

THE CATHOLIC RECORD.

HEART AND SOUL.

BY HESHIETTA DANA SKINNER, AUTHOR OF "ESPIRITU SANTU."

CHAPTER XXIX.

The reaction from intense anxiety and long continued strain was almost too much for me. I threw myself back on the steps, laughing, shouting and cheering, and was still laughing and cheering wildly when Uncle Lee threw his strong arms round me and said to the bystanders:

"The majesty of the law have been upheld. Now let justice be done!"

Gaunt, powder-begrimed and ragged, the major's person gave evidence of the two hours' struggle he had been through. All seemed to look to him for advice and direction. His rugged honesty and common-sense and high purpose prevailed in the counsels of the authorities. The troopers were posted about the city, a proclamation was issued that the prisoner would be tried without delay, and it found guilty would be visited with the extreme penalty of the law, and in the meantime while the poor wretch was conveyed under heavy guard from the courthouse to the county prison, amid the groans and curses of the bystanders. Had I cared to look in the brutish face I could not have done so, for he hung it low and shrank trembling and terror-stricken before the malignant eyes turned on him. The words of the last verse of Robert's Kidd's song that I had been singing in the morning rang in my ears as I looked on:

To the execution dock I must go!
To the execution dock I must go!
Where all the people flock—
To see a man's neck struck—
I must go!

We seemed to have lived through many days since I had parted from Dido in the freshness of the early morning, yet it was only now high noon. We lingered in the city till late in the afternoon, for the major felt bound to see that every arrangement was made to guard against a possible night attack, and I had to look up and settle with the owner of the dead oak. The populace were outwardly quiet, but sullen and discontented, and everywhere dark looks followed us, for they recognized the major as one of the leaders of the defence and me as the messenger of succor to the garrison, and we could hear murmurs of execration as we passed. In the early part of the afternoon our footsteps had been persistently dogged by two men, evil-eyed, low-browed, and with them the woman who had so freely cursed me and mine. They seemed, however, to abandon whatever sinister design they may have had against us, for as the day waned we saw them no more, and it was with a sigh of relief that we boarded the evening train and left the scene of our morning's conflict far behind us.

Glad Dido didn't know this morning how much I was to use that air pistol," remarked the major, stretching his legs comfortably over the seat in front of us, and cutting himself some tobacco. "Of all the bullets I took with me I ain't got but one left."

"But if it hadn't been for your pistol I should not be going back to her now," I said. "She will love it better since it kept me from swinging to a lamp-post."

"I never yet missed what I aimed for," observed the major; "but I tell you what, Robert, you would never have swung from no lamp-post! If I hadn't a had bullets enough to pick off every feller that laid a hand on you, I'd 'a' put my last bullet through yo'r heart rather than through yo'r tortured. And I'd ask you to do the same to me or any o' mine."

"I couldn't, Uncle Lee," I said, gravely. "My Church won't let me take life in that way, not even to save my dearest from torture or dishonor. You see the Church has always sanctified suffering, she teaches that there is no dishonor where there is no sin, and her martyrs are her greatest glory. I should much prefer to be executed from torture if I could get the lowest place in heaven in any other way, but at the worst, it is only a few hours against all eternity."

"I ain't given to controversy, but there air some dogmas I couldn't swaller," declared the major, with emphasis. "and I might glad I'm not exalted upon 'em to so."

I think he saw how tired and worked up I was, for he put his arm round my shoulders and said, compassionately, "I guess you don't want to see no talk about no more shootin' or murders. It's been kinder rough on yo'r nerves all yo'r life from yo'r infancy up, and we can find pleasanter things to think about and talk about."

And he began to speak of Dido's, of our approaching wedding, of the future before us, of a happy home with many blessings of youth, health, of perfect trust in each other, of tender, wholesome affection, of contentment in moderate circumstances, and this sweet vision soon shut out the horror of the preceding hours.

"Robert," said the major, hesitatingly, after a pause, "I don't wish to be impertinent nor premature, but if it ever come that you war castin' about for a name, and it war a male, it would be a glory and a happiness to me to see perpetuated, as it war, the illustrious name of John C. Fremont, the hero of Emancipation and the immortal Pathfinder, the exponent of Republican principles and the creator of the Far West!"

