THE MARTYR MAIDENS OF OSTEND.

A LEGEND OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

CHAPTER IV .- THE RECLUSE.

Notwithstanding the restless and disturbed night which was the natural consequence of the distressing visit we have just been describing, both Winifride and her faithful Hilliard were quite ready the next morning, when the little attendant assigned them by the Pere de Camba made his appearance at the Golden Fleece; and under his experienced guidance they had soon left the gates of the city far behind them, and were walking along the line sea-promenade called the Levee, which chanced to lead directly towards the hermit's dwelling.

This in appearance was nothing better than a hut; but a little garden had been neatly laid out in front, while in the rear it was sheltered by some low stunted bushes; and among them, it is almost needless to observe, Douglas had securely concealed himself long before the moment when Winifride and her companion tapped at the door of the cabin, and the former was received into the arms of her delighted father. The arch traitor had very eleverly taken up his position just under the open window of the only room of which the house could boast; and there, from behind his leafy screen, he could not only see his cousin folded in her father's arms, and shedding tears of joy upon his bosom, but also distinctly hear the exclamations of affection and delight which each in turn was addressing to the other. The envy and despair that tortured his soul might haply resemble that which filled the serpent as he gazed upon the joys of paradise; but, like the serpent, Douglas also was plotting his revenge; and therefore he repressed the heavings of his angry bosom, and put back the curse upspringing to his lip, and prepared quietly to listen, and carefully to gather up such materials from the conversation as might enable him, since he could not hope to make her falter in her duty, to work at least her temporal destruction.

Elliot was the first to speak. "My child, my child," he murmured, as he looked fondly on the far face of his daughter, after having cast aside with his own hands the mantilla, which, being the ordinary dress of the maidens of Ostend, she had substituted, in obedience to a hint from the Pere de Camba, for her more English-looking head-gear, " for how many months, for how many years, have I not thirsted for this moment! And yet now I find you only, as it seems to me, to lose you!" he added, laying his hand on her head with a gesture of inexpressible fondness and re-

"Nay, my father, speak not thus! We cannot be said to lose that which is freely given to our God; and again, has it not been said by Him, that He will repay an hundredfold whatever we sacrifice for Him?"

"He hath said so, in good sooth," replied her father, with a sigh; "and since He Himself has said it, we must, even as becomes us, try to feel as well as to believe it. Nor think, my own beloved child, that I am the less than grateful for that religious calling which doubtless rendered you from the first indifferent to the wooings of your cousin Douglas, who has since proved himself unworthy both of the noble house from whence he is descended and of you."

"My father," cried Winifride, shrinking, as if his words had recalled an evil vision to her mind," he whom you have named is at this moment in Ostend, and he visited me last night."

"Ha! I trust he rendered you that due courtesy which, as a modest maiden, you had a right to look for at his hands, and that surely none the less so as the daughter of his mother's sister."

Wmifride paused a moment to reflect. She felt it would be but adding uselessly to her father's sorrows, if he were made acquainted with the insolent conduct of her cousin, and so she only answered, "He renewed somewhat of the old talk of marriage; but I forbade him both that theme and my presence, and so we hope to be molested by him no more."

Could Winifride have seen the face, or looked into the secret soul of George Douglas, as he rouched that moment beneath the open window, drinking in her every word, as food alike for haever confirmed in her own strong conviction (which, however, she did not impart to her father) that his pursuit of her would never cease

until it had left her in her grave.

tend, when there is so much to do, and which he has promised should be done, elsewhere."

ATHOLIC

"His language to us was very unlike that of a friend to the king," answered Winifride. "Is it not dangerous, think you, to trust him?"

"Trust him I cannot say I do; and yet, I think, were he a traitor, he would hardly have revealed his baseness to you. Perchance he left you wittingly in ignorance of his change."

