



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. IX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 20, 1858.

No. 2.

LORENZO; OR, THE EMPIRE OF RELIGION.

BY A SCOTCH NON-CONFORMIST, A CONVERT TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

Translated from the French by a Lady of Philadelphia.

CHAPTER III.

It required but little time for Lorenzo to captivate the esteem and affection of Henry Walsingham, who, charmed with his admirable qualities, wished him to be the sponsor of his youngest son. Lorenzo objected; Henry insisted.

"I must then avow to you with a candor which your generosity requires," said Lorenzo, with animation, "that I do not bear my true name; but resolved to die without making myself known, no consideration can alter my purpose. Besides, did you know me as well as the marquis of Rosline, you would be far from making such a proposition. Ask him where I became known to him, and in what class of society he found me; you will then seek another godfather for the son of Count Walsingham."

Lorenzo was animated; an undefinable joy sparkled in his eyes. The expression of his countenance did not betray the least shadow of a sentiment of shame or embarrassment. The marquis of Rosline shared my surprise; he asked Lorenzo, in a very low tone, if he desired that Henry should be informed of the manner in which he became known to us. Lorenzo seized the marquis' hand, and pressed it to his lips with an involuntary transport.

"He should have known it before this," said he, "if he whom you have sometimes deigned to call your friend, had not feared to offend you."

"But my dear Lorenzo," resumed the marquis, still in an undertone, "all the recollections of your captivity, and the appearance, at least, of guilt, do they not cause you any pain?"

Lorenzo leaned his head a moment on Lord Arthur's hand, and replied in an altered voice: "A day will come, I doubt not, when the most generous of men will be able to comprehend my language, and the happiness I experience; but now the difference of our religious belief places too great a distance between us."

The marquis did not understand his meaning. He wished not, however, that Henry should be made acquainted with what we knew of our common friend.

We passed the evening with music; after which, I went, according to custom, to read for Lorenzo. He generally named the book he wished to hear, but on that evening he banded me a volume which he had brought with him.—When I was about to commence, he asked me, in a very low tone, if we were alone. I told him that Henry was present.

"Henry, this is like you," he replied, "but I asked that question because this work is little known here. The greater part of our countrymen are not of my religion, and although one of the first privileges of their creed is to read, judge, and examine every thing for themselves, there are, nevertheless, some books which, by a singular contradiction among a thousand others, they are forbidden to read."

Lord Henry smiled. "Lorenzo is right," said he; "Protestants contradict themselves unceasingly."

I colored; for it was the first time Lorenzo attacked my religious principles. I did not venture to show the pain I felt, and yet I could not but acknowledge the justice of his remark. Displeased and embarrassed, I began to read, without making any reply. The book was a collection of the contradictions of the reformed church, a work which our ministers very prudently forbid their people to read. I knew the name of it, and I could easily imagine the indignation of the marquis, were he to surprise me with it in my hands. The reading of this book made a strange impression upon me. The virtues of Lord Walsingham's family, and the extraordinary elevation of Lorenzo's character, both concurred to give me lofty ideas of their religion which I had never had of my own.

Until the day when first I knew Lorenzo, I had heard of the faith of Catholics only as an assemblage of fanaticism, superstition, and outward forms. I now beheld this same religion under quite a different aspect, and my conscience unceasingly reproached me for having adopted false notions, and cherished them without inquiring into their truth.

I entreated Lorenzo to let me have his book, and I passed a part of the night in reading it.—Lorenzo and Henry had both left me; the former had not returned to his room, and it was now about one o'clock in the morning. Troubled, and not knowing what to resolve, I went out secretly, intending to open my mind to one or the other; but, instead of going to Henry's room, I took, without knowing it, the way to the chapel; I did not observe it until I had opened the door. There I encountered my two friends just going out. They said nothing. I entered alone into the sanctuary. I prayed God to enlighten and calm my mind. I then returned in silence

to my room. Lorenzo was on his knees, near the bed, praying as usual.

