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FLORENCE O'NEILL,

The Rose of St. Germain's; OR, THE SIEGE OF LIMERICK.

By AGNES M. STEWART. Author of "Life in the Cloister," "Grace O'Halloran," etc.

CHAPTER X.

A bitterly cold night was that of the 29th of December, in the year 1691. A cutting north-east wind, united to a fall of snow, which had become heavier as the short winter day waned on, and to which, in the earlier part, was added a somewhat thick fog, had conspired to render the previous day as bitterly inclement and unpleasant to the good citizens of London as could well be imagined.

The wind sighed in long and fitful gusts, and cut across the face of the wayfarer as he turned the corner of the streets; it howled amongst the chimney-pots in the old city, and made the windows rattle in their frames, and the sign-board suspended over the door of the Dog Tavern, on Ludgate street, creaked and flapped heavily as it swayed to and fro in the bitter night blast.

But within the hotel all was warmth and comfort; the huge fire in the kitchen burned brightly in the ample fireplace, before which hung a large sirlin, and the red flame flickered cheerily on the bright culinary utensils which garnished the kitchen wall. A goodly array of choice smoked hams hung suspended from huge hooks in the rafters that supported the ceiling, and the apparently freshly-sanded floor as yet showed not the print of a step from the dreary scene without.

But just as the heavy clock of St. Paul's tolled the hour of 9, two persons entered, clad in large cloaks whitened with the heavy snow-storm, and followed by a woman, whose dress betokened her to move in the humble walks of life, and, advancing to the fireside, they stood for a few moments enjoying its genial warmth, the men conversing in an undertone with the worthy and somewhat buxom hostess, Mistress Warner, who had just entered the kitchen to deliver various orders concerning her expected guests.

"You have a private apartment for me, Mistress Warner," said our old acquaintance, John Ashton, whom it was easy to recognize, despite the slouched hat drawn over his eyes, and the cloak closely buttoned up to the throat, with its huge collar pulled up to the chin.

"Yes, the green-room is ready," replied the woman, "and supper shall be on the table at the appointed time. Would it not be well, good Mr. Ashton," she added, "to repair thither immediately." And sinking the already low tones of her voice to a whisper, she continued:

"See you not my party who have just arrived. I do not like the air of curiosity with which they regard yourself and friends."

In fact, two persons had closely followed on the heels of Ashton: in the one, a well formed, handsome young man, we recognize the page, Harding; in the other, the villainous expectorator Benson, not yet by his late recourer in Ireland sufficiently afraid of meddling with the affairs of others to abstain from playing the part of the informer. Acting on the suggestion of the worthy hostess, Ashton made a sign to his friend, and bade the woman who had accompanied him hither follow him to the apartment which Mistress Warner had spoken of. Having closed the door, stirred the fire into a cheerful blaze, and handed some wine to his companions, Ashton introduced the female to his friend, Burdett, by the name of Mrs. Pratt, saying: "You are aware that mercantile matters require me, with two of my friends, to go immediately to France to purchase some bales of French silk for one of our city merchants. In order to expedite this business, then, Mrs. Pratt, who is a friend of the master of a vessel I wish to engage, has met us here to-night, and the owner, Mr. Paseley, will not be long ere he arrives, and you, Burdett, will, therefore, be a witness of the bargain we shall make." Ashton had scarce finished these few words when a

low tap at the door announced the arrival of the person for whom he was waiting.

The man Paseley was of unprepossessing appearance, short and thick set, and an unaccountable impression of impending evil shot across Ashton's heart, as his eyes met those of this person fixed on his countenance with a scrutinizing, sinister expression, and which, when they encountered those of Ashton, immediately feel beneath his glance. Paseley was, in short, one of those persons who cannot look you in the face from an innate consciousness of their own villainy.

At length he said: "You want to engage my smack, sir, at least, so I understand from my friend, Mrs. Pratt: may I ask to what port you wish to conduct her."

"To some one of the seaports of France," replied Ashton. "I suppose you already know, from your friend, that myself and some two or three other persons are about to go thither to purchase silk and other articles of French merchandise."

Again Ashton noticed the man's eyes fixed curiously on his face, as though he questioned the truth of what he said, and he replied: "Well, sir, you shall have the use of my vessel, but really I shall expect a large sum for the hire, under existing circumstances."

