



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XI.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 1861.

No. 45.

TURLUGH O'BRIEN;

OR,
THE FORTUNES OF AN IRISH SOLDIER.
CHAPTER I.—THE MAGIC MIRROR.

In the summer of the year 1688, at about ten o'clock at night, two scenes were passing very different in all the accidents of place, plot and personage; and which, although enacted, the one in London, and the other near it, yet exercised an influence upon the events and person of our Irish story, so important and so permanent, that we must needs lift the curtain from before the magic mirror, which every author, in virtue of his craft, is privileged to consult, and disclose for a minute the scenery and forms which flit across its mystic surface.

Look, then, reader, into the wondrous speculation, and behold a handsome saloon, richly furnished in the fashion of those days. The walls are hung with gorgeous tapestry, and against their stands curious carved cabinets, stored with their loads of precious china and other treasures of art; luxurious sofas, and massive chairs and tables, covered with splendid cloths, occupy the floor, which shows in the interval between this rich profusion of furniture, the deep pile of a Turkey carpet, spreading its soft and gaudy texture over the boards, and evidencing a degree of luxury not always then to be found, even in the mansions of the wealthiest nobles of a profuse and voluptuous court.

Large pictures, in magnificent carved and gilded frames, hang upon the walls; and at the far end of the chamber, from the lofty ceiling to the floor, descend the rich folds of damask draperies, through which, and through the open windows from whose architraves they hang, is seen the river Thames shimmering in the uncertain moonlight—gliding onward in his eternal course, and reflecting in his ever-moving mirror, the glow of forges, and the warm fire-light of smelting furnaces at jovial supper, or, perchance, the solitary red glimmer that twinkles from the poor student's attic—all which, and hundreds more, countless as the stars on high, his waters catch as they flow under the dark banks opposite in broad and silent flood.

In the chamber into which we are looking there burns a large lamp, which sheds through its stained-glass sphere a soft, rose-colored light on all the objects which surround it; and eight wax lights flaring and flickering in the wanton evening breeze which floats lightly in the open windows, lend an additional distinctness to the forms that occupy the room.

These are four in number; two lean over a table, which stands near the window, and seem to be closely examining a map, which nearly covers the board over which they stoop—the one sharp-featured, tall, somewhat slovenly in his attire, his short cloak hanging from his shoulder and a high-crowned hat (then an obsolete fashion) dangling in his hand, leans over the outspread plan, and with eager gestures and rapid enunciation, and yet, with a strange mixture of deference, appears to harangue his listening companion. He is a strong, square-built man, somewhat, perhaps, beyond the middle age, gravely and handsomely dressed—his huge periwig swings forward as he bends over and rests his chin upon his jewelled band, and fixes upon the chart before him a countenance bold and massive, in which the lines of strong sense and sensuality are strikingly combined.

Pacing to and fro, and sometimes pausing half abstractedly at this table, looking for a moment at the outspread paper, and betraying the absence, and, perhaps, the agitation of his mind by his wandering gaze and the restless drumming of his knuckles on the tables; then turning again to resume his rapid walk across the floor, and stealing occasionally a hurried and uneasy look towards a figure sitting alone upon a sofa in the obscure part of the chamber, is seen a man of commanding stature and lofty mien, though somewhat tending to corpulence, richly dressed in a suit of dark velvet, sparkling with jewels, his neck cloth and ruffles fluttering with splendid point, having in his countenance a certain character of haughty command, according well with the high pretensions of his garb.

Another figure remains to be described, it is that toward which the regards of him we have just examined are so often turned: the form is that of a female, seated, as we have said, upon a sofa, and wrapped in a travelling cloak, the hood of which falls over her face, so that, excepting that she is tall, and possesses hands and feet of singular beauty and slenderness, we can pronounce nothing whatever of her person—she is evidently weeping, her dress shows the vibration of every sob, and the convulsive clasping of her small hands, and the measured beating of her tiny foot upon the floor, betoken her inward anguish.