Some days after, little Hilda, the elder son of Henry, was seized with a violent fever, attended with convulsions; and in a few hours his life was in imminent danger. The agonized father went himself to the city, in quest of a physician, whom he brought back with him; but just as he returned, the child had so violent a fit that they supposed him dead. Henry, wild with grief, regarded his child with a kind of despair; then, tearing himself from the barrowing sight, he struck his forehead against the mantel-piece with a vehemence which made me think he was wounded.

Lorenzo, who was near, took his hand, and said, with warmth: "Henry, where is your religion? is not God always the same?"

"Great God," exclaimed Lord Walsingham, "who speaks to me? Is it you, — unhappy victim of my errors? You whom I have sought so many years?"

Lorenzo hastily approached me, with an air of great disquietude. Henry was in a dark part of the room, and could not distinguish who accosted him. It was nine o'clock in the evening. The candles were collected near the sofa on which the child lay, and their light was cut off from the other parts of the room by the persons who surrounded the little sufferer.

"Is this you, Sidney?" said Lorenzo to me. "I pray you, do me the kindness to go to Henry, that he may not know it was I who spoke to him."

I did as he desired, without taking time to reflect. I took Lord Walsingham by the arm, and led him to the child, who now manifested signs of life. We passed a painful night, but before day little Hilda was out of danger.

Henry was more indisposed than his son. He was ardent in his affections, and his constitution, being delicate, could ill support the activity of his imagination. He retired to rest towards morning. At nine o'clock, I went to see him; he entreated me to bring Lorenzo to him; but I was surprised at the repugnance with which Lorenzo consented to approach the invalid.

We seated ourselves near the bed. "You can," said Henry, addressing Lorenzo, "remove from me great uneasiness by informing me from what country you are, and how you were deprived of your sight."

Lorenzo colored. "I was born in Scotland, and I am twenty-two years of age; that is all I can tell you. The events which have marked my life have never been known, save by one individual who no longer exists, and they are too sad to interest any body."

"Henry and Sidney are not then your friends," said Lord Walsingham, in a tone of gentle reproach. "Perhaps my confidence will encourage yours," he continued; "it will prove, at least, how very strong the reasons are which induced me to propose a question which may have appeared to you imprudent. My parents, friends, even my wife, know nothing of the bitter sorrows which have destroyed the happiness of my life. I had never either friend or confidant, nor knew the delight of solid friendship before the day which brought me Lorenzo and Sidney."

"I thought," mildly interrupted Lorenzo, "that Rev. Mr. Billingham had a sacred right to your confidence." Mr. B. was the chaplain of Remember-Hill, a man in his fortieth year, well informed, enlightened, and endowed with every virtue which forms the character of a saintly clergyman.

"You are right, Lorenzo," resumed Henry; "until now, however, I have given to Mr. B. only an indispensable confidence, and nothing more. My affection for you urges me to open my heart to you. I prefer letting Caroline believe me happy, than to trouble her peace by the recital of my irreparable misfortunes. You alone, perhaps, can apply a remedy to the evil; at all events, I count upon your inviolable fidelity in observing secrecy."

I immediately promised what he wished; but Lorenzo, buried in his reflections, made no reply.

CHAPTER IV.

Henry spoke as follows: "Born with ardent passions which developed themselves with age, and educated in the reformed religion, I had not learned the habit of repressing the violence of my inclinations, and I was almost the victim of them. The countess of Walsingham, my mother, was, on the female side, descended from a branch of the Spanish house of the dukes of Medina. Her father, Count Tancredi had made her the heir to his hatred for the house of Medina, with which he had had some quarrels that were perpetuated on both sides, even to the third generation. I had one sister, who finished her education at Paris. When I had attained my twentieth year, I travelled with my paternal uncle, Count Tancredi; we visited my sister, and to my sorrow, I saw her most intimate friend, Dona Maria of Medina. Her name recalled all the rivalry of our families, and should have taught me never to think of her. But I had a weak

and susceptible heart, impetuous passions, and very little command of them.