"Under existing circumstances?" repeated Ashton, laying a stress on the words the man had used. "What do you mean? I want to hire your vessel, and you will be glad to have a large sum for its use: name the amount you require."

"One hundred and fifty pounds," was the unhesitating reply. "Anxious as Ashton was to secure the vessel, even he started at the mention of the enormous sum, and after much haggling, the stipulated sum was brought down to the still enormous amount, if we consider the value of money at the time of which we write, of one hundred guineas. It was then arranged that Mrs. Pratt, with Burdett and Paseley, were to meet on the following morning at the Seven Stars, in Covent Garden, an hotel near to Ashton's place of residence, and there conclude the bargain, by depositing the money in Paseley's or Mrs. Pratt's hands, should the former not be able to be there: and the two friends were then left to refresh themselves, after a long walk in the inclemency of the weather, by the goodly sirlin which Mistress Warner served up, flaked by a substantial pastry and a flagon of strong home-brewed ale, succeeded by hot spiced wine.

But let us leave the brave and unfortunate Ashton, whose life was sacrificed, as our readers will know, in the cause of the exiled Stuart race, and in the present ill-omened enterprise, and follow the ill-conditioned Paseley and the woman Pratt into the room beneath, in fact, to the kitchen of the hotel, in which still remained Benson and the page Walter Harding.

No sooner were the advancing footsteps of Paseley and his companion heard, than the two former personages hurried to meet them, and the sinister countenance of Paseley lighted up with a smile full of meaning as he approached, and touching Harding on the shoulder, he whispered: "I have news for her Majesty, follow me."

Out into the cold dark night, with the keen north-west wind blowing fall in their faces, together with the driving sleet, the crisp snow crackling beneath their feet, and the sky as dark as their own hearts, walked the page and the expectorator, the master of the smack and his friend, Mrs. Pratt, and scarcely had the doors of the hotel closed behind them, than the man Paseley advancing to Harding, whispered:

"He is prepared to give even as much as a hundred pounds for the hire of the vessel. I asked one hundred and fifty, thinking it would go far to show whether it were wanted for purposes of merchandise or not: as if so, he would entertain no idea of hiring it, instead of which he demurs a little, and then coolly offers a hundred guineas, as if the guineas were but as many shillings, and now I will leave Mrs. Pratt to tell her tale, which I am sure will strengthen the idea we entertain. Then, rejoining the woman, Paseley whispered a few words in her ear, she nodded assent, and advanced to Harding, while Paseley and Benson conferred together in a low tone of voice.

"Look you, Mr. Harding," said she, "Mr. Ashton offered me one thousand pounds, to be paid down before Lady-day, if I helped him to the hiring of this vessel. One thousand pounds!" she repeated. "This is a large sum, and would make a rich woman of Martha Pratt: yet out of love to her gracious Majesty, I will give it all up. What do you think, Mr. Harding, will Queen Mary do for me? for 'tis I and Paseley chiefly, more than yourself and Benson, who have helped to the unfolding of this plot."

"Now do not alarm yourself, Mistress Pratt," said Harding: "I will take care to represent to her Majesty what you have lost in her service, and depend on it, she will not forget you. Count on me for standing your friend, and rest assured we shall, all of us, receive a rich reward. I have dogged Ashton repeatedly. I know that he was on terms of friendship with Nevil Payne, who suffered torture, and has since died from its effects." Indeed, I remember Ashton was with him last April at a Jacobite meeting, held at the Globe Tavern, near Northumberland House, and I feel convinced that the plot now hatching has some connection with the last, and—

"And Ashton is a poor man, remember," interrupted Benson. "Verily friend Harding, the Lord is making use of us, His elect ones, as instruments in His hands for the punishment of Jacobite traitors and false sons of the English Church, like this Ashton, who are straining every nerve to bring back the Popish King, in lieu of the godly William and his consort."

"And the thousand golden guineas which he has promised me," chimed in Mrs. Pratt, "can surely not come from himself; no, doubtless, they are given by friends of the late king, as also the money for hiring the vessel. But I tell you what, Mr. Harding, unless you bring me to quick speech with Queen Mary, I will seek an audience of Her Majesty myself, for I am quite determined she shall know how much I am running the risk of losing, in order to serve her cause."