"I won't forget your wish, Uncle Lee," I said, laughing and blushing happily, as I pulled my hat down over my eyes to conceal my embarrassment.

"Not but what I know that yo'r grandfather have the first right to a suggestion," added the major, with great consideration.

Now I knew my grandfather to be a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat, and that if there were two things firmly fixed in his mind they were, first, that the War of Independence had been fought and won by the French and the Civil War by the Irish; secondly, that the whole West, Northwest, Southwest, and Far West had been discovered and opened up to civilization by the French ex-

plorers and settlers, followed by Irish immigration and colonization. True, General Fremont was of French descent, as my grandfather frequently pointed out to the major, and it was therefore permissible to recognize his exploits, but would it not be sacrilegious in the old Cavalier's eyes to have his name supersede the historic Roderic of the De Macarty's? There was but one name worthy of such honor, and had not grandfather always said that if he had had the naming of me in my infancy I should have been christened in honor of France's legitimate king, Henri D'Orléans-Artois?

But now our short railway ride was finished, and I was rested and happy, free from morbid presentiments, rejoicing in the sweet coolness of the evening air, and ready for a brisk walk towards home and Dido!

"Say! I'd get home quick if I was you," said the station-master, mysteriously, coming up to us. "Maybe it's none o' my business, but there was four low-lookin' cusses came upon the freight-train from Raleigh about half an hour ahead of you. They have been drinking, and I didn't like their looks, so when they asked me what time the evening train would be in and which way Major Halburton lived, I told 'em your train was already in, and I started 'em on the road away from your house, 'stead of towards it. But they may have been set on the right track by some one else, and I been kinder uneasy till you came."

We did not wait to hear him out. We started on a dead run down the road, both of us trembling and white to the lips, for the same thought possessed us both.

"Shall we take a short cut through the woods?" asked the major, hoarsely. "Better the road. She may be at the gate to meet us."

"If she'll only stay to the house!" groaned the major. "There's yo'r grandfather, and these strong negroes, and all the dogs. But it's so light yet she may take it into her head to meet us."

In the long spring twilight it was still almost almost as bright as at noon. It was only too probable that she would be tempted out.

"Oh! my beauty! my girl! why did I ever send for you to this God-forsaken country?" he moaned, as he ran; then, a moment later, "And I ain't got but one bullet left!"

I handed him some of mine, but they proved to be too large, for our pistols were of different make and calibre. "Change pistols with me," he begged. "I got more nerve than you."

"See that bay-tree blossom!" I asked. Firing as I ran, my bullet cut the blossom's stem, and it fell into the road.

"You'll do!" said the major. But in answer to my shot came a sound that set me wild with terror—a deep-mouthed baying of a hound! I struggled on frantically, and ever onward and clearer grew the melancholy wail. I was dripping with perspiration from my rapid run, but cold chills came over me for dread of the fatal significance of that sound, and the light chattered in my head.

At the turning of the road we saw her, though we were yet half a mile away, and we saw something else that made us grip our pistols still tighter—dark, ugly forms crouching in the bushes behind her and creeping stealthily up to her. She stood there, unaware of her danger, gazing up the road towards us, erect in her magnificent beauty and elastic strength. The noble hound crouching at her feet was on the alert, however. We could see him raise his head with a prolonged howl, and step round uneasily. God bless the poor brute! We knew he would defend her as nobly as hound could do it. If only the ruffians were not armed he might protect her till we reached the spot.

But a shot rang into the air, the hound leaped up, then fell at his length. She turned in fright and the ruffians surrounded her. With a yell I raised my pistol to shoot the first who should lay a hand on her. One moved, I tried to pull the trigger, but ere I could do so something cold as ice seemed to touch my arm, the pistol fell from my nerveless grasp with a crash on to a stone at my feet and exploded.

"My God! and I have but one bullet!" cried a voice that in its horror I hardly recognized as the major's.

I could not move. The blood was flowing from my arm, and I knew in a dazed sort of way that I must be wounded. Then my leg gave way under me, and a shock of pain told me that the splinters of my bursting weapon had entered it. With a wild cry of despair I tried to drag myself forward on the uninjured limb, seizing branches of trees with my left hand to pull myself along. I heard Onaida shriek, I saw them lay their vile hands on her, then I saw the major raise his pistol, and with a groan of agony I hid my face.

