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THE SIEGE OF LIMERICK

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

CHAPTER III.

MERVILLE GRANGE.

Towards the close of a drear October evening two travellers, spent with a long day's tollowne journey, wended their way across a fertile tract of land on the borders of Gloucestershire. The sky was of that heavy leaden hue which betokens a storm, and hollow gusts of wind ever anon swept across their path, carrying with them clouds of dust, while the sere and withered leaves whirled in circling eddies be-neath the hoofs of the jaded beasts, who had not, as yet, finished a hard day's

The closing in of the late autumn day was, indeed, wild and black enough to authorize the far from cause less fears entertained by the travel-lers. At the time of which we write, when not only reckless bands were well known to infest the highways but also some marauding party likely to be encountered on the road, joined to the fearful state of the weather, the prospect of passing a night on the wilds of Gloucestershire was far from pleasing, should the travellers not reach speedily the place of their destination. The younger of the two might, perhaps, have numbered some thirty years. His dress, a garment of simple black velvet, was made in some cort. of our the cabbine of the desired sort after the fashion of the day though, at the same time, it retained somewhat carefully, the excessive sim plicity which formed so prominent a character, even in the outward garb of the Puritans of old and their immed iate descendents, betokened him, to gether with a certain air of noblenes which marked his demeanor, to have come of gentle blood.

His companion, though with a form unbent with age, might, perhaps, have seen nearly eighty winters; his hair, white as silver, was combed over his forehead, and the naturally morose expression of his features now wore a sterner expression than usual, from the very fact that his creature comforts had been interfered with. This aged man was dressed in a suit of sober brown cloth; the style of his attire, and his general sanctified demeanor revealing without a doubt, the fact that Joshua Benson, whose appellation, in his early days, was, "Firm in Faith," was really one of the veritable Puritans of the generation now rapidly

passing away.
Sundry exclamations of impatience now broke forth from Benson, as his companion, Sir Reginald St. John, suffered his horse to trot slowly on, while he took a brief survey of the country around him, and wiped away the drops of perspiration which had gathered on his brow, for he had ridden long and

rapidly.
"It is a great shame to drag my old bones so far," burst forth the testy old man. "I wonder why you did not put up at the White Bear; it was a comfortable inn, good enough for jaded man and beast. I shall wonder if the Lord does not punish us for running into danger, 'for, verily, those who love danger shall perish in it.' Moreover, I have no liking for the place you are going to. I, Firm in Faith Benson, as I used to be called in the good old times, do not like even to enter the house of an ungodly man like this Papist, De Gray.'

replied Si Reginald, impatiently, notwithstand ing the respect he still felt for his former preceptor; "have I not already told you that I bear Sir Charles a letter from the king? He has never allied himself to those disaffected to the present Government, but always main tained a strictly neutral position. Charles is immensely rich; he ha broad lands in this county of Glouces tershire and in the wilds of Cumber land, and if we can but win him ove to join the forces of King William, he will bring many others with him, and may well afford to aid our royal mas

RUN DOWN WITH

DYSPEPSIA STOMACH Liver



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ter with purse as well as counsel, and for I believed her to be at St. Gerinstruct him of much that he ought to know, if all report says be true."

"May be as you say," replied the old man, copying the example of his companion, who set spurs to his horse and galloped briskly onwards. "May be so," he continued, in a tone inaudible to his companion, who was again buried in thought; "but if I had you again in my power, young man, as I had when you were a boy, the Lord knoweth you should never have dared drag me on as you have done this cold drag me on as you have done this cou-bleak night. I could almost strike you now as in old times," he continued, his always thin, compressed lips more compressed than usual, whilst his hand nervously clutched the bridle of his horse. "If I had power over you his horse. "If I had power over you now, I would soon see if you should take me to the house of this Papist, but I have borne the Lord's yoke from my youth, and though it is hard the once submissive lad should now be my master, I may live to see him a more worthy disciple yet.

At this moment a sharp turn in the road brought them to a fence, enclosing what, in the fading light of the October evening, rendered still more dim by the thick mist that was now falling, seemed to be thickly wooded park, whilst between the branches of the fine beech and chestnuts, which ined the avenue, appeared the red brick walls, with copings of freestone of a fine old mansion, built probably about the Elizabethan era.

