



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 1862.

No. 31

THE PROPHET OF THE RUINED ABBEY.

By the Author of "The Cross and Shanrock."

CHAPTER III.

Terry O'Mara returned to his house, and the captain now approached Fairy-hill Cottage, the residence of his ancestors from time immemorial, and now that of his brother the representative of his family.

On the west it was bordered by the demesne of Lord Barterborough, and on the north by the woodland of the same Saxon lord. The elevated position of the house enabled the inmates to spy the approach of any visitor, at a distance of at least half a mile from the cottage, and it was with no small anxiety, that the horseman, and in full gallop, was observed by one of the domestics making for the cottage.

Miss Mary, I'd know what gentleman on horseback is that racin' up the meadow? He looks like an officer of dragoons, said Peggy Melehan, the kitchenmaid, rushing into the parlor where the former sat reading.

Where, Peggy, where? Oh, I see. My dear, who can it be? A gentleman with mustachios, too, but very like my Uncle Charles. It is he! Run and call the master!

Ere the slow Peggy was half way to the stable where Thomas O'Donnell was giving some instructions to his man Ned Moran, previously to his paying his last visit, as he expected, in company with his wife and children, to the cell of his reverend brother, the captain had cleared the lawn quick-fence, and in a moment was by the side of Miss Mary, with both her hands pressed between his own. Tears choked the fair creature's utterance as she attempted to give her relative an account of what they were now preparing for—to pay the last visit to her reverend uncle.

Hush, my dear child, said the captain of the Chasseurs de Vincennes, endeavoring to curb his own rebellious emotions, is this all you can do for your uncle? Have you no plan, or can you devise no means of procuring poor Father Senan's escape?

Escape! she exclaimed with surprise, how can he escape, and his prison guarded by at least two thousand troops? What plan can I devise, if they would not rest satisfied to take me as a hostage or substitute for him; and I would, God is my witness, willingly suffer death to save the life of a good priest?

Hostage, indeed! Yes, by my sword, if the king saw you, Miss Mary, he might take you as a hostage; but we must try some other and less expensive way of wresting his victim from the tyrant. We can't afford to risk the fair Miss Mary, on such a game of hazard, said he, looking at her with pride and complacency. But has it come to this, he continued, that the O'Donnells have no friends now left? Where are the Gows and the Poleens, the Caravats and Shanavests, the Defenders and the Rocks, and the other factions that so frequently professed friendship for our family?

Where are they, did you ask? said the afflicted girl, recovering from her overwhelming tears. I really do not know, for father never allowed me to learn anything of such factions, and I am sure the priest himself would rather die than owe his rescue to such people as you spoke of. He was ever consistently opposed to factions, and all illegal combinations against the Government.

Aye, and so by the way of thanks the Government, for his pains on behalf of their system, will make a martyr of him, and thus secure his salvation! Are not they kind? Where is your father, Mary? Run, call him. At what hour did you say he was to have the interview with the priest?

At six o'clock precisely, as the pass he has procured from the commanding officer, Colonel Clive, specifies, and none can be admitted but father and mother, with me and little Charley and Hugh.

Six o'clock! and it is now near four, said he, looking at his timepiece. Haste, Mary, haste, you fairy, and call your father.

Thomas entered as he spoke, and the brothers on meeting grasped each other's hands like men, giving expression rather by looks than words to the poignant grief which rent their warty bosoms.

Al, Charles, said the senior brother, what brought you here at such a time? Or, are you not satisfied that poor Senan should be sacrificed without exposing your own life by coming back to such a wretched country? Are you not aware that your being in the French service contributed in no small degree to bring about this murderous result?

Yes, Tom, I could conjecture if I had not

heard as much; but on that very account, was I not bound to do something to save him whom the fact of his having a brother abroad, exposed to the hemp of cursed England? If I am the occasion of his unjust conviction, am I not bound to try and save him from the consequences of that iniquitous sentence?

