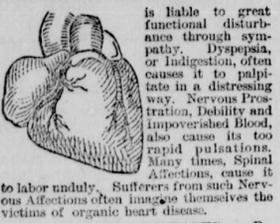


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FLORENCE O'NEILL

The Rose of St. Germain; or, THE SIEGE OF LIMERICK.

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

CHAPTER VIII.

"Yes, it is quite true that the king's troops are in so miserable a condition, that one-third of them could not be relied upon, if Tyrconnell upon his arrival were to give them a pistol each," said a fine looking young man in military uniform, in answer to the remarks of a brother officer, who had but recently joined William's forces in Ireland.

"I am surprised to hear there is such an amount of disaffection," replied our old acquaintance, Sir Reginald, "or that party feeling ran so high in favor of James, even in Ireland, but really I am getting disgusted at the paltry means that are being resorted to, to strengthen the hands of the king's government; from all quarters the same tales are rife; the most nefarious subterfuges are used to bring over wavering adherents of the Stuart race."

"Why, St. John," exclaimed his companion, in a tone of unfeigned surprise, "I should have thought you the last man on earth to be very particular as to how the party whose interests you espouse, should prosper, when we remember recent doings at Limerick."

"The hot blood rushed to the temples of St. John, and with his hand on the hilt of his sword, he replied: "Sdeath, sir! what do you mean by such a remark? What do I either know or care about what is going on in Limerick? I, who this night for the first time in my life, have seen this place, and have but within this short two hours arrived from Kinsale."

"My dear St. John," replied the young officer, placing his hand in a familiar and irritating manner on his friend's shoulder, "can you for one moment attempt to lead me to suppose that you are ignorant of all the fine things that have lately been done in your name to the unspeakable annoyance of Miss O'Neill's relations in Limerick! Own the truth," continued Seymour, the once sworn of Sir Reginald, "and say that you have forsown the beautiful Papist, whose heart is even now with the Jacobite crew at St. Germaines, who has come to save our lives and Protestant faith and liberties, and from pure disinterestedness has taken his father-in-law's crown for himself."

"Have done with your taunting gibes, Seymour, and come to the point at once; explain in what way my name has been used, and tell me who has dared say anything against my betrothal with the lady Florence."

"The spirit of mischief had evidently taken possession of the naturally mischievous Seymour, for after having, to the unspeakable disgust of St. John, given vent to the risible faculties in a hearty burst of laughter, he replied: "You have an intimate friend, named Benson, St. John, a canting old knave, forgive the expression, and—"

"Ah, Benson, what about him, he left me some two months since, to make a journey into Wales, to visit some relations; he has not been to Ireland for many years."

"Indeed," said Seymour, vainly attempting to repress another burst of laughter, "really now this is too ridiculous; do you mean to deny St. John, that you do not know that he offered himself to the military authorities of this town as a spy on General Sarsfield's movements; that you even deputed him to be the means of conveying the intelligence to the family of Miss O'Neill, that your opinions and feelings were so wedded to the cause of William of Orange that you had eventually broken the chains which had hitherto subsisted between you, and which for some time past have become weaker and weaker? To sum all up in a few words: you are said by him to have led Harding to write to Benson in your name, requesting him

to further the good cause by every means in his power, to gain admission to the maternal aunt of Florence O'Neill, resident at Limerick, and through her to become a spy on the actions of the General and his party, avowing also your regret that you had suffered the charms of her beautiful face to draw you aside from the allegiance you owe to William and Mary. Moreover, you express an eager desire to redeem past errors by offering your services as speedily as possible to our commanding officers in this place. Such, my dear fellow," added Seymour, "to corroborate all, here you are in your own person; but forgive my ill-timed merriment, for I see that an ill use has been made of your name. But really, when I remember the finale, and Benson's exit from the house of Miss O'Neill, which set all Limerick in an uproar, it is exceedingly hard to repress another burst of laughter."