An exclamation of gratified surprise burst from the lips of Sir Reginald, as, allowing the reins of his horse to fall over its neck, he let it canter slowly up the avenue which led to the principal entrance of the mansion, whilst Benson, with sundry exclamations of impatience, followed, moodily, behind his companion.

At the Grange at last, then," said Reginald, "for surely this must be Merville, the place I have often heard Lady O'Neill describe, as that in which she spent some time of her widowhood. Ah, yes," he added, as his horse trotted slowly on, "the description closely tallies, and, after all, I have reached the end of my journey sooner than I expected. There is the noble flight of steps I heard her speak of, with a spacious portico opening to the entrance hall, and, if I do not mistake, the ruddy, glaring light which stream from those narrow windows proceeds from an apartment in which the warmth and refreshment I sorely need may be obtained.

As he finished his soliloquy he found himself at the bottom of the steps leading to the grand entrance of the mansion, and, dismounting, he rang the heavy bell, the summons being at once answered by the hall porter.

It was in the power of Sir Reginald to procure a speedy audience baronet at whose mansion he had introduced himself, by means of a seale packet which he placed in the hands of the servant, and a moment later he found himself seated with Sir Charles in that same apartment, the windows of which had shone so cheerily without, from the united glow of lamp and fire-light, on that chill October night. But Benson and the knight both start alike. though each from different causes, as they enter the spacious dining room of Merville Grange. The former sees the figure of an aged man pass hastily across the room, and disappear behind the tapestry with which the walls are hung, and a strange fancy possesses him that in that hasty, fleeting glance he has recognized, in the face and form of the venerable ecclesiastic, one hunted down priests of Rome whom he had known in other and far distant times, and whom his heart rejoiced to see again, and in England, doubtless acting up to the calling of his office, for was he not in the house of the Papist De Gray? The start of Sir Reginald proceeded, however, from a very different cause. As he returned the salutation of Sir Charles, who still held in his hand the missive which the servant had delivered, the dark eyes of Sir Reginald, now unusually ani mated, fell on the figure of a beautiful girl, who for a moment gazed in surprise and mute astonishment on new comers; who, indeed, should the zealous adherent of William of Orange behold but his betrothed, the loyal and ardent Florence O'Neill, who would have willingly shed the last drop of her blood in defence of the rights of the Stuart race!

Habited in an evening robe of pale blue silk brocade, the sleeves, according to the fashion of the time, narrow at the shoulders where they were fast-ened with loops of ribbon, widening as they descended, and turned up at the cuffs, to show the under sleeves of rich point, the neck, also, heavily trimmed with point. Her single ornament consisted of a necklace of large pearls; her hair, perfectly unadorned, belling against the prevailing fashion, fell negligently over her shoulders. Pale almost as the pearls she wore, now stood the fair O'Neill, gazing in strange bewilderment on Sir Reginald, who thus unexpectedly had crossed her path. For one moment their eyes met in mute surprise, but brief as was that space, it attracted the notice of Sir Charles, on observing which, Sir Reginald, recovering from his astonishment, exclaimed, advancing to Flor-

"Your fair neice, Sir Charles, and my humble self are old friends, or, not to use such a term where Florence is concerned, I would rather say my betrothed, and tell you, if you are ignorant of our secret, that we spent to-gether much of our early childhood, especially during part of the widow-hood of Lady O'Neill, who was my own indeed, am I to meet Florence here.

It were hard to say whether Florence was pleased or not to meet with St. John, for the smile that had lighted up her countenance on the recognition that had taken place had so soon faded away. A painful foreboding of impending evil fastened itself upon her heart—in short, that sad feeling which we all experience at times, and are so wont to term presentiment, filled her mind with strange forebodings of com-ing sorrow. She gazed long and eagerly, scarcely noticing St. John, on the letter in her uncle's hand. The one word of astonishment which Sir Charles had attended. Charles had uttered on receiving the Charles had uttered on receiving the carefully folded paper from the hands of the domestic, coupled with the baronet's significant look and the words "William of Orange," had set all her fears alive as to the cause of the unlooked-for appearance of Sir Reginald. Florence would rather see the wreck of her own dearest hopes than become disloyal, yet the color fled from her cheeks, and scarce returning the greeting of Sir Reginald, she met the warm grasp of his hand with the pressure of one as cold as markle and sure of one as cold as marble, and almost mechanically resumed her seat.