Winifride made no reply. She deemed her cousin's words but an angry threat; and thus, although she entirely distrusted his integrity, she did not wish needlessly, perhaps, to alarm her father. Elliot, finding she continued silent, of mit himself, and revealing his anxiety as to the his own accord changed the subject to a less intentions of the intruder. No sooner, accordanxious theme.

share your cloister. Impetuous and ardent as the spot, they found, as the result of this intershe is by nature, it must indeed have been a sa- view, not only that the exile had himself thought she is by nature, it must indeed have been a sacrifice to make !"

"And for that very reason she will make it bravely," cried Winifride, with a beautiful en-thusiasm for her sister-cousin. "Until the very last moment no one would believe it. Friends saw her faults, but not her virtues; they knew that her feelings were ardent and passionate, and to his cousin, he caught her by the arm in such her nature somewhat losty; but they could not a way as to make it impossible for her to free see that out of these very dispositions grew that herself without attracting observation; and "Winothing when given to its God!"

made," replied Elliot smiling. "And Hilliard is ["Winifride! you were very brave last night; with you all?"

"My faithful Hilliard! yes, the pain of that parting has been spared me; and as we have grown together from the cradle, and from the cradle have ever thought, and felt, and prayed together (though, in sooth, her fervent piety did will you bid me depart or not?" use to put my negligence to shame) so now the same convent will receive us both, and in our death we shall not be divided. But there are yet two other damsels of our party: Anne Scandret, the young daughter of that Scandret, a preacher of the Anglican sect, who, you may remember, was some time since received into the Church, and another girl, the child of one Thos. Jeffs, a good man and a Catholic, as well as an carnest upholder of the exiled king. Master Scandret was anxious that his daughter should holy faith; and he and the man Jeffs so earnestly draw the attention of government upon us."

ever done, my Wimfride," replied her father it may make or mar my fortunes. Now you fondly. "And what of thy great-uncle, the know all; and you will understand that I am in good Master Bishop !"

"He is well, my father, though much oppressever seem to take, however well and prosperously they may have shown in the commencement .-But, I think me, I have a packet for you which will tell you more at large of his proceedings than our brief interview will permit my doing.

"The good old man!" said Elliot, with a sigh, as he laid the packet on the table, "it all the more so, for that I myself have still good fat ? hopes that the cause for which we struggle will inmost heart, I fear me I must dismiss thee; for the sun is climbing high in the heavens, and it the good Hilliard? I would exchange a word of

greeting with her ere you depart." Elliot rose, and drawing his daughter's arm tenderly within his own, proceeded to the door, where Hilliard was awaiting them. Douglas seized the opportunity to get a better view of the apartment than he had hitherto been able to obtain. The packet brought by Winisride was lying on the table near the window, within his very reach. No scruple restrained him; his hand was eagerly put forth to seize it, and the next moment the letter was hidden in his bosom, tred and for love, she would have felt more than ever confirmed in her own strong conviction before Elliot had given his last embrace and

blessing to his daughter. CHAPTER V .- THE STOLEN PACKET.

Winifride and her companion were so absorb-"No more indeed," said Elliot anxiously, tak- | cd in their own reflections as they returned toing up her last words; "we must hope, dear wards the town, that they saw nothing of Dougchild, that he will not again force himself upon las; although as soon as he thought himself safe you. And yet his very presence in these parts from discovery, he had partially retraced his footfills me with apprehension. Perchance you are steps in order to follow upon theirs. Happily traitor alike to God and to your kindred; but was her wont: not aware that he has been released from prison their little guide was not so observant; he had me you shall never compel to the baseness you on a secret understanding with the Court of St. employed himself during Winifride's long inter- propose. So help me God and our Blessed Germains, and for the express purpose of promot- view with her father in making sundry observa- Lady!" ing our interests among the Jacobites of Eng- tions in the hut and garden of the latter, and the

