



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE

VOL. XIX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1868.

No. 19.

NELLIE NETTerville;
OR,
ONE OF THE TRANSPLANTED.

By the author of 'Wild Times,' 'Blind Agnes,' etc.

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

He was clad in a garb which might have belonged to the native fishermen of the coast, yet no one could have mistaken him for other than a gentleman and soldier, as he stood there holding back the screen of matting, and gazing, with a look curiously compounded of amusement and annoyance, at the scene presented by the interior of the cottage. The latter feeling, however, was evidently in the ascendant—so much so, indeed, that he had actually made a half movement as if to retreat and leave the but to its unwelcome occupants, when something—a but a glimpse of Nellie's delicate profile, as she stooped over the glowing embers?—induced him to change his mind, and stepping quietly over the threshold, he dropped the curtain behind him with an energy and good will which seemed to indicate that, instead of his premeditated flight, he had made up his mind to accept with a good grace, and perhaps even to enjoy, this unexpected addition to his society. The sound of the falling mat warned Nellie of the advent of a stranger, and, crimson with shame and fear, she stood up to receive him. He gazed upon her steadily, the half feeling of annoyance still visible on his clouded brow, yielding gradually to a look of intense but reverent admiration, and removing his fisherman's cap from his head, he bowed courteously, and said in English:

'God save all here, and a hundred thousand welcomes also, if, as I apprehend, you are fugitives like myself from tyranny and injustice.'

There was an indescribable tact and courtesy in the way in which he combined this announcement of his being the master of the hut with a frank and ready welcome to his unknown visitants, which made Nellie feel at once that she had to do, not only with a man of gentle birth but of high and polished breeding also. Yet this fact seemed for the moment rather to add to her difficulty than to decrease it, and secretly wishing that the fish could be made, by some magical process, to disappear from the embers upon which it was comfortably broiling, she placed herself as much as she could between it and the stranger as she stammered out her apology for intrusion. Did he see the fish? and did he guess at the petty larceny she had just committed?—Nellie fancied she saw something like an amused look in his eye, which made her feel hot and cold by turns with the consciousness of discovered guilt; but the rest of his features wore no smile, nothing but an expression of kind and courteous sympathy, as he eagerly interrupted her excuses:

'Say no more, dear lady, say no more, trust me I have not now to learn for the first time to what dire straits the sad necessity of these days may bring us. And, therefore, to all who come to this poor hut, but more especially to those who, for honor and for conscience sake, have laid down wealth and power elsewhere, I have but one word—one greeting, and that is the old Irish one, of a hundred thousand welcomes.'

'A hundred thousand welcomes!' repeated a feeble, quivering voice close to the stranger's elbow. He turned and looked for the first time steadily at Lord Netterville, of whose presence up to that moment he had been barely conscious. The old man had risen from his seat, and stood smiling and bowing courteously, evidently thinking he was doing the honors of a home, of which—however humble—he was yet the undoubted master.

'Our house is poor, sir,' he went on, 'once indeed we boasted of a better; but let that pass. Such as it is—such as our enemies have made it—you may reckon assuredly upon meeting an Irish welcome in it.'

'Sir,' whispered Nellie through her tears, fearing lest the stranger might break in too rudely on the old man's delusion, 'he is old—he has been ill—he fancies he has reached his home; you must excuse him.'

The unknown turned his eyes upon the girl with a look so full of reverent sympathy that it went straight to her heart, never afterwards to be effaced from thence. She felt that her grandfather would be safe in such kindly hands, and was turning quietly away when Lord Netterville, still enacting his fancied character of host, threw a handful of dry wood upon the fire, and the blaze that instantly ensued fell full upon his features, which had hitherto been barely visible in the gloom. The stranger started violently.

'Good God!' he cried, in a tone of irrepressible astonishment. 'Is it possible that I see Lord Netterville, and in such a plight?'

'You know my grandfather, then?' cried Nellie joyously, feeling as if the stranger must have been sent by Providence especially to help

her in the hour of her utmost need. 'You know my grandfather?'