The last sound I heard as I swooned away into unconsciousness was the long-drawn, melancholy baying of the wounded hound.

CHAPTER XXX.

More than thirty years have passed since that evening in North Carolina, and I cannot yet write of it with calmness. A merciful unconsciousness kept me in its bondage for many a day, and when I awoke, at last, to the full perception of my surroundings I was puzzled. For I saw Miss Sophy bustling about my sick-room with tender solicitude, and at her throat and on her cap the wonderful pink bows that Dido and I had slyly joked about. I heard my grandfather calling, cheerily, "Has the lad waked up yet?"

Could it be possible that it was all a horrible vision of disturbed sleep? Where was Uncle Lee? And would the gracious figure of Onaida soon come in to rouse me by dropping a handful of dewy Banksia roses on my face? But when I tried to move, there were my bandaged leg and arm, my aching head and strained shoulder to witness to the reality of my dream. Yet, if it had been as I feared, what did the pink bows signify, and Pope's cheery voice? I dared not ask a question. I lay there

and let them nurse me tenderly, while I waited, waited in vain for some message, some token that would soothe the awful disquiet at my heart.

But the hours slipped by and no message came to me. I would raise my eyes every time the door opened, only to close them again in disappointment and dread. An entire day of consciousness had passed before I could frame my lips to the question that trembled upon them.

"Pepe, I must speak. Do not try to stop me. What does it all mean? Why are you and Miss Sophy the only ones to come to me? Why is there no message? I must know. I cannot bear this suspense. The suspense is killing me!"

My grandfather moaned. "Listen, Eric," he said, and his face was old—oh, so old!—and his voice was choked and uncertain. "We let her go to most you, unsuspecting of danger. Then I heard a shot and the baying of a hound. I seized a rifle and ran as fast as these aged limbs could carry me, followed by two of the negroes. I could see her standing at the gate, but I could not see you or them for the turning in the road. There were more shots; then the ruffians noticed our coming, and fled. We found you three lying not far from each other. She was so beautiful, Eric! so radiant with youth and joy! There could have been no suffering, physical or mental. The bullet had done its work mercifully, and she had not had time to realize the extent of her danger, but was still wearing a smile of welcome for you!"

Here the old man broke down and sobbed pitifully for a moment. Then he raised his head suddenly and looked at me. "The bullet was not theirs. It was from my pistol!"

"I know, Pepe; I remember. But that must be our secret," I groaned. "And what of him? Could he survive it?"

"We lifted him up, but he never moved or spoke again. We found no slightest trace of wound or hurt upon him. The surgeon said death must have been instantaneous. His heart broke with the shot that pierced hers."

I could not hear more just then. It was not for many days that I learned how ill I had been, how the surgeon had feared for my reason if I woke too suddenly to the full consciousness of the tragedy, and how, for my sake, these two devoted souls had put away sorrow and mourning, my grandfather training his voice to cheerfulness and his face to smiles, and Miss Sophy laying her darling in the grave, and then coming back to array herself in her smartest finery and sit by my bedside to await the dawn of returning consciousness.

I wish I might have seen my beautiful Dido's face once more before they left her in her grave under the live-oak, with the wild jessamine and the roses blooming over it. The uncle who so worshipped her, who would have given his life a thousand times for hers, and yet had been doomed to die in taking her life, lay by her side. Oh, if he had only known one little moment sooner that rescue was so near! Oh, the pity of it! the pity of it!

How distant, how unreal, all else seemed in life beside these two graves! I could hardly understand how my grandfather could have any power left to grieve over the news that reached us from Detroit that the old homestead at Hamtramck had been burned to the ground. To me the news came almost as a relief, for I could not have endured the torture of looking at all our loving preparations for bride's home-coming. Every little carefully planned comfort, every suggestion of the feminine presence expected there would have been a fresh arrow of grief to my heart; and the tower-room, that dainty bridal-boudoir, would have been like the tomb itself to my stricken soul.