peared, had already begun sorely to repent of his mprudence in making the suspicious-looking Englishman acquainted with his countryman's retreat; and now, nothing doubting that some mischief was intended, he felt greatly puzzled how to act in order to prevent it. The fair foreigner, who had won his heart by the gentle kindness of her voice and manner, would, he felt instinctively, be powerless in the matter; Pere de Camba, to say the truth, he feared to acquaint with his own act of folly; so at length he came to the resolution (the wisest under the circumstances that he could have adopted) of returning at once to the heringly, had he reconducted his charge to the gates "But you say us, my Winifride, and therefore of Ostend, than he once more turned his steps towards Elliot's dwelling; and when, some hours cheated the world by persisting in her resolve to afterwards, the Burgomaster sent his officials to fit to disappear, but that he had likewise either taken with him, or destroyed, all that the hut contained which could have thrown light on his identity or occupations.

After the departure of her young guide, Douglas hesitated no longer; but striding at once up intenser spirit of devotion which counts all as nifride!" he said, in that deep low voice which Elizabeth had been wont to say was always the "It is the very stuff of which saints are often token of his worst and most relentless moodsnow let us see if you can stand the test: your life, and-what I believe is infinitely more precious in your eyes—the lives of those who are nearest and dearest to you-your uncle, yes, and your father too, are in my power. Now say,

"You have played the listener, Master Douglas," replied his cousin, with far less of surprise than of grave contempt in her manner; "the man capable of such an action can be trusted neither as friend nor foe: and therefore to accept of any terms from him, would be but to lose in dignity without gaining aught in real security or repose."

"Winifride, hear me," Douglas continued with frightful earnestness, which made his fiend-like threats sound still more terrible, "those were no reside for a short space in a religious house, to vain words I uttered last night, as perchance you be more deeply grounded in the mysteries of our may have deemed them. I told you then-and now you must perforce believe it—that no idle besought me to take charge of these poor chil- consideration of honor or of conscience has power dren, that without manifest discourtesy and un- to turn me from my purpose, no matter whither charitableness I could not say them nay. Al- it may lead me, or what misery it may bring beit, I will own I was somewhat unwilling at the down on others; with you at least I will be canfirst, seeing that the travelling with so large a did; nor will I insult your understanding by any party tended to embarrass my movements and to affectation of the sanctity which your smoothfaced hypocrites assume; rebel or royalist-"Thou hast done well and kindly, as thou hast saint or sinner-either or all am I, just as I think earnest when I say, that if you will love me and will wed me, I will save your kinsmen, and will ed by the ill turn which his majesty's affairs do join their party; but if you will not, why then you may live to sing their requiem, or you may perish with them; but in either case I shall have been revenged."

"Love!" repeated Winifride bitterly; "love in the face of such deeds and sentiments as these. And after all, who are you, that you talk so loudly? or what authority do you possess, that the grieves me that he should be so despondent; and safety of a whole race is to depend upon your

"I am but George Douglas, to be sure," refinally prove triumphant. And now, child of my plied the traitor with a sneer; "but then, am I not also an accredited agent from the Court of St. Germains? and as such, would not your fawill not do to let it get abroad that the old her- ther and your uncle be in my power, even if I mit entertains ladies in his cell. But where is had not possession of such a document as this?" and he held significantly before her eyes the very packet which but an hour before she had confided to her father.

"You could not, you would not be so base!" probable consequences of such treachery. "I will say nothing to you of my father; but you could not act so foul a part by Master Bishopthe good, the kind old man-he whose house was so often the house of your boyhood, and whose heart was ever open to you as if you had been also fear me that you could not choose but hate sisted, and added, "Douglas, farewell! and farehis own."

"I could, and I would," replied her cousin with his most determined manner. "I could, I would, and what's more, I will, and that too on the instant, unless by a written document you promise to renounce the mummery of a religious state, and to return forthwith to England as my wife."