'I ought, at any rate,' he answered, with a sad smile, as he took Lord Netterville's proffered hand. 'For we fought together and were beaten at Kilrush; my first battle, and, as I suppose, his last.'

'Ha,' cried the old man, 'Kilrush, Kilrush! who speaks of Kilrush? Were you there, sir? Time must have played sad tricks upon my memory then; for truth to say, I do not recognise you.'

'Nay, my good lord,' said the stranger soothingly, 'it would be stranger still if you had done so, for I was but a beardless boy in those days. Nevertheless, I remember you, Lord Netterville, and surely you cannot have altogether forgotten the cheer we gave when you, a tried and veteran soldier, rode up to serve with us as a volunteer in the regiment of your gallant son.'

'I remember! I remember!' cried the old man eagerly. 'It was a bright and glorious morning, and we charged them gallantly—a bright and glorious morning but with a sad and bloody ending. Alas, alas!' he added, his voice falling suddenly from its trumpet-like tone of exultation to an old man's wail of sorrow. 'Alas, alas! how many of the best and bravest that we had among us lay dead and trampled in the dust, as we withdrew from that fatal field.'

He bowed his head upon his breast, and remained for a little while absorbed in thought, and Nellie took advantage of the pause to say:

'You knew my father, sir? You must have known him if you were near Lord Netterville at Kilrush; for father and son charged side by side, and were seldom, as I have since been told, ten minutes out of each other's sight during the whole of that bloody battle.'

'Knew your father? Yes, dear lady—if your father was, as I suppose, Colonel Netterville—I knew him well. He was the bosom friend of my uncle and namesake, Roger Moore of Leix, who placed me in his regiment when I joined the Irish army.'

'Roger Moore of Leix,' cried Nellie, a flash of enthusiasm lighting up her face; 'Roger Moore—the brave—the gifted—the first leader in a noble cause, whose very name was a battle cry, and whose followers rushed into fight, shouting for "God—our Lady—and Roger Moore!" Yes, yes; he was my father's friend. I remember even when I was a child how he used to talk about him. And you,' she added with a sudden change of voice and manner; and placing both her hands in his, 'you, then, are that Roger Moore, the younger, in whose arms my poor father died?'

'At the battle of Benburb,' said Moore, in a low voice; 'a glorious battle—well fought, and well won, and yet for ever to be regretted, for the loss of one of Ireland's bravest and most faithful soldiers.'

'Grandfather,' said Nellie, suddenly withdrawing her hands from Roger, and blushing scarlet at the inadvertence of her own action which had placed them in his, 'this is Captain Moore who bore my wounded father out of the press of battle, and to whom we are indebted for that last and loving farewell which he sent to us in dying.'

But instead of replying with an anger corresponding to her own, Lord Netterville gazed vacantly upon the stranger, evidently without the slightest recollection of his name or person, and repeated, in a low, mechanical voice, his previously muttered welcome.

'He does not remember!' said Roger. 'Alas, alas! for that bright intellect, once cloudless as a summer's noon.'

'Hush, hush!' whispered Nellie. 'Recollection is beginning to return.' And Lord Netterville did in fact seem to be making a languid effort at gathering up his scattered thoughts; for he looked at Roger, and said feebly:

'You knew my son, sir?—you knew my son?—then, indeed, you are very welcome. He was a brave boy, and fought for his king and country—fought and fell—on the field of—the field of—the name—which I thought never to forget—has almost escaped me.'

'Benburb,' Roger ventured to interpose.

'Benburb! Ay, that was the very name—Benburb—my memory does not fail me, sir; but I have been much tried of late—or we rode too far this morning—for I feel very faint.'

He tried to draw back from the fire as he spoke, but he tottered, and would have fallen if Roger had not caught him by the arm, and made him sit down upon the settle.

He is faint for want of food,' said Nellie hastily; 'we have been wandering all day among the hills, and he has not broken his fast since morning.'