"Pray do not alarm yourself unnecessarily, Mrs. Pratt," replied Harding, sharply: "depend on it, their gracious Majesties will not suffer your services to go unrewarded; so be at the palace at the hour of noon on the morrow, and I will crave an audience for you."

By this time they had reached the Strand, and separated, Harding to return to his apartments at the palace, the entrance to which he obtained, as the hour was somewhat late, by means of a pass-key, intending to usher Benson in with him, and Paseley and the woman Pratt to their respective lodgings in the neighborhood of Covent Garden.

CHAPTER XI. A SECESSION.

Again domiciled with his cousin, Isabel O'Neill, the brave and worthy Sarsfield was compelled, for a time, sorely against his will, to yield to the effects of a violent cold, and became almost rampant under the restraint to which he had been subjected; for he had been confined to his bed during three entire days, at the expiration of which, finding himself somewhat recovered, no solicitation could prevail on him to remain quiet and inactive: so rising some time before the hour of noon, clad in a loose dressing gown, and his pleasant face a shade paler than usual, the General was ready to see and be seen by any who might wish to confer with him on matters of business.

A visitor, however, awaited him of whose arrival he little dreamed, and his astonishment may be better imagined than described when Sir Reginald St. John presented himself before him.

Sir Reginald was, indeed, personally a stranger to the General, though known to him by repute, and the same repute had informed him that he was a brave and skillful officer, a devoted adherent of William of Orange, inheriting in every respect, the principles of his now aged father, the former inflexible and stern upholder of the Commonwealth.

Sarsfield drew himself up to his full height, and looked inquiringly at his visitor, almost doubting the reality of his presence, certainly never dreaming for a moment that the right arm and sword of St. John were now at the command of James the Second.

Yet so it was, for, advancing forward, St. John exclaimed: "General Sarsfield, I am willing to serve under your command, and I offer to fight in defence of His Majesty, King James, now in exile at St. Germain's."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Sarsfield: "do I hear aright? Report has spoken of you, Sir Reginald, as one of those who were singularly disaffected to the government of King James, as of one, in fact, who trod faithfully in the steps of his ancestors; but, believe me, I seek not to analyze the motives which have brought to our aid the sword of so gallant an officer. I ask you only have you must inevitably sustain when your defection becomes known?"

"I have done so, General, and am well content to abide the issue," replied Sir Reginald. "I shall lose my estate, which will, of course, become forfeit to the government of William should he still continue to wear the crown, which I now believe he unlawfully usurps. Beyond this I am not aware that any grievous calamity awaits me. To be plain, my heart sickens at the sight of the many frauds and artifices which are being resorted to for the purpose of upholding William's interests; nay, more, I have myself suffered in this way but recently, my name having been unlawfully used,

Queen Mary and her ministers strove very hard to make the honorable and high-minded Payne, Jacobite tutor to the young Earl of Mar, legal informer regarding this conspiracy, in which many of the nobility in Scotland, as well as England, were involved some months before it had reached its present height. And later, Mary wrote several letters to the Privy Council in Scotland, making ominous enquiries as to what had become of him. The following, in answer to some of these inquiries, was written to the principal minister of Her Majesty for Scotland, who was then at Court:

TO LORD MELVILLE: "Yesterday, in the afternoon, Nevil Payne was questioned as to those things that were not of the greatest concern, and had but gentle torture given him, being resolved to repeat it this day, which accordingly, about six this evening, we inflicted on both his thumbs and one of his legs, with all the severity that was consistent with humanity (even to that pitch that he could not have preserved life and have gone further; but without the least success, for his answers to all our interrogatories were negative. Yea, he was so manly and resolute under his sufferings, that such of the Council as were bungled (hesitated), and began to give him charity that he might be innocent. It is surprising to me and others, that flesh and blood could, without fainting, endure the heavy penalty he was in for two hours. My stomach is truly out of time by being witness to an act so far from my natural temper, that I am fitter for rest than for anything else, but the dangers from such conspirators to the person of our incomparable king, have prevailed over me in the Council's name, to have been the prompter of the executioner to increase to so high a pitch."

The unfortunate Nevil Payne soon afterwards died from the effect of these barbarities.—Strickland's Life of Mary.

and I represented as having broken the tie of betrothal long subsisting between myself and the Lady Florence O'Neill."