That would be very noble and very generous, if there was any chance or probability of your succeeding. The proposal has been submitted to me by that brave fellow O'Mara, and others;—but seeing no probable chances of success, I declined the proffered aid.

Why, man, let us make a probability. Let us set about creating chances of success, and we will, we cannot but succeed. Are you not preparing to visit Senan this evening?

Yes, in about two hours or less.

Well, then, leave me to make that visit in your stead, and see if I cannot release the victim from his blood-hounds.

Al, my dear Charles, you can have no idea of the vigilance of—

Nonsense, Tom. For God's sake let me alone; I can't put up with these lamentations.—I am captain of a regiment of Chasseurs de Vincennes, and I must be obeyed. Come, Miss Mary, have you all things ready as I instructed you?

Yes, sir, I await your commands like an obedient aid-de-camp.

The officer now returned from a bedroom off the parlor, with the whiskers of his brother carefully deposited in a sheet of paper, which he laid on the work-table of Mary and her younger sister Bridget, who, under the instructions of the captain, commenced stitching the beard to two flesh-colored pieces of satin cloth.

Within an hour Miss Mary and her nimble-fingered assistant, Bridget, had succeeded in stitching the grave whiskers of their father on the pieces of satin cut out for them by the captain, who, in a few moments after, had succeeded by aid of the starch of Peggy in adjusting them to his own cheeks. His foreign lip-beard or mustachios had next to be disposed of, after falling beneath the edge of the merciless razor, and the foreign dress of the elegant French gentleman had to be exchanged for the native frieze, blue broadcloth, and cashmere shorts of the Irish farmer.

Thus equipped, the captain, accompanied by his brother's wife, the Miss O'Donnell, and two of the younger children, at about half-past five o'clock set out, in the family vehicle or side-car, to pay the last visit of condolence to their relative in his prison cell, at the town of Cloughmore.

The party were met at the prison gate by the chief jailer, an Englishman named Bremner, who, during the confinement of the clergyman, was sent over to supersede an Irishman who held the post from time immemorial, but whose fidelity in the present instance was suspected on account of some little courtesies of his to the prisoner.—Their names were called for, and their passports seized by this important official, and upon his finding them 'all right,' the party were ushered by an under functionary into the cell of the doomed priest. They found the venerable martyr on his knees before the crucifix by the side of his iron bedstead, with his mind so absorbed in prayer as to seem to his visitors to be in a perfect trance. Accustomed to the abrupt visits of officials, and annoyed by those who came to offer humiliating terms of pardon, the pious confessor paid no attention to the entrance of his relatives, and his fervent acts of piety were not in the least distracted till the loud sobs and cries of the female portion of the visitors recalled his senses from their ecstatic communings with the world of spirits. It was some time before he could recognize his brother Charles, disguised as he was, and it was not without a good deal of argument that he was prevailed on to embrace the chance which was offered him of making his escape.

I hope I am now prepared for death, he said, and if it be the will of God that I should come to this end, I am satisfied. I am guilty of no crime; I have not even violated the letter of an iniquitous law, for the parties I married were both Catholics. Let me, Charles, let me die.

But, my dear sir, you are a priest of God as well as an innocent man, and it would be sacrilege to allow your murderers to shed your consecrated blood. Besides, it would discourage the poor people more than any thing that has happened for three hundred years. It would actually throw them into utter despair, and give a triumph to their enemies, the effect of which would be felt for many a long day to come.

No, Charles, I cannot forfeit the crown which I am persuaded will be mine in suffering for the faith, and forming one in that succession of glorious martyrs which has adorned the Church of St. Patrick for the last three hundred years.—Besides, how could I, in conscience, agree to have you, a brother, sacrificed to preserve the few remaining years of my useless life? No, it cannot be—it must not be, Charles.

But, my dear brother, you mistake; I will not be sacrificed. A hair of my head won't suffer while I hold the rank I do in the service of the French monarch. They dare not execute me. Exchange clothes with me, and embrace the chance which Providence has put in your power. Listen to reason, my dear brother.

