the entire magistracy of the county, we have never been able to catch that atrocious criminal, Jerry Pierce.'

'No, but you caught a brace of beggarmen, and committed them as vagrants—that was doing something pro bono publico!'

Lord Effingham, who had been listening attentively to this characteristic dialogue, now asked Mr. Esmond how it happened that the murderer of his nephew had so long eluded the pursuit of the law. As he spoke his eye fell on old Bryan who had thrust his face amongst the group with a look of intense anxiety on his shrivelled features, after satisfying himself that his niece was not within hearing, a fact which Lord Effingham had ascertained before putting the question.

'Oh, that's easily understood, my lord,' replied Uncle Harry, 'it's all owing to the d-d conspiracy—I beg your pardon, ladies—that exists amongst the peasantry. A conspiracy for purposes of assassination, and also for purposes of concealment. See how things went at the time of Mr. Chadwick's murder.'

'Yet there was found a man—one of themselves,' said Moran, 'to give honest testimony against the murderer at all risks to himself.'

'Humph! and see what came of it—hadn't Phil Mara be sent out of the country after the trial,—and you know yourself, Phil Moran, how it ended with his family.'

'Anopos to Philip Mara,' said Lord Effingham, 'Miss Markham some weeks since gave us an interesting account of that tragical affair, in which he played so prominent a part—but she intimated, if I remember right, that the tragedy did not end with the execution of the unhappy Grace.'

The three young ladies were at this time exploring with Mrs. Esmond amongst the ruins.—A shade fell on Moran's face as he replied, 'Alas, yes! my lord, that was but the second act in a bloody four-act tragedy,—the effects of which are still felt in the country like the last throes of an earthquake. The first act was the murder of Chadwick—the second the hanging of Grace.'

'And the others?'

'It would, perhaps, trespass too much on your lordship's patience were I to tell.'

'I should like to hear it,' said the Earl, 'if Mrs. Pakenham and you, Caroline, to his sister, have no objection.'

'Certainly I have none,' said Lady Pemberton with a sort of incipient attempt at animation, '—I should like, of all things, to hear an Irish story.'

'And when you have heard it, my lady, you'll never want to hear another Irish story—I can tell you that?' said Mr. Esmond, as he walked away to join the younger ladies.

'Is the gentleman angry?' said Lady Pemberton looking after him with a look of languid surprise.

'Not at all, madam,' said Moran very gravely, 'on the contrary, he is particularly amiable just now.' The court lady raised her eyebrows—perhaps shrugged her shoulders a very little *à la Française*, and seating herself on a prostrate pillar, prepared to listen to the 'Irish story' to which Mrs. Pakenham could not in politeness object, so she took a seat beside her cousin.

'The story is not long,' said Moran, 'otherwise I would not consent to inflict it on this company,' and he bowed slightly, 'under these circumstances. But to commence my story, where I infer from what your lordship said that Miss Markham ended hers, at the execution, namely, of young Grace: the feeling of execration wherewith Mara, the informer, as they called him, was regarded by the great majority of the country people, can be best understood by the fearful revenge planned and executed under the auspices of the same dangerous association which had authorised the death of the unfortunate Mr. Chadwick. Enraged that Philip Mara had been sent by the Government beyond seas, where their power could not reach him, they resolved that he should still suffer in his nearest and dearest, and swore a terrible revenge against his three brothers, who were all, like himself, masons by trade, and moreover, engaged as he had been in the erection of the fatal barracks at Rathconnon. Quietly and sternly did these dark conspirators proceed to the execution of their fell purpose. The Maras were all decent,

respectable men, and men, moreover, who being under the saving influence of religion, kept themselves carefully aloof from the demoralizing influence of the secret organisation, which like a mighty serpent had wound itself round and over the bone and sinew of the country, the stalwart laboring classes, crushing within them every higher and nobler instinct, and changing within its poisonous breath the best feelings of their nature into bitterness and gall. United they were amongst themselves, as all Christian families—ever are, and were always happiest when together; so it was that the three brothers, with a young apprentice of theirs, were returning from work one fine evening in the early autumn, little thinking of the doom that was impending over them, when, from a place of concealment where the gang had lain in wait since early morning, eight well-armed men darted on them. Quick as lightning the Maras fled, and from their perfect knowledge of the neighborhood two of them managed to escape the murderous attack, as did also the apprentice; the third brother, Daniel, frightened and bewildered, instead of trusting to his heels and his ingenuity, like his brothers, took refuge in the house of a widow close by, and the murderers forcing their way after him, killed him without remorse or pity, laughing to scorn his piteous entreaties. It may be that the delay occasioned by the murder of the unfortunate Daniel facilitated the escape of his two brothers, who succeeded in getting away from the country.'

'What an awful state of affairs,' said Lord Effingham, while the ladies held up their hands and averted their heads in horror. Still they wished to hear it out, especially Lady Pemberton.

'You may well believe,' resumed Moran, 'that the news of this barbarous murder, even less justifiable than that of Mr. Chadwick, became wholly unprovoked on the part of the victim—threw the whole country into a state of the wildest excitement; proclamations were issued, offering rewards—even a sum of two thousand pounds was offered for any information that might lead to the apprehension and conviction of the murderers; still no one came forward to claim the reward.'

'Why, that is precisely the case now with regard to the murder of Mr. Esmond?' said Lord Effingham with some sternness; 'you say no tangible evidence has as yet been obtained to throw light on that revolting crime, and, for aught we know, the murderer may be prowling round the neighborhood in wait for some other opportunity of popping a landlord. I see plainly that the people do connive with these wretched criminals, and make common cause with them; how could they otherwise elude the vigilance of the police, and baffle the power of the law?'