While thus they are engaged, upon the broad bosom of the river, under the silver moonlight, with gay torches glowing, and, no doubt, plentiful store of laughing masks and sweet swell of floating music (for those nearest the widow

turn and seem to listen) glides by the royal pageant—the court of St. James' on the water;—the royal barges pass on their way; and now all is gone, sailed onward, and vanished like a dream.

Lo! there must have been some sudden sound at the door! They all start and look toward it—the lean gentleman in the shabby suit, clutches his map; his brawny companion advances a pace; the tall aristocrat arrests his walk, and stands fixed and breathless; while the lady shrinks further back, and draws her hood more closely over her face.

Their objects, then, must be secret. It is, however, a false alarm, they resume their respective postures and occupations—and so leaving them, we wave the wand which conjured up the scene, and in a moment all is shivered, clouded and gone.

But, lo! another rises gradually to view, it represents the dim vistas of a vaulted chamber, spanned with low, broad arches of stone, springing from the stone floor. Two blazing links, circled with a lurid halo from the heavy damps which there, in this, perpetual fog, shed a dusky, flickering glare upon the stained and dripping roof, and through the dim and manifold perspective of arches, until it spends itself in vapory darkness. A group of some seven or eight figures stands in the fitful glow of this ruddy illumination—gentlemen of wealth and worship it would seem, by the richness of their garb;—some are wrapped in their cloaks, some are booted, and all wear their broad-leaved, low-crowned hats. Strong lights and deep shadows mark many a furrowed and earnest face. This is no funeral meeting, as the place would seem to indicate—no trappings of mourning are visible, and the subject of their conversation, though deep and weighty, is too earnest and energizing for a theme of sorrow; neither is there, in the faces or gestures of the assembly, a single indication of excitement or enthusiasm. The countenances, the attitudes, the movements of the group, all betoken caution, deliberation and intense anxiety. From time to time are seen, singly or in couples, or in groups of three, other forms in the shadowy distance, as richly dressed, gliding like ghosts through the cloistered avenues, and holding with themselves, or one another, anxious debate.

And now, a tall and singularly handsome young man, in gorgeous military uniform, turning from an elder personage in a velvet cloak, to whom he has been deferentially listening, moves a pace or two toward the detached parties, who walk slowly up and down, as we have described, and raising his plumed hat, he beckons them forward; and so they come, and muster with the rest;—whereupon, the elder gentleman, with velvet cloak, draws forth a letter, and with a brief word or two of preface, as it would seem, reads it for the rest, pausing from time to time to offer and receive remarks. This over, he says something further, whereupon he and all the rest raise their hats for a moment, and then he shows the letter to one of the company nearest to himself, who takes it, looks to the end, and then to the beginning, and then upon the back of it, and so passes it on to another, and so from hand to hand it goes, until again reaches him who first produced it; and then, with the same solemn and earnest looks and air, they one by one, take leave, shake hands and glide away, until the old gentleman in the cloak and one other remain.—Then he in the cloak holds the corner of their momentous letter to the flaring link, and now it floats to the ground in the flame, and now all that remains of the mysterious paper is a light black film, coursed all over by a thousand sparkles. Cautious old gentleman!

Enough—the spell is over, the lines and colors shift and change, shadows and lights are lost and mingled, and all is once more whirling and blended in vague, impenetrable cloud and darkness.

But the pageant which has, for a fleeting moment, moved before us, has effected a dread reality, whose consequences are not only entwined with the incidents of the history we are going to relate, but mingle in the currents of a thousand tales of glory; ay, and in the meanness and buffoonery of comedies, enough to feast all cynics, that ever were, or ever shall be, to satiety; and more nobly and sorrowfully, alas! in the dire events of tragedies, of most heroic and mournful splendor. It revealed the meeting of a council, upon whose wisdom, craft, and energy, hung the doom of millions—the fate of kingdoms, princedom, powers.

CHAPTER II.—THE LADY AND THE PRIEST.