For God's sake! Charles, do not rob me of the crown that is within my reach. I shall ascend the gallows' steps with the joy of a bridegroom. I am in peace with the world and with my Lord, I hope; and the people will be edified rather than scandalized at my sufferings.

Oh, brother of my soul, why will you not yield to reason and humanity? What a catastrophe you will bring about by this obstinacy.—Know then, if I must tell you, that the peasantry have armed to the number of several hundred men, sworn to rescue you or die in the attempt. Oh, what havoc you will have to witness at the hour of your death!

What, Charles, what do you say? Surely you deceive me?

No, sir, no. I declare to you on my word, and solemn oath, if you ask me, that if you do not now embrace my proposition, not only yourself, I, and our brother Thomas, but most of your people, will be cut down by the cruel soldiery of this town.

The female portion of this party, who, during this conversation, carried on in a low tone of voice and in French, kept up a loud crying and sobbing in order to prevent the guard at the door from hearing, now joined theirs with the entreaties of the brother, begging of the priest, for God's sake, and as he regarded their feelings, to consent to escape from the hands of his executioners.

These things staggered his resolution, but especially when he heard that there was to be a rescue. As he lived for the salvation of his people, next to the glory of God, and as, like St. Paul, he wished to become anathema, if necessary, for the flock committed to him by his Lord, so his desire even of the crown of martyrdom yielded to his desire to save the flock of Christ. He consulted his Redeemer again a few minutes in prayer, and raising himself up, he exclaimed, 'Now I am ready, Charles. It seems my hour is not yet come. If it be the providence of God to conduct me by His angel from this dungeon, and from the power of the Philistines, why, I must not resist His will.'

One hour was all the time that the visit was to last, and now the guard at the door cried out that the third quarter of an hour was past.

Prepare, he said, and be ready to leave at seven o'clock precisely.

Oh, dear sir, won't you allow me to remain another hour with my dear uncle, whom I shall never again see in this world? said Mary, who now went to the cell-door, in order to divert the attention of the officious guard from what was going on in the cell.

The captain was soon stripped of his whiskers and other external disguises, in which the priest soon became so enveloped as to deceive the sharpest scrutiny. As they left the prison precincts, they raised the famous mournful Irish 'ullulu' in which they were joined by a number of women at the jail-gate, and subsequently by all the townspeople, from whom it spread through the country in all directions, so that the mountains and valleys of Waterford, Kilkenny, and Tipperary, re-echoed for hours the wailing and lamentation that ascended to heaven in testimony of the innocence of the victim of the cruel government of perjured England. The poor priest himself was overpowered with grief, and mingled his tears with those of the affectionate but helpless people who lamented his fate. There were several 'keepers,' or female chanters of extemporary dirges also present to add pathos to these lamentations. This species of poetry was composed and sung at the same moment, and often kept up for several hours, and even days, over the dead bodies of the great in ancient times. Those who were skilled in this sort of composition were called 'Phlelehs,' who sometimes discharged this sad duty for pay; but more frequently, as in the present instance, it was performed from affection or out of respect to the virtues of the deceased. Although the proper place for poetical lamentations was over the corpse or at the 'wake' of the deceased chief, patriot, warrior, or other benefactor of his race or country, yet in cases where death was certain, as in the instance of Father O'Donnell, or where the victim was a distinguished one, the 'keening' commenced on the eve of his death. And besides, it was understood that the body of the pastor of Cloughmore was not to be restored to the relatives, but quartered, and hung in conspicuous places for the terror of the peasantry; and this was an additional reason for this commencement of the 'keen' to mourn his death while he was yet living.

While the wild cry was borne on the gently careering breeze, and reverberated along the mountains, hills, and plains, Terence O'Mara was

anxiously awaiting the promised messenger on the hill-pass on Knockmoldown. The appointed hour having elapsed, and no messenger having made his appearance, the shrewd peasant at once concluded that the stratagem of the captain had been successful, and he regarded the 'ullulu of keepers' which reached his ears, as probably a ruse on the part of the people to put the keepers of Father O'Donnell off their guard.