"For heaven's sake, Seymour, be quiet," said St. John, "and tell me the whole truth; for some enemy has been at work, over and above the vile mischief-making Benson, whom I am determined shall not have the opportunity of meddling with my affairs in future."

Seymour then narrated in his own words those circumstances with which the reader is already acquainted, relative to the capture of Benson, or Layton, as for the sake of disguise, he had chosen to call himself, together with an account of the summary punishment inflicted on him at the hands of the mob.

It were, of course, vain to attempt to describe the wounded pride, mortification and anger with which St. John listened to all he had to say, or his pleasure on hearing of the punishment of his villainous ex-pretector Benson. For a few moments he was silent, then he said:

"Farewell, Seymour, for awhile, before an hour is over I shall be on my way to Limerick."

"To Limerick!" ejaculated his friend, "why it is the headquarters of General Sarsfield."

"Exactly so, and also the dwelling-place of the General's cousin, Miss O'Neill."

"And in your present mood, I shall not be surprised to hear of a defection, for it is not unlikely you may find your way to Sarsfield himself," said Seymour, with a significant glance at St. John's dejected countenance.

"Keep your surmises to yourself, Seymour, I have been foully wronged as you well know, and—"

"True enough," was the reply, "and as I am your sworn friend, I say nothing and keep my thoughts locked within my own breast, but I tell you, Reginald, I am morally certain that a very short time hence King William will hear that the cousin of the aged St. John, the supporter of the commonwealth, hitherto so devoted to his interests, has passed over with many others to the ranks of the exiled James."

CHAPTER IX. With an unusual degree of outward calmness and composure, which she was, however, far from feeling, Florence prepared to accompany her uncle to the palace: on arriving at which she was at once shown into a small ante-room, communicating with the boudoir of the queen.

This, the favorite sitting-room into which Mary had been ushered, was hung with pale blue silk, the draperies and curtains festooned and looped with silver, the ottomans and couches being also of the same color and material. Tables of curiously inlaid wood supported vases of precious metals; some were filled with the choicest exotics, others exhaled an almost oppressive odor from the perfumes burning within them, so that as Florence entered the apartment a sense of faintness stole over her, but she remembered the necessity there was for calmness and composure in the presence of the queen; and, leaning on the arm of Lord Clarendon, with a cheek only a shade paler, perhaps, than usual, the heiress of the O'Neills approached Mary with a firm step, and gracefully kneeling, pressed to her lips the small white hand so graciously extended, though her heart was all with Mary of Modena.

Still there was something in the presence of Mary of England which fascinated Florence in spite of herself. "She is a Stuart certainly, notwithstanding her grievous sins; she is so like our beloved king, her father," mused the girl for one short moment, during which the queen, with sweet soft words, requested her to be seated.

Yes, there were the features of the unfortunate line of the Stuarts strongly delineated on Mary's oval countenance, and as the eyes of Florence fell on her tall and still graceful form, her pleasing and regular features, and air of quiet dignity, they fell beneath the scrutiny of those dark sparkling eyes, bent so curiously and with so strict a scrutiny upon herself.

"I wish I might dare to love you," thought Florence, as her eyes met those of the queen.

cheek, "I mean is his health good, as also that of his consort?" "His majesty was well, and also my gracious mistress," said Florence; "and pleased, indeed, will they be to hear that I, already so favored by their notice, should also have been honored by your majesty's gracious reception of my poor self."

"And you do not meditate a return to St. Germain?" said Mary, fixing her eyes with a penetrating glance on the features of Florence, as though she would read her very thoughts. But no that cannot be, if rumor speaks correctly, for it is said that you are betrothed to Sir Reginald St. John, one of the most favored of our beloved lord and consort; nay, our royal favor has been sought in this matter; but of that later. We know that Sir Reginald is of himself deserving, and we see that the lady he has chosen has even more than her fair share of woman's charms; but, as we have already said, we will speak of this later, at a more fitting time, and then devise measures for your nuptials, and make arrangements, it may be, for your future well-being near our own person."