In the month of March, in the year of our Lord, 1689, the red and dusky light of a frosty sunset had flung its crimson mantle over the broad-sides of the Slieve-phelim hills, tracing the white rocks and the wintry woods which irregularly covered their wide expanse with a genial blush, which again melted softly away, in the deep blue shadows that gathered mistily in the long sweeping hollows and rugged defiles into

which that wild range winds and breaks. Among other objects, this rich coloring illuminated the irregular, grey front of a building of considerable antiquity, and some strength, although wholly incapable of resisting, with any sustained effect, the artillery of an age still less advanced in military science than the eventful one of which we write. Even then a time-worn pile, carrying in its aspect something venerable and saddened, and not the less picturesque, perhaps, that its character was somewhat undefined, and its parts adapted with small attention to regularity of structure—here presenting the character of a fortress, and there that of an antique dwelling-house; in some parts bound in the giant clasp of the dark embowering ivy, and at others exposing to the dusky light of the setting sun its hoary front, and steep, grey-flagged roof, with all its furniture of glittering windows, and darksome portals, and the low-arched gateway which, under its deep shadow and heavy masonry, seemed to warn away the intruder with a jealous scowl. Around this building, and much nearer than military precaution would have allowed them, and but partially and irregularly cleared from about the mansion, stood grouped the fantastic birch and oak which then and there, even within the memory of man, skirted, with the wild and beautiful forest, whole miles, we might say leagues, of the mountain sides. Thus circumstanced, and occupying the slope of the mountain's foot, the castle of Lisnamoo stood, on the evening we have mentioned, steeped in the glowing airy tide which flooded all the broad and hazy landscape, as far as the eye might reach, with dusky crimson.

This evening-light, solemn and melancholy as the chastened beam which streams through the stained oriel of some ancient church, poured through three narrow windows, deep set in the thickness of the wall, into a low, broad chamber within the building which we have just described. Heavy beams traversed its ceiling from end to end; its floors and wainscoting were of shining wood, as black as the bog oak; and the furniture, of which there was no lack, seemed fashioned in the same dark wood. Cupboards and presses there were; chairs and tables, and chests of rude and antique workmanship; a row of clumsy book-shelves, partly stocked with volumes, occupied the wall above the yawning hearth; and near its side, in a high-backed, ponderous chair of oak, sat the only living inmate of the chamber.

It is a lady of stately, yet most sorrowful mien—clothed from head to foot in a suit of the deepest mourning—so thin and pale, and so unearthly still, as she leaned back in her chair, that, looking upon her, one might hold his breath and doubt if she were really alive. She must have been beautiful; in that wasted form and face the lines of beauty still linger; the fair proportion of the deer-like limbs, the noble formation of the small and classic head, and above all, the exquisite lines of grace and symmetry still traceable in the now sharpened and emaciated features, tell eloquently and mournfully of what she was. Of her age it were not easy to speak with certainty; if you look upon her hand, the fineness, the delicacy, and snowy whiteness of its texture, contrasted like polished ivory with the dark shining table on which it rests, would bespeak her little more than a girl—a young girl wasted by decay, and soon to forsake for ever this beautiful world, with all its bright enchantments still undissolved around her, and even in life's happy spring-tide called away forever.—Look again at the pale face, and there you read not the traces of early decay; it is not the countenance of youth—deep lines of sorrow, anguish, despair, have left their ineffaceable characters upon its sharp and colorless contour;—acute suffering, chastened by profound humility, is there mournfully predominant; and again, behold from beneath the black velvet cap there strays in silver lines a long grey lock.—The usual tests of woman's age are here inapplicable and at fault; and whatever be her years, it is but too plain that wild and terrible affliction has anticipated the hand of time, and that the pity-moving spectacle who sits alone in the dim chamber, is the fearful work of strange troubles—the wreck of grievous agony, perhaps of fierce and wayward passion—that she is one whose pride, and fire, and beauty, the storm has quenched, and left, and shattered—one whose inward desolation is complete.

But ere this description might be written, she, so literally death-like before, had on a sudden raised her quenched and sunken eyes passionately towards heaven, clasped her thin hands, and wringing them bitterly in what seemed the agony of prayer, broke forth in low and earnest accents.