'Tis hard to resist taking up this mournful chorus, brought hither on the wings of the evening wind,' said he to himself; 'but yet I won't join in this melancholy ditty till I see for what I won't weep for my beloved pastor till I see him dead first.' And so saying, he came out from under the shelving rock where lay concealed; and hiding his rifle and ammunition in a crevice of the rock, he advanced cautiously on the public road towards the town.

CHAPTER IV.

The side-car on which our party of mourning visitors rode, now returned to Fairy-hill, and a few minutes for refreshments, exchanging of greetings, and prayerful congratulations, were all that the necessity of the case allowed, ere the departure of the escaped prisoner. After a few minutes spent in fervent prayer, the reverend gentleman returned from a small oratory which was situated at the east end of the building, and the entire family having placed themselves on their knees, he imparted to them, severally, his blessing and the blessing of Heaven. He next presented each with some little memento, such as a ring, a prayer-book, a cross, a string of beads, a little medal, a picture, or other such memorial; and having again bid them another 'God be with you,' and 'God bless you,' he bade them a last farewell, and parted for ever from the hereditary threshold of his ancestors. The horse on which the captain had arrived stood saddled at the hall door, the rein held by Thomas O'Donnell, who had already mounted his favorite gray mare 'Seagull,' and without arms or ammunition, the brothers set out together for the port of Dangarran, viz. Knockmoldown.

They moved along rapidly and silently for a time, both becoming saddened in mind, at the probable fate that was to await their generous and heroic brother Charles; at length, their steeds having slackened their pace a little as they advanced towards the mountain, the priest, who was as yet in darkness regarding the manner of the captain's arrival as he was regarding his own destination, after they reached the seaport, asked his brother Thomas how in the world did Charles come to know his fate, or how did he penetrate so far into the country unobserved by the English.

Your fate, brother, answered the former, 'was well known in France, and created a great deal of sympathy at the court of his most Christian majesty, who first attempted to save you by sending instructions to his ambassador at London, to intercede with the king of England for you; and having failed to save you by negotiation, afterwards, at the request of Charles, whom God save, his majesty allowed the royal yacht, the Joan d'Arc, to convey him to the Irish coast, and you to France, in case Charles succeeded in rescuing you.'

Ah, what a kind-hearted and magnanimous prince. I shall never forget his majesty's goodness of heart since the time that I, being a student at the Sorbonne, and getting my degree, his majesty, then the Dauphin of France, presented me with the gold medal, in preference to many others who were candidates, and superior candidates to me, in the contest for the honor. Alas! that treasure is now with the rest of my means, I fear, irrevocably lost to me by the plunder of my effects by the English soldiery! But you did not tell me, Thomas, how Charles heard of my being in durance; all communication with him you know, being long since prohibited by our cruel governors.

He heard all about it from Kilpatrick and his lady, who, on hearing of your arrest in Scotland (which they set out for on the day of their marriage accompanied by Ossory, as you are aware) soon after went to France, with the double view of avoiding any danger to which the cruelty of the government might expose them, as well as, if possible, to save you through the French court's intervention.

Al, that was how poor Charles got word of my trouble, was it?

Yes, and it was well that he did. For much as we love him, and great as our grief would be for his loss, should he fall a sacrifice to his generous affection in your behalf, we would count his fate as nothing, when you are safe.

I am not sure but your idea of these things is entirely a mistaken one. He may be of some use to King or country, but I, what use can I be to anything or anybody?

I know, brother, as regards personal merits, youth, prospects of advancement, and all that, Charles may be regarded as the greater loss to the O'Donnell name; but when we regard you as consecrated to religion, and as a representative

of the Church, which a hostile government wished to degrade in your person, then the balance is entirely in your favor. Thank God! the O'Donnell's can afford a martyr to their country or liberty's cause, as the annals of the last five centuries can show.