"I dared not open my heart to my uncle, although I loved him tenderly. We again met the duke of Medina and his daughter in society, for Dona Maria left the convent shortly after our arrival, her education being then finished. I thought I perceived that my attentions were not despised, notwithstanding the insurmountable obstacles which opposed themselves to what I supposed my happiness. One evening, in my presence, they spoke of Dona Maria of marriage. She replied, in such a way that I might hear, 'I will never marry any one who does not profess my religion, and who is not agreeable to all my family: at the same time, I will never marry against my will.' These words, which should have opened my eyes to the obstacles that were to be overcome, in order to arrive at the accomplishment of my wishes, served only to increase my illusions and my hopes.

"At this period, I met also at Paris the marquis, Arthur of Rosline. His mother and mine were both Spanish, and first cousins. The former, sister of the duke of Medina, had married the marquis of Rosline, of whom Arthur was born; and after the death of her first husband, she was united to the duke of Salisbury, by whom she had, among other children, Caroline, my wife, and Hilda, who must now be twenty-two or twenty-three years of age. I spent eighteen months at Paris, at the expiration of which the departure of the duke of Medina and his daughter was spoken of. I then felt the strength of my attachment. I solicited the place of page of honor to a prince of the house of Spain, whom the duke was about to accompany. The count of Tancredi aided me with all his influence; but the duke had anticipated us, and obtained the favor for Lord Hilda of Salisbury, his nephew. This circumstance aggravated the hatred of the house of Tancredi against that of Medina.

"I quitted Paris and went to Spain, before the departure of the duke and Dona Maria.—My uncle, who conjectured the state of my heart did everything to divert me; a fervent Catholic, he failed not at the same time to pursue an object which enlisted all his tenderness and solicitude; I mean my conversion. I was adverse to his views. My mother, my sister, and Dona Maria, the object of my dearest affections, were all Catholics; but the prejudices of childhood, the attachment of my father to his belief, a thousand human motives prevented my being one. The hatred existing between the Catholic families of Tancredi and Medina I disapproved, although I shared it myself. I knew enough of their religion to be aware how much these dissensions were contrary to its maxims; nevertheless, like most Protestants, I attributed to the Catholic faith what was merely an effect of human weakness.

"I traversed the south of Spain and Portugal. My attachment to Dona Maria and the kindness of Count Tancredi recalled me to Madrid, where the first intelligence I received was the approaching marriage of the dóna, for which they only awaited the arrival of Lord Hilda, her cousin.

"My despair changed into fury, and Lord Hilda was the object of it. I learned that he was seventeen leagues from the capital. I said nothing to my uncle, but left upon the table a letter which informed him of my unhappy passion, my grief, and my determination to prevent the marriage of Dona Maria, or die. I set out for a small town where the duke of Medina and his daughter were; from this place I sent a challenge to Lord Hilda, and went to await him at the place which I had designated, and which was situated upon the road.

"Two days passed without my receiving any intelligence. Unable any longer to subdue my rage and my despair, I formed another scheme. O my friends, how weak is man, when the voice of religion has not sufficient influence to calm the passions which swell and agitate his soul! How unhappy are they who, in great trials, turn not their eyes to the all-powerful God! What misery and tears do they not prepare for themselves, who, with the passions of youth, are not restrained by the thoughts of religion, and the fear of divine chastisement! Determined to avenge myself, and force Lord Salisbury to try the chance of mortal combat, I resolved to waylay him in a forest, by which they had assured me he would pass in the evening. I was unknown. By bribes I induced some people in the neighborhood to aid me in my design.

"A carriage passed; I thought I recognized the livery of the duke of Medina. I ordered my people to stop it. They met with a determined resistance: some shots were exchanged. To prevent serious consequences, I had still prudence enough to command my men to charge their pistols only with powder; but the wretches whom I was forced to employ, disregarded my orders. Frightful shrieks were heard. One of the duke's servants was wounded. The report of the fire arms brought succor; my base ac-

complices deserted me; and alone, a prey to the most cruel agitations, and in an excitement bordering on delirium, I was arrested, bound; and I was twenty minutes in a dungeon of the prison of —, before I was able to call up the events which had transpired.