"That will I never do," cried Wimfride vehemently. "You may, if you please, prove a

"Amen!" responded the improus mocker; king, that he should be lingering on here in Os- sconced among the bushes. The boy, as it ap- this enlightened age, that your oath is somewhat then, tearing it up in a rage so concentrated as purpose equal to his own.

it must perforce be broken on the other. For instance; adherence to your God, by which I | tend. believe you would poetically express your mad folly in making a monkish woman of yourself, will inevitably involve you in the much depre-cated fact of high treason to your kindred, since I swear to you—and my oath, to say the least of it, may be counted as irrevocable as your own -I swear, that if you relent not, the vessel that sails this night shall bear such intelligence to England as will suffice to send your uncle, with every mother's son who calls him cousin, to the block, ere another month has passed over their

HRONICLE.

There was a pause, for Winifride was too much agitated to trust her voice; and Douglas, mistaking her silence for hesitation, thus proceeded: "We are close to your abode, and I give you half an hour to deliberate with your friends. Possibly Elizabeth Bishop may not be so heroically inclined as knowingly to condemn her aged grandsire to destruction. At all events, it will be but courteous to offer her the option; so in half an hour I shall be here for your decision. Meanwhile, I think I need not warn you that any attempt to escape will but precipitate the ruin of your friends."

"You need fear nothing on that head," replied Winisride haughtily, "since all too keenly do I feel already that each of those lives so cruelly imperilled by your treachery is worth more than a thousand and a thousand of mine own."

They had reached the archway of the Golden Fleece as she finished speaking. Douglas bowed her in with as much formality as if his had been merely an escort of politeness; and then, setting his back doggedly against the wall, he prepared to await her decision with an outward semblance of tranquility which was terribly contradicted by the wild workings of the heart within.

CHAPTER VI .- THE DECISION.

"Good heaven, Winifride! what is the matter? and what has happened?" cried Elizabeth Bishop and both her young companions, as Winifride, pale as death, and Hilliard, scarce less ghastly, stood before them.

"Oh, Elizabeth! I have undone you!" cried the unhappy girl, sinking into a chair, and covering her face with her hands.

any show of justice be censured or reproached."

the perplexed Elizabeth. "The packet! the packet!" murmured Wini-

obtained it ?" "You surely do not mean to say that Douglas has found means to possess lumself of that packet

"Unhappily it is even so," she answered .-is in possession of that very packet."

"Nay, but it is impossible," ejaculated Elizabeth, now white as ashes in her turn; " you must be mistaken, Winifride. How should you know it from any other paper?"

"By the acorn which you yourself did paint in frolic on the cover, Bessy."

"Then God have mercy on his soul!" cried Elizabeth, utterly aghast at this intelligence. -. "God have mercy on his soul; for the old man is lost!"

"Not for certain," whispered Wimfride; " he will restore the papers, so that I consent to be

Elizabeth rose from her chair, struggling with emotions that all but choked her; and then catching Winifride by both her hands, exclaimed-"Now, Winifride, I swear to you that, if even for the sake of that dear old man, or for the bold bad man, Elizabeth Bishop will be your friend no longer."

"Noble Elizabeth!" cried Winifride, folding her friend in her fast embrace; " such well I knew would be your answer. And yet, and yet I did one who was the cause, albeit unwilling, of your grandfather's ruin."

"There, indeed, you did me wrong," said Elizabeth affectionately. "But where is this traitor Scotsman? Shall we not give him his answer on the instant?"

"I will write it," said Winifride; " thus shall we spare ourselves his hateful presence;" and drawing a sheet of paper towards her, she wrote, in a hand if possible bolder and firmer than ever

"Work your wicked will upon us; for I never can and never will be yours.

"Winifride." Hilliard took the paper and carried it to Doug-

rash; for say you keep it on the one side, then almost to resemble calmness, took his way towords the residence of the burgomaster of O-

CHAPTER VII.-THE CATASTROPHE.