"I will speak to you to morrow. Sir Reginald, about this matter," said Sir Charles, as he refolded the letter; "we will have no business conversation tonight; you are fatigued and weary, and shall partake of such hospitality as the Grange can furnish. Yours must have been dreary travelling for some hours past, and your aged friend looks, too, as if he sorely needed both

rest and refreshment." Weary enough was Benson; but had the poor baronet been cognizant of all that was passing in the mind of his guest, he would have known that it was the evil passions which filled his mind far more than natural exhaustion, that gave to his countenance that restless, distracted expression. withstanding, he managed to do full justice to the tempting viands placed before him, and demolished with tolerbefore him, and demonstred with toler-able rapidity a portion of a cold capon, flanked with ham, and a good allow-ance of venison pasty, with a quantity of fine old wine, which the hospitable baronet had directed to be placed be fore his guests.

Vain were the efforts of Sir Reginald to induce Florence to throw off the air of cold restraint that hung over her, and he observed, somewhat uneasily, that it was only when he introduced the subject of the Court at St. Germains that her spirits seemed to re-cover their wonted tone. For a time it appeared as if she yielded to the in-dignation she felt, for her eye kindled, and a bright flush suffused her lately pale cheek, when she spoke of Mary Beatrice and the ex-king. Then words of scorn rose to her lips, which she would not repress, as she spoke contemptuously of those worthless ones who had risen on the wreck of their own fathers' fortunes, of her deep, unswerving love of the Stuar race, of her resolution, if needs be, to give up her life's dearest hopes and affections for them, and to shed her blood, if necessary, in their service, and Sir Reginald felt that she for whom he would have given up all he held dear, save his honor, which was pledged to William and Mary, was, indeed, lost to him, that his own hopes were levelled with the dust; that drawn together by the holiest bonds of an affection which had grown up be tween them from childhood, the hand of the high souled kinswoman of the great Tyrconnell, the loyal Florence, never would be given in marriage to himself, even did her heart break in the reection she would most assuredly make of all overtures of an alliance. But if St. John was disturbed and uneasy from the cause we have mentioned not less so was the timorous barone who, in the fluctuations of political opinions, had determined to keep him self and his fortune perfectly safe, by maintaining a strictly neutral posi-tion. It was in vain that by sundry

impatient gestures, and again by an impetuous "pshaw," that he attempted to allay the storm which was rising in the breast of the excitable Florence In her own heart she ridiculed the timid fears of the old man, though respect for his age and the tie which existed between them, kept her silent where he was concerned. Moreover. Sir Charles had noted what Florence in her storm of impetuous feeling, had failed to observe: that Benson scarce ever removed his keen, light grev eve from the maiden's countenance; that ever and again an almos basilisk glance darted trom beneath those heavy eyelids, varied by a fierce expression of anger, which seemed as if it could scarce restrain itself. Sir Charles was an acute observer; he had failed in his endeavors to silence the incautious Florence, who imprudence was thus exposing herself and him to danger, and the baronet resolved to put an end to the conversa tion by commanding a domestic to conduct Sir Reginald and Benson to the apartments destined for their use.

A weird-looking gloomy chamber was that into which St. John was at length ushered, together with the extutor, after having passed up a spacious stone stair-case with heavy balustrades, and crossed several long corridors with apartments branching off both to right and left : but the cheerful blaze of a bright wood fire which burned in the ample stove gave an appearance of comfort, and the small inner apartment, communicating with that of the knight, had also been With a feeling of duly attended to. weariness and dissatisfaction, Sir Reginald threw himself into a chair beside mother's warmest friend. Delighted, indeed, am I to meet Florence here, mained for some time lost in a gloomy

reverie, not noticing the observant air of Benson, who, desirous of impart-ing to his companion the good advice he so much needed, now determined to abide by Sir Reginald as closely as in the days of his boyhood.