Roger did not answer, but signing to her to support Lord Netterville, he went straight to some invisible cranny in the walls of the hut, and drew thence a bottle of strong cordial. Pouring a little of this into a broken mug, he made the old man swallow it, and then stood beside him,

anxiously watching the result. Happily it was favorable—in a few minutes Lord Netterville revived, the color returned to his wan cheek, and turning to Nellie, he asked her, in a half whisper, 'if supper would soon be ready?' Shyly, and blushing scarlet, Nellie nodded an affirmative, and forgetting all her previous shame in anxiety for her grandfather, she was about to resume her office as cook, when, with a half smile on his face Roger Moore put her quietly aside.

'Nay Mistress Netterville, remember that I am master here, and that I forbid you to lay hands upon that fish! I have always been cook in my own proper person to the establishment, and I cannot allow you to supersede me in the office.'

'Forgive me!' said Nellie, tears starting to her eyes, and half fancying in her confusion that he was angry in earnest. 'I could not help it, for he was starving.'

Do not misunderstand me, I entreat you,' said Roger, in a voice of deep and real feeling; 'I should be a brute if I objected to anything you have or could have done; I only meant that I objected to your continuing in that office; for so long as the daughter of my old colonel is under my roof, (even though it be but a poor mud sheeling,) she shall do no work, with my good will, unfit for the hands of a princess.' He busied himself while speaking in drawing forth from that same recess in which he had found the cordial some thin oaken cakes, a few wooden platters and one or two knives or spoons of such massive silver that Nellie could not help thinking they were as much out of keeping with the rest of the furniture as Roger himself appeared to be with the hut, of which he was doing the honors in such simple and yet such courtly fashion. He would not even let her hold the platter upon which he placed the fish as he took it from the embers, and he himself then brought it to Lord Netterville, and pressed him, as tenderly as if he had been a child, to partake of this impromptu supper.

The old man yielded, nothing loath, and so, indeed, did his grandchild, for, though very fair to look at, no goddess was poor Nellie, but a young and growing girl with the healthy appetite of sixteen. She accepted, therefore, Roger's invitation without the smallest affectation of reluctance, and sitting down on the floor beside her grandfather, shared the contents of his platter with innocent and undisguised enjoyment. With all her sense and courage she was as yet in many things a perfect child, yielding as easily as a child might do to the first ray of sunshine that brightened on her path, and accepting the happiness of the present moment as unrestrainedly as if never even suspecting the shadows that were lurking in her future. Now, therefore, that she felt her grandfather was in safe and helpful keeping, she threw off the sense of responsibility which had weighed her down for months, and became almost gay. Color rose to her wasted cheek, light sparkled in her eyes, and she responded to Roger's efforts to make her feel comfortable and at home, with such innocent and unbounded faith in his wish and power to befriend them, that he vowed an inward vow never to forsake her, but to guard her, as if she had been in very deed his sister, through the trials and dangers of her unprotected exile.—When their meal was over, and while her grandfather slumbered in the quiet warmth of the nestfire, she told Roger her story, simply and briefly, as she might have told it to a brother, beginning at her departure from her ancestral home, and ending with her encounter with the English strangers among the mountains.

'It is Major Hewitson,' said Roger, 'in whose favor I have been despoiled of my old home. Major Hewitson and his pretty daughter "Ruth," as he chooses to call her, in order to blot out the fact that her name is Henrietta, and that she had a popish queen for her godmother. She forgets it not herself, however,' he added, with a smile; 'for her mother was of noble race, and they say that she is a true cavalier at heart, and noses like a caged bird in the network of demure fanaticism which her father has twined around her.'

'She has a lovely face and a kind and honest heart for certain,' said Nellie. 'She knows you also, now I think of it, for she is who directed me to this hut, with a hint that I should here find a friend.'

'D-d she!' said Roger, with genuine fervor. 'Nay, then, for that one good deed I needs must pardon her, that she, or her father for her, have robbed me of my inheritance. And now I think of it,' he added, with a touch of sly malice in his smile, 'you also, if you came hither to seek land, must have been bound on the same errand; for both these baronies, "Umball agh-tragh" and "Umball iogh-tragh," is the country of the O'Maillys, and, in right of my grandmother, my own.'