"My sentence was not long delayed. I expected immediate death, which would have put an end to my misery. I was condemned to the loss of my sight, and to perpetual imprisonment. When they came to apprise me of my fate, I had passed seven days in cruel uncertainty. The expectation of death had opened my eyes. The tender exhortations and advice of Count Tancredi were recalled to my mind. I began to think seriously of the eternity which I expected soon to enter. I was occupied with these reflections when the announcement of my punishment threw me into agonizing despair. I had seen nobody but the jailor and two officers of justice, who had interrogated me; I had denied nothing; my sentence was just; but I should have preferred the loss of life to that of sight and liberty. Deprived of weapons, I struck my head violently against the dungeon walls. I longed to be crushed under its ruins. A day and night, which seemed like an age, passed tediously away.

"Towards three o'clock in the morning, my door opened; I groaned; it was immediately closed. An undetermined and light step was heard; some one approached and took my hand. The rays of the moon, penetrating through a little grated window which was close to the ceiling, rested on the wall of my cell, but did not enlighten the interior. I distinguished with difficulty, a person on his knees, and leaning towards me. I was on a wretched bed, and had not been able to close my eyes for thirty-six hours, since my sentence had been made known to me. Never shall I forget the sweet tone of that voice which penetrated my heart.

"Henry," said the stranger, "where is your religion? God is still your Father; it is he who sends me to you."

"Great God!" I exclaimed, rising suddenly, "are compassion and kindness yet reserved for me! But what can save me from my frightful fate? At twenty-two years to lose light and liberty forever!"

"Nothing lasts forever, in this world," said the stranger, mildly; "but you are not of my religion; you cannot feel the innumerable consolations which she offers to the most afflicted."

"There is no consolation for me;—consolations? No; neither is there religion," I replied, wildly; "I wish to die."

"And if God should preserve your liberty and sight, would you no longer use them to resist the truth; but consecrate to him a life which he alone can take from you?"

"Ah! I have promised it, and I here reiterate the solemn promise," I exclaimed; "if by an effect of his almighty power, the God of the Catholics, who has been represented to me as so good and so compassionate, save me, I will embrace that religion which, more holy and perfect, would enable me to serve him better. Yes, I promise you to live and die a Catholic."

"The stranger leaned his head upon his hand, and preserved a long silence. Then, quickly rising, "There is not," said he, "a moment to lose; take my clothes and give me yours. I have nothing to fear, and but one favor to ask. Fulfill your promise; and if you can, go to Bayonne, or if you pass through that city when returning to your own country, inquire for Senor Don Silva, and address yourself to him to strengthen your faith; he is a young and saintly priest. Say to him that his friend Hilda walks in the path which he traced for him, and that he hopes with aid from above, never to stray from it."

"On concluding these words, he put round my neck a ribbon to which was attached a little cross. 'Never part with this token of my friendship,' he added; 'I received it from a brother whom I tenderly love, before I became a Catholic. In fixing your eyes upon this cross, you will remember that suffering is the way to heaven; and that, after the example of his divine model, the true Catholic should be humble, patient, faithful, and resigned. Give this purse to the jailor,' he continued, handing me one full of gold, 'and fly far from this city. Count Tancredi is no longer at Madrid; but you will find him at the village inn of —, where he lies wounded.'

"I fell upon my knees before my deliverer; I wanted to ask many questions. As a reply to all, he embraced me with great affection; then tearing away from me, he knocked loudly at the door. The jailor opened it, and took me by the hand. I gave him the purse, and wrapping myself in the stranger's cloak, I went out of that horrible abode, shuddering at the thought of leaving there my generous liberator; not doubting, however, that he had only to make himself known, in order to be set at liberty.