Do not suppose, however, that St. John put himself willingly under the surveillance of Benson, or patiently bore the infliction of his advice: the fact simply was, that he paid him that amount of respect and deference which one is wont to yield to those under whom we have been placed for a series of years, ranging from early youth to mature age. Moreover, Benson, introduced at first by the knight to the notice of the young knight to the notice of the Dutch king, had rapidly ingratiated himself in the service of the prince, so that the former friend and preceptor was converted, for the time being, into something very like a spy on the actions of Sir Reginald.

It was, indeed, to sound the opinions of the ease-seeking, comfort-loving, timorous old baronet, that St. John had been deputed by the king with a gracious message, commanding his presence at Kensington, and, likewise, was bade to express a hope that, in the event of his aid being required, should there be real cause for apprehension of a rising in favor of James, that he would not fail to be ready both with men and money, according as

circumstances might require.

William was cognizant of far more cf his favorite Reginald's intentions, than the latter was at all aware of, for Benson had apprised the king of his long-cherished attachment Florence O'Neill; thus it was then, that the knight was closely watched, for the advancement of a certain purpose in view, had Benson been requested openly by the king to accompany him into Gloucestershire, and his proud spirit continually chafed under the infliction of the constant presence of one for whom she was fast ceasing to feel the slightest regard.

Long and patiently did Benson regard the man whose disposition he so well knew, and the feeling of whose heart at that moment, he could so clearly read; so deep, however, was the abstraction of the latter in his own melancholy musings, that his attention was at last only roused by a movement purposely made by his companion.

"Are you grieving, man, because the Papist girl with the fair face will not have you; you, the favored friend of our gracious king," said the fanatic, in harsh, low accents, "what can you be thinking of to seek a mate from such a nest as this? Did I not see tonight, with my own eyes, the Romish priest, Lawson, pass swiftly through the apartment by another door than that at which we entered, and I know he recognized me too, for we were school-mates together before he had anything to do with Rome and her corruptions? That he was once my friend, matters not, for his superstit ious creed makes him now my foe. And this fair-faced girl with the mawky blue eyes," he added, his voice sinking to a whisper, "it is a pity but that the gracious Mary knew not the treasonable things I have heard her say this night. I warrant me the Papist crew at St. Germains would stand little chance of beholding her again ; but as to you, the favorite King William, and the beloved son of my adoption, you can surely think of her no more, for the Lord loves not to see his chosen ones wed with the daughters of Belial."

"Silence, Master Benson," said Reginald, rising as he spoke, his handsome countenance full of indignation, "remember I am no longer the boy whom you can lecture as your choose to regard or listen to offensive speeches; I tell you there lives not in the Court of Mary and William, a more pure or noble woman than she of whom you dare speak so lightly. Do not presume to mention her name again, and please to keep your fanaticsim, do not trouble me with it, nor meddle about affairs with which you have nothing to do."

"Verily," replied Benson, rising and taking a lamp from the table in order to withdraw to the inner apartment destined for his own, "I tell you St. John, you do not know what is for your own good, and in your mad fond-ness for this girl, treat very ill one who loves you as well as I do; I fancy you must be aware King William will not higher than to win the hand of this girl of a Papist brood, who is devoted soul and body to the miserable and be sotted James.

"How dare you presume to taunt me with the interference of the king,' exclaimed St. John, his temper nov gaining complete mastery over him. now understand once for all, Joshua Benson, our long friendship ends from this moment if you continue by word or action to presume to interfere with my affairs.

"Well then, dear St. John, pardon me if the love I bear you has made me too zealous. I promise you I will not give you offense again, but at the same time, I shall strive with the Lord earnestly before I seek my rest this I will wrestle with Him in prayer, that you may escape the perils which I am certain will fall on you if you dally a moment longer than is requisite in this abode of Satan.