Then turning to her uncle, Lord Clarendon, Mary entered into a long and animated discussion respecting the contemplated departure of the king, leaving Florence a prey to any but pleasurable emotions. Had she dared to express the feelings of her heart she could not have done so, for Mary had purposely contrived her speech cunningly enough, leaving her no room to expostulate, assuming for granted that she was graciously furthering the most ardent desires of the girl's heart, and so closing her speech as to afford Florence no chance of escape, without being guilty of the most flagrant breach of etiquette by interrupting the queen whilst speaking, or rudely breaking in when she was addressing the Earl. In fact, Florence was marvelously like some wretched fly, when securely trammelled in the spider's web, and every effort was now exerted to throw a veil of dissimulation for the present over her own conduct, and to govern well her outward bearing, in order that no trace of the inward anxiety she endured should escape her, and be evidenced in the expression of her features.

But Mary was far too penetrating in her judgment, and too clear-headed to be at all deceived. Her speech had been artfully contrived. She knew well one of the most ardent admirers of the unfortunate Mary of Modena had knelt unwillingly at her feet, that she had broken off her proposed union with Sir Reginald solely because the latter was attached to her court, that the girl's whole heart was centred in the weal of the exiled James, and that she was anxiously looking forward to the time of her return to St. Germaines.

But the queen had resolved she should not see St. Germaines again if she could help it, that she should marry Sir Reginald, and, moreover, little by little, she would manage to extort, having first gained access to her heart by the exercise of all those blandishments of which she was mistress, a full account of all that was passing in France.

It remained, however, for time to show whether the queen could so easily manage her new prey as she supposed; but be that as it may, the latter felt, when too late, that she had played a rather dangerous game in coming to London, or, being there, by failing to preserve the strictest incognito; and still more embarrassed was she when, at the moment of parting, Mary, with the same gracious tone and manner, addressing herself to the baronet, said:

"You will not forget, Sir Charles, that we shall use all our influence to promote this affair of the nuptials of your niece. We have felt much interested in the Lady Florence, in consequence of the reports which have reached our ears of her beauty and worth; and ascertaining from the king that Sir Reginald has but recently left the metropolis for Ireland, we have obtained his promise that he shall be at once summoned back to England."

Much as Florence wished to speak she dared not, but merely bowed her acknowledgments, whilst the baronet was profuse in his thanks for the interest the queen evinced in her welfare; and with a heart full of gloomy apprehensions for the future, Florence accompanied her uncle back to his residence.

Alone in her boudoir, the queen moodily watched their departure, accompanied by her uncle, the Earl of Clarendon, and with compressed lips and fingers, nervously clutched together, she exclaimed, aloud:

"Well met, a pretty traitor! In the girl I take some little interest, and will mould her to my will; but if she prove rebellious—well, ay, what then? Suppose she is of a stubborn nature. Yet, no; with this St. John daily, hourly beside her, she will become all I wish to see her, a willing tool in my hands. She does not like my proposal, however, for I saw the color in her cheeks come and go when I spoke of her staying here, and of my hastening her nuptials. And as to you, my beautiful uncle," continued the queen, with increased irritation, as she beheld Lord Clarendon passing through the court-yard beneath her window, "I have you fast, and will take care you are safely caged in the Tower, if in the slightest way you are found to have any share in this new conspiracy, a rumor of which has reached us, and in which your name is coupled with that of fair mistress Florence and others we had thought affected to our persons, and if"

"Aye, indeed, if they are guilty let them have such mercy as they deserve," said the voice of William of Orange, who, unobserved, had entered the boudoir and overheard the soliloquy of the queen. "I tell you, Mary," said William, "to watch Clarendon well, and do not suffer his relationship to yourself to mar the ends of justice. Trust me, he is not faithful to our interests."