"At the village of —, I learned with heartfelt grief that Count Tancredi, attacked by assassins in a neighboring forest, had been seri-

ously wounded and carried to the inn, where he had just expired. His servants told me that a young lord who passed the night with him, had said, on leaving, that I would come immediately to replace him. I asked his name, but nobody could tell me. They informed me, also, that Lord Hiddallah had been assassinated the same day, and by the same highwaymen. I gave orders that the body of the count should be borne to his family at Toledo; and, not daring to prolong even for a moment, my stay in a province so fatal to me, I started for Bayonne.

"In V — I was accosted at the hotel, by a Spanish officer who had seen me in France.—'You know,' said he, 'the terrible misfortune which has befallen the duke of Medina?'

"No; what is it?"

"But,—that is to say, his daughter, Dona Maria.' He then related the melancholy event of which I was the author. He added: 'They have not as yet discovered the name of the guilty wretch; the whole affair is enveloped in profound mystery, which will, probably, never be unravelled; the assassin, who was unknown, having died, they say, during the execution of the sentence, which condemned him to lose his sight. Dona Maria has been affected in an extraordinary manner by all these circumstances. She was seized with a severe illness; her reason was totally destroyed. I have seen her since her misfortune; she is very pale, with a calm and touching expression of countenance; she does not weep, but there is in her insanity something so sad and gloomy, that she inspires the greatest compassion.'

"The officer continued speaking for some time, but I heard no more. He left me without remarking the frightful state into which his recital had thrown me. The death of my deliverer, a cruel death which he had suffered for me, entirely absorbed my thoughts, and rendered me almost insensible to the melancholy condition of the unfortunate Dona Maria. I withdrew to a retired part of the garden, and threw myself upon a bench, a victim to the most poignant anguish." Henry paused, and covered his face, which was bathed in tears, with his hands. "O God!" he exclaimed, "thou alone has sustained me!"

CHAPTER V.

After a silence of some moments, Henry resumed. "I have already exposed to you the violence of my character. I strove, however, through respect for the memory of my benefactor, to be resigned to my fate. I arranged everything to continue my route; but a malignant fever detained me two months at V —. As soon as my health was re-established, I set out for Bayonne; my only consolation was to fulfil the promise I had made to Hilda, and to convey his remembrance to Senor Don Silva.

"On my arrival, I called upon this young lord, and was equally surprised and pleased to find in him a young man, but a few years older than myself. His expression was angelic. Sprung from one of the noblest families in Portugal, he had voluntarily embraced evangelical poverty. His sweet and persuasive conversation touched me. I told him that during two years, I had combated the desire of entering the Catholic Church, and that, determined no longer to resist my convictions, I had come to Bayonne, one of my friends having advised me to address myself to him. I then asked him if he remembered a young man named Hilda.

"His is a virtuous soul," said he; "God was pleased to make use of me to bring him back to the true Church; but for several months I have heard nothing of him. I hope he has persevered."

"A death-like paleness covered my face.—Don Silva begged me to be seated. I burst into tears. Embarrassed by my emotion, I informed him that I had just recovered from an illness which still rendered me very weak, and that after some time I would speak to him with entire confidence of the sorrows which his words recalled. He entreated me in so urgent and affectionate a manner to reside with him, that I could not excuse myself. He occupied a pretty little dwelling near the harbor; what might have lessened its agreeableness was its vicinity to the galley-slaves, whose vessels touched his house. When I remarked this to him—'It is expressly for that reason that I have chosen it,' said he; 'it is one of my delights to be near, to offer the aid and consolations of religion to those unfortunate beings who are deprived of every other comfort, and condemned to chains.' This reply gave me an insight into the soul of Don Silva, and redoubled my esteem for his religion. He furnished me with an apartment near his own. In the evening, as soon as I was alone, I fell upon my knees, and, for the first time, making the sign of the cross, I took from my bosom Hilda's little crucifix. It must have belonged to a distinguished family; the cross was composed of five sapphires, the image of gold, and the little nails which attached the figure to the cross, were brilliant. I repeatedly kissed this pledge of my eternal salvation, which was, at the same time, a gift from