



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XVI.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1865.

No. 7.

ANGELA; AN HISTORICAL TALE.

CHAPTER I.—THE IMPROVISATRICE'S ROMANCE.

"I wander round sweet music's cell, And in my heart of hearts would hear What to her own she deigns to tell."

Christian Year.

It was Christmas-day. The cannon from the Castle of St. Elmo on one side was answering the reverberating echoes of the Castle of St. Michael on the other.

Lay thee down, Ferdinand, said the maiden, as the last knight passed the door, and nothing was to be seen but the devout and thronging multitude; kneel not so long.

Nay, Angela, said the knight; poor homage is this small token of respect to a God-made man on this day? But he suffered her to make him rise, and arrange again the pillows that still supported him.

Nay, grieve not, Ferdinand, she said, almost reproachfully, or I shall think my company no longer pleases thee as it was wont to do.

Sing to me, dearest, said the knight; sing what I love to hear on such a day? Angela drew near her harp, and rang a few melancholy chords on the sweet instrument;

Fair fame of Auvergne His brave comrade replied, In safety I leave thee, Or die at thy side.

That night, in the pause Of the carnage and din, They sought the brave Bridier Without and within.

The sanctuary lamp Gleamed calm o'er the spot, On his hands clasped in prayer, But wakened him not.

All fell on the ramparts— But nailed to the rood, The evening tide bore them Where La Valette stood.

VII. And weeping, the father Gazed long on the dead; For St. Elmo grieve not! To his brave knights he said, Thank God for their glory! Grieve not for our loss; Such death is most life For the Knight of the Cross!

VIII. Ah! true unto death This life they laid down; And their Master hath given them A heavenly crown. And still o'er St. Elmo The white cross doth wave; But her martyrs are sleeping; In a glorious grave.

'Thank you, dearest!' said the knight, as the musical swell of her voice died away in the full chords of a half-triumphant symphony.

'Say you so, Ferdinand?' said the voice of Sir Diego, as he stepped across the threshold. 'Time it were for a brave young knight like thee to return to our hard fare, and the command of this galley, and not be listening to maiden's songs, and lying on soft pillows till the Grand Master himself asked me this day when my fair nephew would be at his post again.'

'No fear of Angela enervating my knightly valor, uncle,' replied the young knight. 'I heard you the song? It was the Dirge of Bridier;—and only stir her up, and she will sing of the brave Bragadino, till your own blood even, uncle I warrant you, will be the better for her strain; and even your bronzed cheek will see the tear standing on it for very loyal chivalric emotion.'

'Say you so?' said the knight, seating himself. 'A fair challenge; and we will e'en bear it.—Your lady-mother shall sit as judge; for, by my troth,' he added, surveying his sister's noble figure, who, habited in all the graceful pomp of the matrons of that day, had now entered the room from the church of St. John's, she is still fair enough to sit for a queen of love and beauty.'

Emilia di Mendoza smiled; the circle was formed, and Angela, still fresh from the inspiration with which she had sung the Dirge of the Martyr of St. Elmo, swept over the rich chords of her beautiful harp, and looked, as she bent over the graceful instrument, a very Sappho of Christian song, telling the tale, not of a poor unrequited earthly love, but of a triumphant heavenly one.

'I have won it,' said the young knight, as he smiled into the countenance of his uncle, in whose eyes unconsciously glistened a tear, which now fairly made its way down his bronzed cheek.

'You have,' returned the old man kindly. 'Why, girl, thou canst sing of the feats of arms that graced my youthful days as if thou wert a very troubadour, and hadst been invisible on the fair walls of Farmagosta beside us.'

'Us, uncle?' interrupted the maiden, rising, and standing before him, with eyes flashing still from the inspiration of her song: 'were you too at the siege of Farmagosta? Did you escape from that terrible slaughter to see the martyrdom of the brave Bragadino?'

'Yes, Angela,' he replied: 'I was an unbearded youth then; these gray locks were bright and fair as thine own; and the noble Bragadino was not the less the star of my existence than his lady-love is to the wandering knight-errant.—Else thou hadst not forced a tear down old Sir Diego's rugged cheek. But I guess who taught thee to love him. It was thy saintly friend, Martino Carga. Ah, well I remember the holy youth, when, escaped by a miracle from the carnage of Cyprus, I had returned once more to beautiful Venice, and he was studying among the Dominicans at St. Giovanni e Paolo!'

'No, indeed, uncle,' returned Angela; 'tell me who it is?' 'A Monsignore Marengo,' replied Sir Diego. 'He was educated in Rome; and it seems the Holy Father has thought well to send him back to his native country, to feed the flock there which has been so long shepherdless. They further said that he is coming to treat with the infidel for full powers to pay every honor to the martyr, and translate his relics to the cathedral-church.'