"I know it," said Mary, fixing her eyes reproachfully on her husband, "but do not speak to a wife devoted and tender as myself of any thought of family connections being suffered to clash with the duty which I owe to you. Ah, my beloved one," she continued, clasping her husband's hand tenderly within her own, "cared I ever for my own kindred when you are concerned; cared I even for the father of whom I was the most indulged and favored child; have I not ever been the most dutiful and submissive wife, and when I had left home and kindred for you, did I not soon tear from my heart, whether at your bidding or not, every emotion of old home affection, not given to you, so that I might be more truly and entirely yours?"

"Well, yes, I must give you the praise you have deserved, and own you have done your duty in my regard," said William. "I have found you generally faithful in these points, and when remiss a few words of admonition have set you in the right path again, though remember, for your caution, if ever tempted to err again in this regard, that I encountered difficulty with you in days gone by."

The fine eyes of Mary filled with tears as again she gazed reproachfully on her husband.

"Ah, my best beloved," she said, "remind me not of my former shortcomings, which, God knoweth, I have long since bitterly atoned for by many a tear in the long hours of your absence from my side. I tell you once more that Clarendon shall suffer severely should we find him in the slightest way implicated in this rising. Small mercy shall he meet with, any more than if he were an alien to my blood; or, indeed, the fair Florence O'Neill either, should she be involved or mixed up with mischief, as the *pro tege* of my gracious step-mother is most likely to be."

"Ah, indeed, and pending that matter of the girl," said the king, "I have sent to Ireland to require the immediate return of St. John, and if it be true that she has dared refuse him for his known fidelity to myself, it will be matter for conjecture as to what course she will now pursue."

"Poor fool," said Mary, laughing, "did I not dislike her for the unwarrantable prejudice she presumes to entertain against us, I could almost have pitied the agitation she suffered when I spoke of our interesting ourselves to hasten her wedding, and that you had summoned St. John hither. She played her part well, but is too unsophisticated to have gained the mastery over her features. Indeed, the mistress whom she almost adores—for she regards Mary of Modena, I have been told, with feelings little short of veneration—has taught her no lesson on that point, for she herself is the creature of impulse, as your majesty well knows, and by look, or word, or hasty exclamation, is sure to discover to the world all she feels; and no small wonder that this minion, who holds her in such veneration, imitates the idol at whose shrine she bows. But I will watch her well and closely, and if I find foul play to your interests, my life, depend on it, your loving wife will not spare her power to avenge and punish, whether the transgressor be Clarendon, in whose veins my own blood flows, or the fair descendant of the O'Neills, on whose face I never looked till now."

Thus spoke the wife of William of Orange, now bidding adieu for a few hours to the man at whose word she had sworn every other tie, and trampled under foot the holiest affections of our nature. It is a historical fact that it was the constant aim of William to root out of her heart every natural emotion; and well did he succeed, for she soon imbibed the naturally cold, apathetic disposition of her husband, and centred all her ambition in deserving the epithet of a humble and obedient wife.

It is hard to look back into the records of the time at which we write and not feel indignation at the subservient devotedness of this misguided princess, who whilst she deliberately crushed every emotion of filial affection beneath her feet, carried her attachment to her husband on a maudlin sentimentality, servile in her submissiveness, and idolatrous in her love of one who, cold as was his nature, had a warmer spot in his heart for another than his wife, and who, to say the least, was but a cold and indifferent husband.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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PAPAL INFALLIBILITY.

A Protestant Who Says It Only Requires the Exercise of High Reason to Believe the Doctrine.

To the Editor of the Catholic Times: I was interested in the letter of Mr. Seaman and your answer thereto, which appeared in the March 17th issue and also in that of March 21. Some fifteen years ago while studying the claims of the Catholic Church and endeavoring to obtain solutions to various difficulties which arose in my mind as the result of my Protestant education I asked myself the question: "What is to prevent a wicked Pope from deliberately betraying his trust, and in spite of his infallibility, spreading error broadcast throughout the Church?"