Nellie blushed scarlet. 'Alas!' she said, 'I knew not whether or to whom they sent us; but sure am I, at all events, that we never would

have accepted of any home at the expense of its rightful owners.'

'Nay,' said Roger, 'I did but jest. Would indeed that it was to you I had been compelled to yield it! In spite of that fact you should have had, I promise you, a right royal welcome. And now I must needs explain. This sheeling, you must know, is not really my home. It is but a temporary refuge, of which I have two or three along the coast; for I have fought battles enough against England's new-fangled government to have deserved the honors of outlawry at her hands. My life consequently has been none too safe at any time these six months past; and now that yonder gray-haired fanatic, who would ask nothing better than to seal his title in my blood, has got possession of these lands, it is of course less secure than ever. My most permanent home, however, is on an island, facing the bay on this side, and washed by the waters of the Atlantic on the other. It is poor enough, God knows, yet capable of giving better accommodation than such a hut as this is. Will you and your grandfather be content to share it with me?'

Tears rushed into the dark eyes of Nellie. 'Providence is good,' she answered simply—'Providence is very good, and gives us friends when we least expect them.'

'Well, then, it is a bargain,' cried Roger gayly; 'and now, Mistress Netterville, come and see the craft in which you will have to make the voyage.'

He pulled down the 'mysterious mantle' as he spoke, and Nellie saw that, instead of covering the bare wall as she had imagined, it merely concealed an opening into an inner and smaller portion of the hut, built right over the creek, and made to answer the purpose of a boat-house. Into this the water rushed, so as to form a basin deep enough for the floating of a boat, and one accordingly lay safe within it, concealed by the overhanging roof from observation on the outside.

It was not flat bottomed, like the native craft, but had been evidently built both for strength and speed by one who understood his business, and its chief cargo at this particular moment seemed to be a quantity of luxurious beather.

To this Roger pointed with a smile: 'If I were a Highlander,' he said, 'you might suspect me of second-sight; for I have gathered, without thinking of it, double the usual quantity of beather, that which we outlaws perforce use for bedding. I hope you will not mind roughing it a little.'

'I have roughed it a good deal within the last few months,' said Nellie, 'and I do not think you will find me difficult to please. Is the boat quite safe? I have never been out on the real sea before.'

'Safe,' said the young man, with a little pardonable pride in his dark eyes. 'I built her myself, and she has weathered more than one bad storm since the first day that I sailed her. I call her the "Grana Uaille," after the stout old chiefness whose island kingdom I inhabit, and which, with the other lands of which Major Hewitson has robbed me, I inherit from my grandmother. But the sun is getting low. Do you not think we had better start at once, and get the voyage over before night-fall?'

To this Nellie gladly assented, and between them they conducted Lord Netterville to the boat. Roger arranged the beather so as to form a sort of couch, and with the mantle thrown over him to protect him from the damp, the old man found himself so comfortable that he settled himself quietly for slumber. Then Roger put up his sail, and with a fresh and favorable wind they glided down the creek.

Nellie would not lie down, but she sat back in the boat with a lazy kind of gladness in her heart, which, rightly interpreted, would probably have been found to mean perfect rest of body and mind. Such rest as she had not felt for months! The waters widened as they approached the bay, and Nellie marked each new feature in the scene with an interest all the keener and more enjoyable, that everything she saw was so unlike anything she had ever seen before. Accustomed as she had been to the tamer cultivation of her native country, the savage grandeur of that wild west, with its poverty in human life, its wealth in that which was merely animal, took her completely by surprise, and she gazed with unwearied interest, now on the undulating ranges of blue mountains which crossed and recrossed each other like network against the sky, then on the broad, black tracts of peat and bog land which covered the country at their feet like a pall; listened now to the biter and plover as they answered each other from the marshes, then to the shrill screams of the curlews as they rose before the boat, darkening the air with their uncounted numbers; or she watched a heron sweeping slowly homeward from its distant fishing ground—or a grand old eagle soaring solemnly upward, as if bent on a visit to the departing sun; and her delight