"But are you not aware that you have been summoned to England, and that Florence has been most unwisely introduced to the Court of Mary?" exclaimed the General. "Her situation is now one of extreme difficulty, for, if I do not mistake, she already finds herself in what we may term a species of detention; for, Sir Reginald, you are summoned to the court as a faithful adherent of William, under the idea that Florence will not dare to refuse to wed you, whilst herself, closely watched by the queen, her only refusal to consent founded on the supposition that you are true to their interests. I had given her credit for more sense," he added, "than to imagine she would so heedlessly throw herself into the power of our foes, for truly, whichever way I turn I see only difficulty, for had the summons reached you before you came hither, and you had returned as the adherent of William, a sorry plight would Florence have been in, for Queen Mary intended to appoint an early day for your nuptials, and as the case at present stands, though my heart rejoices to receive you as a brother in arms, I see no escape for her, as yet, from the mishap and captivity her foolish heedlessness has caused; for much as she will rejoice to hear that the cause for estrangement existing between you and herself has been so unexpectedly removed, still I do not imagine," he continued, with a smile, "that William and Mary would now receive you as a traitor whose disloyalty far exceeds that of Florence herself."

"And is it possible Florence has placed herself in the power of Mary," exclaimed Sir Reginald, with a feeling of remorse at his heart, for well he remembered that it was at his suggestion Sir Charles de Grey had sought the Court of William, at a time when his own blind attachment to the service of the latter had made him assiduous to gain over as many as possible to his cause.

"I will leave Limerick at once," he said, "and hasten back to England, and see her safe beyond the precincts of the court. They are full of danger to any persons suspected of disaffection to the present Government."

"How?" exclaimed the more cool and cautious Sarsfield. "Allow me to point out to you the mad folly of such an attempt. If Florence is in danger, your presence will not save her, and can only result in your own imprisonment. Submit quietly, and trust to the safety of our foolish young relative through the influence of her uncle, Sir Charles, or some other fortuitous chance turning up in her favor."

This, then, was the end of Sir Reginald's journey to Ireland, this, the end of his loyalty and love for William, the cause of his estrangement from Florence. In the course of a few days, stung by the base use that had been made of his name, of the discreditable actions daily resorted to, St. John had resolved on yielding his allegiance elsewhere, and secure again the affections of his betrothed, and now, in the home of his maternal aunt, he had become the friend and companion of Sarsfield, the valiant opponent of William, his very name infusing fresh hope into the hearts of their followers and a terror to his enemies.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Catholic Organization.

Give the Catholic societies that are approved your warmest support. Encourage them, stimulate their purpose, increase their membership. This is an era in which organizations predominate. Men come together and bind themselves in union for many purposes. On all sides we see societies and federations formed for the advancement and attainment of various objects. Efforts which made individually would be useless, are by combination rendered effective, and gaining strength from unity create a force which is almost irresistible. To Catholics especially, at the present time, should those facts irresistibly appeal. For too long a time we have not known one another as we should. We have frittered away many priceless opportunities. Does a matter arise in which our sentiments should be aroused, we have no cohesive force, no working together. Rather with our ignorance we stand aloof and our purposes aims we stand aloof and look askance at each other, inert, lifeless. Do we see this elsewhere? Certainly, we do not. We see large, moving, compact bodies, with a purpose, and they execute it. Recent events show how important is Catholic organization. We who feel we have the right, and are swelling with the consciousness of it within our bosoms, and yet let that right be smothered by our own fault. Not so much our fault, but our stupidity. Perfect our organizations. The association formed to defend Catholic interests and to promote them, affords the necessary means of combination in the hour of imperative conflict.

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LOCKED OUT.

By CHARLES W. HOOKER.

Jack Watson drank heavily when he was in college, but we called him a good fellow. After he left college, he began to drink heavily and to be a good fellow, but we called him a drunkard. When he was twenty-five years old I looked upon him as a lost man. I believed that he would be a mere sot at thirty, and that he would die miserably before he was thirty-five.

We lost each other for some years, and then, after a chance meeting in New York, I dined with him most happily in the comfort of his home, and in the light of a beautiful woman's eyes. When the light was withdrawn, and we were left to dim the remaining illumination with a haze of tobacco smoke, I fell into deep thought upon the agreeable failure of my prophecy. What had saved Jack? I might have said it was his marriage, but I knew he had fallen into the depths again soon after. Hearing that report, I had pitied her exceedingly, and had thought the worst of Jack. Yet, I could not doubt that he was at last in the sure way. Knowing him so well I felt that some surprising incident must have changed the course of his life, and my curiosity craved the story.