Months of uncertainty passed away, during which the young Englishwomen were placed under the surveillance of the chief magistrate of the town, who, although reluctant to undertake the ungracious office, had not ventured to refuse, after George Douglas had represented to him that his cousins were suspected in England of being engaged in aiding and abetting some of the numerous plots for the restoration of the elder line of Stuart which were every where rife at that period. Through the kindness of the Pere de Camba, Winifride had in the course of this time the happiness of hearing of the safe arrival of her father at the Court of St. Germains, whither he had repaired after flying from Ostend; but concerning the fate of her English relations both she and her consin were compelled to remain in a most cruel state of uncertainty, George Douglas and his agents so closely watching their proceedings, that every attempt at communication with their own country was effectually prevented.

In the midst of all this trouble and perplexity, the poor girls found their only support in the consolations of religion. Few hours of the day there were in which one or other of them might not have been seen kneeling in the church; and there, as in all other places, their devout and modest demeanor secured them the respect and sympathy of the inhabitants of Ostend. Their history (which had got abroad) their vocation to religion, and their fidelity to their holy calling. had well-nigh invested these young girls with the character of martyrs; while the treachery of George Douglas was regarded with proportionate detestation and horror.

It was not until the close of a most stormy autumn that their doom was finally decided, by the arrival of a queen's messenger with orders to compel them to return immediately to England. A note from George Douglas first acquainted them with this fact, as well as with the arrest of Master Bishop, and many of his family, on a charge of treasonable correspondence with the Court of St. Germans; and he took care to couple this information with a bint, that any at-"Nay, not quite so bad as that neither," in-terposed the kind voice of Hilliard; "it was but portion of the sentence would only increase the an unlucky accident, for which no one can with | danger to which their friends were already exnosed. His victims, however, needed not this "But what is it? what has happened?" asked suggestion; for, in fact, they had no idea either of evasion or of resistance. The night before their intended departure was spent by Hillard fride. "My God! how or when could be have in the church, kneeling, as was oft her wont. for hours before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament. Her young companions joined her at sun-rise :-and after they had assisted at the Divine Sacriwhich my grandfather intrusted to the care of fice, and received Holy Communion from the Wimfride?" cried Elizabeth, addressing Hilliard. hands of their faithful friend, the Pere de Camfice, and received Holy Communion from the ba, they proceeded at once to the place of em-By foul means or by fair ones, Master Douglas | barkation, accompanied by that good old man. as well as by vast numbers of the townspeople, who, although personally unknown to the maidens, had yet warmly felt, and openly resented, the unmanly persecution they had undergone at the hands of their countryman and kinsman.

The wind was howling portentously, and the aspect of the heavens threatened a speedy repetition of the terrible storms which had already (more than once this season) had strewn the shore with the tokens of shipwreck and of death. But the lives of those who were dearest to them were dependent on their prompt return, and it never even occurred to them to delay it for any chance of danger to themselves.

George Douglas was on the spot to witness their departure; but whether from some late feeling of compunction, or from an eager desire to see his plotting crowned with success, perhaps he himself could scarcely have defined. Probasake of any human being whatsoever, you are bly, however, the former and the better motive capable of faltering in your noble purpose, or of was that which influenced him; for as Winifride the poor girl gasped, struck to the heart by the giving one syllable of encouragement to that was passing, he put forth his hand, exclaiming-" Winifride, can you forgive me?"

"I can and do," she answered gravely and kindly, but without appearing to see his outstretched hand; and having thus tacitly refused his proffered aid, she stopped into the boat unaswell for ever !"

Not so Elizabeth Bishop, who was following close upon her footsteps; for she paused with one foot already on the edge of the boat, and held out her hand to Douglas, saying, as he took it, "Douglas, I have never loved you, and you know it well. But now we may never meet again; and therefore I pray you pardon me whatever of idle or unkind I have ever spoken against you, as I do pardon from mine inmost soul the evil dealing which has brought us hither."

"And wherefore should we never meet again?" demanded Douglas in a husky voice, more moved than he chose to own by this unlooked-for mood of softness in this high-spirited girl, who had alland; therefore it bodes no good to us, or to the result was the discovery of Master Douglas en- and yet it seems to me, fair would-be martyr of las. He gave one glance at its contents; and ways hitherto opposed him with a tenacity of