and astonishment at last reached their climax in the apparition of a seal, which, just as they cleared the creek, popped its head up above the waves, leaving her, in spite of Roger's laughing assurances to the contrary, well nigh persuaded that she had seen a mermaid. The wind continuing steady, Roger shook out his last remaining reef, and, responding gaily to the fresh impulse, the boat sprang forward at a racing pace. They were in Clew Bay at last, and Nellie uttered a cry of joy—never had she seen anything so beautiful before. Masses of clouds, with tints just caught from the presence of the sun, soft greens and lilacs, and pale primrose and delicate pearly white, so clear and filmy that the evening star could be seen glancing through them, hung right over-head, shedding a thousand hues, each more beautiful than the other, upon the bay beneath, until it flowed like a liquid opal round its multitude of tribute isles. Opposite, right in the very mouth of the harbor, stood Clare Island, all a light and glowing, as if it were in very deed the pavilion of the setting sun, which, as it sank into the waves beyond it, wrapped tower, and church, and slanting cliff, and winding shore-line, in such a glory of gold and purple as made the old king-lom of Grana Uaille look for the moment like a palace of the fairies. Nellie was still straining her eyes for a glimpse of the Atlantic on the other side, when the deep baying of a hound came like sad, sweet music over the waters, and Roger slightly touched her shoulder. They were close to the island; in another moment he had run his boat cleverly into the little harbor and laid her alongside the pier. A huge wolf-dog, of the old Irish breed, instantly bounded in, nearly oversetting Nellie in his eagerness to greet his master.

Roger laid one restraining hand on the dog's massive head, and removing his cap with the other, said, smiling courteously:

'You must not be afraid of Maida, Mistress Netterville. She is as gentle as she is strong, and has only come to add her voice to her master's, and to bid you welcome to the outlaw's home.'

CHAPTER VIII.

Nellie slept that night the peaceful slumbers of a child; but the habits of long weeks of care were not to be so easily shaken off, and the first ray of sunshine that found its way through the narrow window of her chamber roused her from her well earned repose. Her first impulse was, as it had ever been of late, to spring from her couch with a painful sense of hard duty to be accomplished that very day; her next was to thank God with all the fervor of a young and innocent heart for the haven of safety into which He had guided her at last. Then she lay back upon her pillow, and, yielding to the delightful consciousness that there was no immediate call upon her for exertion either of body or mind, glanced languidly round the dimly-lighted room, and endeavored to make a mental inventory of its contents. It was a square chamber, forming the second story of the old tower in which Roger had taken up his abode, and which was all that was yet remaining of the old strong hold of Grana Uaille. The apartment had evidently no furniture of its own to boast of, but, having been used as a sort of lumber room, was abundantly supplied with articles brought hither from more favored mansions. Nellie soon perceived that much of this so called lumber was of the costliest description, and represented probably the sum total of all that had been saved from the wreck of Roger's fortune. There were cabinets of curious workmanship, a table carved in oak as black as ebony, a few high-backed chairs of the same material, ornaments in gold and silver, some of ancient Celtic manufacture, others in their more delicate workmanship bearing marks of artistic handling, which, even to Nellie's unaccustomed eye, betrayed their foreign origin.—There were pictures, too, most of them with the dark shadow of a Spanish hand upon them, and swords, bucklers, weapons, and armor of all kinds, old and new, defensive and offensive, piled up here and there in picturesque confusion in the corners of the turret. Nellie had been amusing herself for some minutes scanning all these treasures over and over, and guessing at their various uses, when her attention became suddenly riveted upon a huge coffer with bands and mouldings of curiously-wrought brass, which stood against the wall exactly opposite to the foot of her bed. She was still quite a girl enough to be willing to amuse herself by imagining all sorts of impossibilities respecting the contents of this mysterious looking piece of furniture, and she was watching it as anxiously as if she half-expected it to open of itself, when the door of the chamber was cautiously unlocked, and the old woman, who represented the office of cook, valet, and everything else in Roger's establishment, crept up to her bedside as quietly as if she fancied her to be sleeping still.

'God's blessing and the light of heaven be on your sweet, smiling face,' she ejaculated, as-