"I know what you are thinking about," said he. "You're wondering why I am here instead of being in the gutter? Well, we called him a drunkard. When he was twenty-five years old I looked upon him as a lost man. I believed that he would be a mere sot at thirty, and that he would die miserably before he was thirty-five."

"No, I didn't," said Jack. "I never drank a course, but—"

"No, I didn't," said Jack. "I never drank a course, but—"

"Metaphorically," said Jack. "I never drank a course, but—"

"Literally," said Jack. "I never drank a course, but—"

"No, not even Alice," said Jack. "I never drank a course, but—"

"I began with the usual drunkard's balance—on the wrong side of the books. We took a flat in that long row I pointed out to you when we came to town. The furniture we procured on the instalment plan. It was not luxurious, of course, but you should have seen how happy a home Alice made of it. There were weekly payments to be made, and for a month or more the rising sun and I were equal models of punctuality. Then I let it go for a week. Nothing happened. I was somewhat surprised, as I had expected to be expelled from the premises. Presently I discovered that the balance had been more binding than the shackles of Israel in Egypt. Another week slipped by, and another. Various causes reduced our funds to a low ebb. Presently I promised immediate settlement and he departed. I was to receive my monthly cheque from the Philadelphia office in a few days, and I relied upon it. A polite collector called, however, with fifty dollars from John Ennis, and as he gave me the cash he looked at me in a peculiar way.

"He thinks I'll go off on a spree and spend this money," said I to myself, and then I set out to buy a new suit of clothes. It seems absurd to be sentimental about a few sticks of furniture, but when a man is newly married, and has a home for the first time in ten years, he may be pardoned for an excessive attachment to the things he has. That anxiety was, of course, my chief danger. The drunkard is always on the edge of a precipice, and if he looks down he will cast himself into the gulf. It is the same, perhaps, with all moral perils: they have a fascination. I looked down that day and was dragged over the brink.

"That was the beginning of such degradation as I could not name to any man but a true friend. The party which I had drunk with that alone is heartrending to endure or to look upon. What Alice suffered, doubtless, I do not even know. How she unflinchingly forgave the angel of the book, and how she recorded in words we have not learned on earth. Through it all I think her principal anxiety was to preserve our home.

"I will not weary you with the story of her struggles. There is nothing so mean as money, and the less you have of it the meaner it is. One can reap a fortune at arm's length, but a few pennies will sneak into an intimacy with their owner which will desperately assault his self-respect. Alice began forgiving the man who will not guard his wife from that, if he can; and I could, but did not, for the sake of my appetite.

"At last there came a day like that when I borrowed the money from Ennis, only far more serious. It was Wednesday, and the polite collector had mentioned Friday—the day when men are hanged—as the probable occasion of a humiliating experience for me. After my heartrending disappointments I raised the necessary amount. I had preserved my connection with Allen and Graves, and was still in charge of their New York office, but my position was in jeopardy because of my habits, and my salary was overruled and suspended. I borrowed that money of one of our customers, Andy Playson.

"You know him. He said that he wanted to talk to business. Andy cannot take business comfortably except in a liquor saloon. The demon inside me welcomed him as a friend. Here was certainly an excuse. It was a matter of business to preserve my friendly relations with him. The next thing I remember distinctly was opening my eyes in total darkness. I thought at first I was blind. How long it took me to discover where I was, I am unable to say. In reality I was lying in the little vestibule of my office. I got upon my feet, opened the inner door and turned on the electric light. My watch was stopped, but from the windows I could see the illuminated dial in the tower of City Hall. It was nearly midnight.

"But what, midnight! I had no idea whether I had been unconscious three days or a month. My mind was so perplexed that I could not ascertain the date in any of the ways which would have suggested themselves to me in my normal condition. There was a newspaper on my desk. My eyes rested upon it without intent, but at least one word seemed to detach itself from the page. It was the date of the week in the date line of the paper, and that day was Friday; then it was already too late.

"There was a pistol in the drawer of my desk, and somehow, though my hands trembled so that I could hardly hold a key, I managed to open the lock and at last to secure