Benson spoke thus as he withdrew from the room, but entering the inner chamber he closed the door, stood for a moment warming his withered hands over the fire, and then said in a low voice: "I cannot help loving the man as I loved the boy. The evil which I feared years since has come to pass, and out of the very affection I bear him, I will place a barrier in his way which he will not be able to remove.

He would not let me force him when a youth, surely not now; but never fear, I know how to gain my point by other means; once in London I can easily gain speech of the king, and if I do not mistake, all his fine plans will

soon end in nothing." Thus trying to gloss over his villainy under the specious pretence of affection for his benefactor and former pupil, Benson betook himself falling asleep whilst cogitating over the means he should adopt to carry out his

schemes. TO BE CONTINUED.

THE SUCCESSOR OF ST. AUGUS. TINE

The Archbishop of Canterbury has before him a somewhat difficult, delicate, and embarrassing task. The year 1897 will be the thirteen-hundredth anniversary of the landing of St. Augustine in England, and it is proposed by the Protestant Church to celebrate the commemoration by what is called a Pan-Anglican Conference, in which Dr. Benson will be the leading figure. Most of our readers are familiar with Dr. Benson's polite designation of the Catholic Church in Great Britian in our own time as the "Italian Mission." Agreed that his Grace is perfectly willing to concede that Catholics are members of the true Church, we regret we cannot reciprocate the kindness. Unlike many of his brethren in error, the Anglican chief is not merely content to hold by the "continuity" theory; he favours the "continuity" theory; he favours the "branch" idea if the differentia-tion is discernible. The "continuity" man contends that the Protestantism of to-day is the Catholicism of pre-Reformation centuries, and the "branch" theorist is rather disposed to argue that Protestantism is right, both being branches sprung from the common stem of primitive Christianity. We believe Dr. Benson is a "branch" man. Now, this celebra-

tion of Augustine's landing must put his Grace and those who take his view in rather a curious place. His argument, we take it, is that the creed which Parliament pays him to profess is the pristine Catholicism of England, and that the religion of Cardinal Vaughan, of our readers and our-selves, is something totally different to that pristine creed, some thing totally new to England. But, unfortunately for this theory, there are some facts on record which the celebration alluded to will recall, and which do not quite fit in with the views of Dr. Benson. What are the chief points of difference between Cardinal Vaughan, who may be taken as personifying the creed of the "Italian Mission," and Dr. Benson, who may be looked upon as the embodi-ment of England's pristine Catholic-ism? Both believe in God, both believe in the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption. What are the points of difference? It is rather difficult to enunciate them, since Dr. Benson has always been an eminently "safe" man, never committing himself to a definite statement, but to generalities and vaguenesses, which pass muster. The broad lines of difference, however, are clear enough. Cardinal Vaughan believes in the Real Presence; Dr. Benson does not. Cardinal Vaughan believes in the Invocation of saints and prayers for the dead; Dr. Benson does not hold these tenets. Cardinal Vaughan honors Our Lady; if Dr Benson does so he has never said any thing about it. Lastly, Cardinal Vaughan gives his allegiance, and takes his commission from the Roman See; Dr. Benson scouts the Roman

authority. Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, speak of him as the "successor of St. Augustine." Dr. Benson accepts the name, and thinks, or pretends, that he has a genuine title to it. But St Augustine came from Rome, sent by Pope Gregory: St. Augustine said Mass, and believed in the Real Presence therefore St. Augustine honored Our Lady; St. Augustine invoked the saints; St. Augustine prayed for the dead; St. Augustine tock his commission from Rome; St. Augustine gave his allegiance to Rome. Which denomination, then, has the soundest claim to be called not aking to, but identical with, the pristine Catholicism of Eng-Is it the creed of land? Vaughan, or the creed of Dr. Benson

We are told that the ecclesiastical head of the Protestant Church in England waxes indignant that the author ity of the English Church is called in question. It is rather difficult to restrain from indignation when in face of the facts stated we continue to hear impudent reference to our Faith as the "modern Italian mission." We would hope that Dr. Benson is an honost gentleman, as Newman, Manning and Faber were, but we are compelled to say that his acts bear the indication of his being a blustering hypocrite. London Catholic News.

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