'In the case of Mara, my lord, the non-detection of the criminals for so long a time is easily accounted for, as the misguided people made it a point of honor to conceal those whom they looked upon as the champions of the peoples cause, and the ministers of popular justice; but as regards the murder of Mr. Esmond the case is widely different, and I know the perpetrator of that crime is as much abhorred by the peasantry as by any class in the community. The feeling against him is strong and universal, and I can no how account for the delay in his apprehension except it be that he has managed to leave the country. Now, however, that the Solicitor General has come down to investigate the affair, something may be done to bring the assassin to justice—if he be still within reach of his arm.'

The sun was just setting, and his last rays fell at the moment on the millioned window of the cathedral, where a man's face was distinctly visible to the Earl and Mr. Moran, shaded by the peak of a cap, still broadly marked with an expression of mingled cunning and drollery that would have delighted Hogarth. The vision was but momentary, and the exclamation that hovered on the lips of the two who alone saw it, were suppressed by a mutual glance of admonition. The Earl was surprised—the attorney more than surprised, but fearing the effect on the ladies, they made no remark, and Moran resumed his story, just as Mr. Esmond and the ladies made their appearance once more, attended by Bryan.

'There is no knowing,' said Moran, 'how long the murderers might have escaped, were it not that a young fellow named Fitzgerald, a well-known leader of 'the boys,' being taken up for highway robbery, in or to save his life forfeited to the law, turned State's evidence and gave such information relative to the murder of Daniel Mara—in which, it appeared, he had been a principal actor, that several persons were at once arrested, either as principals or accessories to that awful deed. The first brought to trial were two men named Walsh and Lacy, the latter a remarkable handsome and intelligent young man, well dressed and altogether respectable in appearance, with nothing in his aspect to

indicate the evil qualities that had led him to the commission of such a crime. The case, as stated for the Crown by the Solicitor-General, disclosed some facts that evidently startled the prisoners; it was shown that these men, with some others, had been brought from a distance, by the friends and relatives of Grace, to do the deed, and that it was to have been done a week earlier but for some cause which kept the unconscious Maras at home from their work that day, and thus compelled their assassins to await their opportunity some days longer. It appeared that on the following Sunday, the entire band of conspirators met at the house of a farmer named Jack Keogh in the immediate vicinity of the barracks, and were there hospitably entertained, a female relative of Keogh's, who was also his housekeeper, waiting on them at table. Early next day they all proceeded to a woody hill called 'The Grove,' which overlooked the new barracks, and where arms had been secreted ready for use. Whilst lying there waiting for the time when the doomed brothers would leave off work, refreshments were brought them by the same woman who had waited on them the previous day at Jack Keogh's. Now amongst the party secreted there with such murderous intent were the two sons of Keogh, both of them fine young men in the bloom of life, the prop and stay of their old father, and the pride of his heart. One of them in particular, John, the elder of the two, was a man of powerful frame and unusually tall stature, with a placid, goodnatured look, and comely, well-formed features. Though not so neat or trim as his brother, who was of much smaller proportions, John Keogh was a man to be singled out in a fair or market as a fine specimen

'Of that bold peasantry—a nation's pride, Which, once destroy'd, can never be supplied'

Well! these two brothers had been arrested, with many others, for the murder of Daniel Mara, and the main point now was to procure sufficient evidence to convict them all. It is true Fitzgerald swore quite enough to hang them, and another of the band, named Ryan, had also turned King's evidence, but both being informers, or, as the people call them, 'stags,' there was still a hope cherished by the prisoners and their friends that some other evidence than theirs would be required where so many lives were at stake. It was, therefore, with a sort of dogged indifference that the prisoners in the dock, Walsh and Lacy, appeared to listen to the elaborate statement of the learned counsel for the Crown, and his recapitulation of the evidence which the two 'informers' were to give. All at once, however, Mr. Doherty paused an instant, and then turning towards the dock, held up his hand, and men used a name—the name of another witness—it was that of the housekeeper and relative of Jack Keogh who had brought food and drink to the murderers whilst they lay in wait for their victims, and who had heard all their plans on the previous day at Keogh's house. The mention of her name had a terrible effect on the prisoners, and indeed on all the country people present; her position in the Keogh family being well known, her intimate acquaintance with all the circumstances preceding and succeeding the murder made her a most formidable witness; whilst the thought of her going against 'her people'—for, of course, the evidence that criminated Walsh and Lacy involved the conviction of the young Keoghs and many others—'curses, not loud, but deep,' were heard on every side, mingled with expressions of pity for the prisoners. It was here 'oh! vo! vo! they're done for now, anyhow?' there it was 'Well, well, after that who'll trust any one?' 'Their own flesh and blood! oh werra! werra!' Still it was hoped, and all but believed, that Kate Costelloe would not do so foul a deed, and this hope buoyed up the prisoners and their numerous friends amongst the audience, even whilst the two informers, and other witnesses of minor details, gave their sworn testimony. At last came the moment when Kate Costelloe was called, and instantly a dead silence fell on the court—the bench—the bar—the dock—the hall—all remained in speechless, breathless suspense, for all alike felt that in all probability the issue of the trial—the fate not only of the prisoners in the dock, but of all who were yet to be placed in it, including, of course, the two Keoghs—all depended on the evidence of the woman. As the moments passed slowly away, and the death-like hush continued unbroken, and no Kate Costelloe appeared, the hopes of the prisoners and their friends rose higher and higher; all eyes were eagerly turned on the door by which the witnesses were introduced, and the intensity of suspense was becoming painful even to those least concerned in the issue—when, all at once, the fatal door opened, and a small female figure, closely veiled was seen to enter, carried, as it were, by two persons who supported her on either side—she was evidently unable to support herself. A groan of fierce execration burst from the crowd in the body of the court-house—the glow of hope died away on the