They had now gained considerably on the mountain, engaged in such dialogue as the foregoing, when suddenly a blazing fire burned on the left peak of Knockmoldown, and as it spread its glare on the bald summit of the neighboring heights, it clothed them in the light of a ghastly and unnatural illumination.

Gradually the 'ullulu' or lamentations of the peasantry died away, as their attention was attracted by the 'bonfire' on the 'Knock,' and those who were in the secret drew conclusions favorable to the fate of their pastor, from the fact that the fire was on the 'left head' of the mountain, instead of the right as they expected. Many a fond wife and loving mother were rejoiced, and prayed to God in thanksgiving when they went to the door and beheld that to-night, at least, there was no need for their sons or husbands to attend to the dangerous service of the 'enchanted warrior,' as Terry O'Mara was generally called.

Our fugitives were now within a short distance of the 'gap,' or highest elevation of the road, when a stentorian voice of one whose head alone appeared above a rock, cried out to them in rapid utterance—

Who goes there? qui va la? che ha chan! Danne mintera, 'friendly folks,' answered Father O'Donnell, in that grave, mellow voice which belonged to him, and which was well understood by his interrogator, the 'enchanted warrior.'

O Lord be praised, Father Senan, cried O'Mara, sinking on his knees. 'God is stronger than Satan. Give me your blessing, sir.'

God bless you, Terry, said the priest, and may He give you grace to mend your ways, and renounce your present life of danger and sin.

Sin? said the peasant, by way of remonstrance; 'I do not think it is a sin to shoot and eat the game that is fed by the produce of my own farm for which I pay; nor do I think it a sin to save your reverence from the Saxon gibbet, when I know you were innocent of any crime, and only sacrificed in hatred of religion.'

Excuse me, Terry, said the priest, 'I only meant that you exposed yourself and family by disregarding the game-laws, and that your having anything to do with unlawful societies would in the end lead you and others into trouble and sin.'

There it is again, reverend sir, preaching in favor of British laws, and your head not yet well free from the gallows, to which those laws condemned you unjustly. But what is become of Captain O'Donnell?

The captain, Terry, is in the same danger that I was in. In fact, he took my place in the prison cell.

Then he won't be long there. O, murder, murder! why did I kindle the left fire on yonder peak? I must be off at once and quench it, and set fire to the right turf-stack, and, perhaps, a part of the men may then come.

Wait, wait; you need not stir, said the farmer, Thomas O'Donnell, recalling O'Mara, who was just going, 'the captain is safe, having in his pocket his commission as officer in the Chasseurs de Vincennes, together with the French monarch's autograph. He is safe, Terry. He sent you word by me to keep quiet. They dare not touch a hair of his head.'

But what if ye are pursued? interrogated the cunning peasant.

Oh, there is not much danger of that till we are far out of their reach. Farewell, Terry, said both, as they put spurs to their steeds and departed.

Farewell, and a safe journey, answered Terry. 'Be cautious; the road is somewhat rough from the late rains, and steep in some places.'

Terry remained where he was for a few minutes, deliberating with himself what to do, when, to his astonishment, his ear caught the violent breathing and smothered cough of some one coming towards where he stood. His figure was that of a man in his shirt-sleeves, without a coat and without a hat. Upon being asked who was that, the panting and jaded messenger cried, in a voice half smothered by his heavy breathing,—'Bloodhounds! Madera ultha, fly, fly, pursue; dragons—dragons on chase!'

Terry found that this was no other than Darby Anglin, the fool of Lord Barterborough, who no sooner heard it whispered at the Great House that the flight of the priest was discovered, than he ran off to acquaint the 'enchanted warrior' that the pursuit was on foot. Poor, faithful, and loyal creature, the express had nearly cost him his life, as shall be shown hereafter. It appeared that the prisoner was gone no more than an hour when, about eight o'clock, the captain of the prison, by way, I suppose of sharpening his ap-