I was glad, then, that it was burned—burned the very evening of the tragedy—as a sort of funeral pyre of all that was precious in the past! But to my grandfather the loss of his home, with all its memories of wife and child, its many keepakes and tender associations, was a hard blow. He had aged visibly, rapidly, since Dido was taken from us, but after the disaster to the homestead he had a slight stroke of paralysis. Miss Sophy nursed him skillfully, and I was very thankful for her presence, for, though I was then well enough to be up and limping round, yet I was still very crippled and helpless. The mild winter favored our recovery, but the gloom of the tragedy hung over us, and I could see nothing, think of nothing, save the precious graves under the jessamine and roses. The simple stone above them bore no inscription but this: "Halburton, Levi Tracy, aged 46. Onaida Mary Virginia, aged 21. Died December 24, 1868. May they rest in peace!" There was no need of epitaph. The story of their death would never be forgotten by those who loved them; it but best remain unknown to these outside the sacred circle.

The intense, debilitating heat of the Southern summer set in early that year, and, fearing for my grandfather's strength, we brought him northward by easy stages to the New Jersey sea coast. With the autumn we removed to New York, where we took rooms at a modest boarding-house, for I was not fit to resume active work in my profession, and we must husband our resources as carefully as the comfort of the aged invalid would allow, until I was strong enough to take up my duties as bread-winner.

With change of scene and the tonic of sea-air, both my grandfather and I made rapid strides towards recovery, and could begin to look the future in the face with less of the horrible depression that had prostrated us mentally and physically while we lingered near the scene of tragedy. Yet, without the solace of work or home life, the winter dragged wearily by, and the first sad anniversary almost unannounced

"Eric," said my grandfather, at last—he was too sad nowadays to call me by the old, happy nickname of Rery—"Eric, I am too old to found another home, for you, alas! have no cause to do so. I ask one favor of you, and this is to take me back to my native France to die. I cannot last much longer, my

strength is not equal to looking upon the ruins of the home of my manhood, and my old heart turns with longing to the home of my infancy. Take me back to France and let my aged bones lie by those of my father and mother, and of his father, the first Marquis de Macarty. If, in the providence of God, I may once more salute France's legitimate sovereign before I die, I shall feel the only thrill of happiness possible to me again in this life of sorrow and uncertainty."

And so the early spring of 1870 saw us preparing to return to the land of our forefathers. A few days before we sailed I hired a wheel-chair for my grandfather and pushed him in it to Central Park to enjoy the sweet May air. The exertion fatigued me, and I sat down on a bench to rest. I suppose it was but natural that, as I saw the carriages of the wealthy roll past me, I should repine and wish that I still held a portion at least of the fortune I had been euhred out of. When I was well and strong I had been almost indifferent to the loss of my fortune, except as it involved the treachery of friends; indeed, I sometimes fancied that I could not enjoy with an easy conscience to lead a life of luxury above the average circumstances of the majority of my fellow-men. But now that physical exertion fatigued me and that I could not provide Pepe with such comforts as his age and invalid condition demanded, I felt myself growing bitter and discontented. A middle-aged gentleman, apparently of our own moderate circumstances, shared the bench on which I was resting, and entered into conversation with me.

"There goes a lucky man," he said, indicating the occupant of a luxurious barouche. I looked up and recognized the bland, urbane countenance of my former trustee, Mr. James Arthur. I also saw that he, too, recognized us, but he turned his face away without as much as a nod and looked straight before him, too comfortably prosperous to allow himself to be disturbed by the sight of less fortunate pedestrians beside the road, and lolled back on the cushions with the air of one who felt himself wholly deserving of the abundance with which the Lord ad prospered him.

"He was shrewd enough," continued my informant, as we watched the barouche bowl easily along till out of sight, "to foresee the coming of the iron and copper industry on Lake Superior, and prudent enough to invest heavily in mining property and in the construction of freight barges for the coasting trade. Now his nephew is about to invest with him and establish fine plants, then he runs the concerns into debt, threatens insolvency, and froze out the other shareholders until he controlled the stock. He hid his mind, then seized a lucky turn of affairs, worked the mines at a tremendous profit, which all went into his own and his nephew's pockets. Now his nephew has died, and he is in sole control, with many additional millions to his credit."

"But did not the nephew leave a widow?" I asked, hesitatingly.

"Yes, but he made a peculiar will. The widow was to have a third of the property and to choose which of three portions indicated it should be. The rest going to his uncle. The widow, for some inscrutable reason, chose to take as her share a Cuban sugar plantation which he had made millions out of in its day, but which was now ruined. Her lawyers made it clear to her that it no longer represented a