'Oh, that it might be so—oh, that my worthless life might yield this one good and worthy service—that I might, unseen and lost as I am, guard them from this mysterious danger. Inscrutable are the ways of heaven, wonderful its dispensations, that, I, I should have been car-

ried hither, on the currents of that dreadful destiny of which I am now the unresisting sport—borne to this place, cast among these people, just as my presence here—weak, worthless, mayhap forgotten—oh, bitter word, forgotten—as I am—may prove a blessing; may open an escape; may save life, and rescue innocence. Weak and imperfect are my means; but there is One who can even with the folly of the weak confound all the wisdom of the wicked, and bring the designs of the crafty utterly to nought. In His hands their safety is, and He with his mighty arm protects the good and pure.'

As she thus spoke the tears rose to her eyes, and she wept for some minutes in bitter humiliation, softly repeating from tune to tune the last words she had spoken—"the good and pure, the good and pure." On the table before her lay pen and ink, and a piece of paper, on which, in characters as plain as printing, were written certain words, with whose import the reader may hereafter be made more fully acquainted.

This paper lay upon the table before the table-clad lady, who was still weeping bitterly, when a knock was heard at the chamber door; she hastily took the paper, folded it, and having placed it within the bosom of her gown, desired the visitor to come in. The door opened, and there entered a very young man, dressed in a suit of the plainest black, with his own dark brown hair falling in curls upon his shoulders; his face was thin and pale, his forehead high and intellectual; and though his form was fragile and somewhat stooped, and his face worn and sallow with the midnight studies, and perchance, the austerities of his religious calling; and though in his countenance, mingling with its prevailing expression of gravity, was a sadness and even a sweetness which might have seemed scarcely consistent with the energy of his mind, yet in his dark eye there burned a certain fire of an enthusiasm—which, in a chamber so gentle might easily have degenerated into madness and ferocity of fanaticism.

With that air of melancholy respect, which great misfortunes in noble minds never fail to inspire, the young priest, for so he was, approached the lady.

'I trust,' said he, gently, 'that my visit has not come unseasonable; it shall be but a brief one, and I grieve to say, it must be my last. I have come to bid you farewell.'

'Your last visit! and to bid farewell!' repeated she mournfully. 'This is a sudden, and to me a sad parting. You leave the castle, then, to-night?'

'Yes, and for many reasons,' he replied firmly. 'What I yesterday suspected, I more than suspect to-day. Those whose hearts I have shared, and whose bread I have eaten for so long, I will not betray; nor shall I stay here to have my mind filled with apprehensions, which I dare not divulge, and which to keep secret is to connive at hidden wickedness, and to participate in sin.—I must away—I will bear and see no more of that which troubles my conscience to hide, and which yet I may not tell. I am resolved—my part is taken, and so a long farewell to those who have been my early friends. Other scenes await me, where, with less of happiness, and, perchance of safety, I may command more opportunities of good. And, gentle and most afflicted lady, in leaving you, ignorant of the purpose which has brought you here—unacquainted with the sad story of your life—unacquainted even with your very name, and seeking not to penetrate the deep mystery of your existence—I feel yet that in leaving you I shall part from a friend.'

'I thank you for believing so—I thank you heartily,' rejoined she, sadly and earnestly; 'and pray you to do me so much justice as to continue to regard me thus while you live, and by this worthless token to remember me.'

The young man took the ring which she presented, and having thanked her, she resumed—'I shall, indeed, miss your gentle counsel—your kindness, your pity—sorely miss them,' said the lady, with patient sorrow.

'God grant you comfort,' said the ecclesiastic, earnestly, laying his hand upon the thin wasted fingers of the lady.

'Comfort—comfort!' said she, quickly, and almost wildly; 'no, no—no, no. You know not what you say—comfort for me!—oh! never more.'

'Yes, lady, there is comfort for you, whatever be your fears and sorrows—a consolation reserved even for the sin-stained conscience—even for the broken heart,' he said, solemnly and affectionately; 'reject it not—the Church, with the voice of heavenly love and mercy, calls you to her bosom—implores of you to come; and, with a smile of pity, and forgiveness, and encouragement, will fold you in her arms.'

The lady slowly shook her head in mute despair.