As I understood it, it seemed to me that his infallibility insured his positive possession of the truth, but his peccability allowed his betrayal of it. But in reality I suppose that the doctrine of infallibility includes not only the divine guidance of the Pontiff's mind, so far as relates to his own possession of the truth, but also the overruling Providence which controls the public enunciation of it.

As a remarkable instance of how God overrules the declarations of men, when it suits His purpose to do so, I would refer you correspondent to the narrative of King Balaak and Balaam the prophet as recorded in Holy Scripture. (Numbers xxii., xxiii., xxiv.) Here are shown in a most wonderful manner how, despite the weakness of the prophet, and the temptation he was under, both by reason of the bribe of honor and riches offered by the King as well as through the fear the prophet had of the King's anger, he was compelled by the Lord to speak the truth concerning the future of Israel and to bless, instead of cursing, the people of God and to prophecy their future glory and greatness.

The consideration of this narrative helped me very considerably to appreciate the security of mind, I might add the reasonable security of mind, the devout and believing Catholic possesses upon the subject of the divine guidance of the Church.

He feels at all times that over and about the human elements of the Church, whether that element arises to the sublime heights of that sanctity which is so becoming to it, or whether it falls to the depths of imperfection which is so unbecoming to it, Almighty God is present not only as enlightening, guiding, directing, but also as overruling the actions of men.

When we consider God as not merely enlightening the mind of the visible head of His Church, but as overruling His utterances, the faith of Catholics is shown to be most reasonable and based upon the highest kind of certainty.

We have the command of God to "hear the Church," with a penalty attached to disobedience to this divine injunction; and coupled with this we have the divine promises: "I will be with you all days, even to the end of the world" as a teaching body. The "gates of hell shall not prevail against it" ever rings in our ears, to remind us that Christ, the founder of the Church, is as calm and undisturbed by the storms which rage around Him as He was when quietly sleeping in the company of His disciples amid the raging tempest in the Sea of Galilee.

I will add but one more sentence and then close. It does not require the exercise of "credulity," but of the highest reason on the part of your correspondent to believe in the Catholic doctrine of infallibility of the Pope.

Yours very truly, R. S. PETTET, 1,326 N. Twelfth street, Phila.

The Danger of Irreverence. Unbelief comes oftener from irreverent association than intellectual doubt. The sneer of a Voltaire has killed more than all his arguments. A jesting tone of talk on religious truths, is to take the name of God in vain, as truly as the vulgar oath; and when I hear him who calls himself a Christian or a gentleman, indulging in burlesque of this sort, I at once recognize some moral defect in him. Intellect without reverence, is the head of a man joined to a beast.

There are many who think it a proof of wit; but it is the cheapest sort of wit, and shows as much lack of brains as of moral feeling. I would say it with emphasis to each Christian who hears me, never indulge that habit, never allow sacred things to be jested at without rebuke; but keep them as you would the miniature of your mother for no vulgar hands to touch. There is an anecdote of Bayle that he never pronounced the name of God without an audible pause; and what ever you think, I recognize in it the dictate of a wise heart. We need this reverence in the air of our social life, and its neglect will palsy our piety.

Fatal Result of Delay. Sickness generally follows in the path of neglect. Don't be reckless; but prudently take a few doses of Scott's Emulsion immediately following exposure to cold. It will save you many painful days and sleepless nights.

Sleeplessness is due to nervous excitement. The dedicated constituted, the financier, the business man, and those whose occupation necessitates great mental strain or worry, all suffer less or more from it. Sleep is the great restorer of a worried brain, and to get sleep cleanse the stomach from all impurities with a few doses of Paralee's Vegetable Pills, gelatine coated, containing no mercury and are guaranteed to give satisfaction if the money will be refunded.

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