'Turn not away from comfort—hope—for forgiveness,' he said, while his eye kindled, and his form seemed to dilate with the glory and gran-

deur of his theme. 'The Church—the eternal Church—of whose glorious company I am but the meanest and basest servant—the Church, even with my voice, calls thee to herself. Come, and she will tell thee how thou mayest have hope—how thou mayest, indeed, obliterate the dreadful stains of remorseful memory—how thou mayest be lifted up from the dark and fathomless abyss of sin and despair, and, mounting toward the throne of grace, ascend, until at last, when expiation shall have done its work, your soul shall rise, pure and glorious as a sinless angel, into the light of the eternal presence of God. Oh! turn not away; refuse not to be saved; reject not the heavenly message!'

'I have,' she answered, humbly but firmly, and still with downcast eyes—'I have, as I have told you ere now, but one trust, but one hope, one faith—and these rest not in any Church.'

A slight flush of impatience for a moment tinged the pale cheek of the priest; but it quickly subsided, and his countenance wore even more than its wonted expression of sadness, as, with arms folded and eyes cast down, he slowly paced the chamber floor in silence.

'And whither do you purpose to go?' asked the lady, after a considerable pause.

'Anywhere—I care not whither. First to Limerick, as I am at present minded,' he answered. 'I hear there is a chaplaincy to one of the new regiments yet unfilled; but night draws on apace, time presses, and I must away.'

'I need not remind you,' she said—

'Of my promise yesterday?' interrupted he. 'Assuredly not; the paper shall be conveyed, though, for the reasons then assigned, under circumstances of perfect mystery. These are dark and perilous times—the saints guide and guard us!'

The lady then placed the document, of which we have already spoken, in his hands, and the ecclesiastic resumed—

'I well know how much depends upon the safe conveyance of this paper. Trust me, I shall not fail; before midnight it shall be in his hands.'

'And if he hearken not to that,' she said, 'neither will he hear though one rose from the dead. God speed thee, and farewell!'

The young priest drew his cloak closely about his face—mayhap to hide some evidences of bitter emotion which he could not altogether repress—and, hastily catching up the little bundle which formed his only luggage, descended the narrow staircase, and passing forth on the short green sward, he was soon traversing the winding pathway under the boughs of the wildwood.—Leaving him for the present among the lengthening shadows, to pursue alone his hurried way toward the distant towers of Glindarragh Castle, we must glance for a moment at another party, who, from an opposite direction, and upon very different thoughts intent, were also tending toward that antique and hospitable mansion.

(To be continued.)

LETTER OF THE REV. DANIEL WM. CAHILL, D. D.,

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

Stanton Island, Saturday, May 10, 1861.

FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN—Tuam, Gweedore, Derrymacash, and Glenveagh, are renewing the old history of Elizabeth in Ireland; filling the valleys with the wail of lamentation, and reddening the highways with the innocent blood of the defenceless Catholic. Bishop Plunkett and the Bificians: Adair and the crowbar exterminators, the Scotch proprietors of the Donegal mountains; and the Orangemen of the North, are moving through Ireland like columns of flying artillery, for the persecution, the dispersion, and the extinction of your race and your name.—Your wealthy, influential co-religionists are silent: your Parliamentary friends are few, divided, self-interested, and powerless; and the noble Irish freeholder, and the faithful Catholic poor labourer, are fast disappearing from your soil. The magistracy, who should be the local guardians of your peace, your rights, and your lives, heedlessly—in some cases approvingly—look on: the factions of your laws, like the black crape drawn over the face of an assassin, conceal the murderous landlord from the retaliation of his victims; and under this perfidious disguise, worn for the death of your franchise and the overthrow of your faith, millions of our countrymen have been beggared, banished, and killed. Your Parliament being composed principally of landlords and of the enemies of your religion and race, the legislation is the record which supports the extermination of Plunkett and Adair: it is, the English legal warrant to seize at pleasure the Irish Catholic tenantry, to throw down their houses, to imprison the aged for life in the emaciating poorhouse, and to expel the innocent young to the haunts of city vice or to overwhelming expatriation.

English Imperial legislation is not known in Ireland at institutions of industry, in a national