A glance full of meaning passed between Angela and her mother. 'When will he arrive?' asked Emilia. 'He is expected every day,' returned the knight; 'and will proceed from here in a Venetian vessel, not to excite the Turk's indignation

by an escort of the galleys of the Knights of Malta, else he bring new vexations upon that unhappy land. But, by my troth,' he exclaimed suddenly, as a slight bustle met his ears, and he started to the window; 'here is the Grand Master himself. Up with thee, Ferdinand; he is come to greet thee, and congratulate thy mother on thy recovery.'

It was true; and in a few moments more Ferdinand had knelt, and then been raised and clasped warmly to the breast of his Superior, Alphonse de Vignacourt, 56th Grand Master of the Knights of St. John.

CHAPTER XIV.—THE TRANSLATION OF THE MARTYRS.

"Now you misty mountains fall As the breezes give us speed; Oh, my spirit, with our sail: There's a brighter land ahead!"

How Ainslie.

It was a beautiful May evening in the year A.D. 1618, and our readers must come back with us awhile to the fair isles of Greece that 'stud the Aegean sea,' and seem, as the sylph-like caiques dance upon the bright blue waters that lave their coasts, and murmur soft music on their radiant shores, verily and indeed the embodying of the poet's dream of 'the bright Elysian rest.'

A very fleet of light boats seemed skimming their way between the fair islets, waving their snowy sails like the seabirds' pinions on the horizon, or gradually drawing nearer, till they all seemed approaching one point and making for one harbor. And there lay again that fair point, one day to be ploughed up by innumerable smoking and hissing monsters of the deep, sparkling in its sunlit beauty, calmly reposing mid the many-colored shadows of the hills that circled it round in their embrace.

'The little lone chapel stood calmly on the hill-top to the right, pointed out as Mary the Star of the Sea. Far away in the distance gleamed the two or three small clumps of green orange-trees that graced the naturally barren island, which scarcely, however, appeared so just then, while decked in the budding beauty of its fields of corn, and the dark-green foliage of its fig-trees scattered over the landscape. Now mount on hill and turn about to the port, and mark, first, bearing down to the right from behind the island of Paros, a small bark. How beautifully it sways from side to side, in the undulating motion of the sunny waves. Greek rowers man it, and on one side of the deck stands a venerable old man, his snowy hair and beard scarcely whiter than the serge habit in which his aged form is wrapped, and marks him as a son of the great St. Dominic. That is Father Angelo Colepus, once the heroic succorer of the dying and wounded at the fearful siege of Nicosia, and a confessor of the faith; once, too, a slave for the name of Christ; then devoted to the task of strengthening his fellow Christians among the galley slaves; now for many years Bishop of Santorin. See how you gay galley jaunts merrily before the wind, followed by two or three other smaller boats in its train, from the fair island of Naxos, right opposite to us. It contains the Archbishop of the once-rich island of Bacchus, with a number of attendant priests; and those other boats are filled with men and women, part of his flock, all following in his train. Now look to the left, where another galley, bearing the Venetian flag, is making its way round the point of the harbor, leaving its fair wake visible in the deep azure of the sea as far as the island of Tinos, which is still beneath the Venetian rule. There may be seen our old acquaintance Monsignore de Rigo, coming again to revisit the scene of his own temporary captivity and his brother Bishop's martyrdom.'

How merrily they all glide in and furl their swelling sails, and one by one new stragglers may be seen arriving, as if in breathless haste to catch up with its fellows in the race they have been running. You might fancy it was a sailing match, and that bright sea some beautiful river, but for the breaks every now and then in its many-hued horizon. But what are they all hurrying in the port for, and dotting its blue waters here and there with dark stops and slender lines crossed by the one long yard-arm which in an Eastern boat carries the great sail? And why are the people clustering on the sands, and hurrying down to the beach in their holiday attire, seemingly so joyful at the arrival of the strangers? And what mean those bonfires that are breaking out on every hill-top, and every church-yard round by the beach, and up by the mountain glen, till the whole island seems ringing with glad exclamations of delight, and the inhabitants of the opposite islands stand gazing in amazement at the unusual illumination. See;—just as the evening draws in, another boat is following the wake made by Monsignore de Rigo's bark in its course from the island of Tinos, and we will silently make our way on board, and hear what the passengers are saying.

They are not many. One is a tall, majestic matron, and near her stands the light and grace-

ful figure of a maiden, evidently her daughter. Beside her leans thoughtfully on the parapet the slight but muscular form of a youth clothed in a pilgrim's habit, the same as that worn by his elder companion, who stands a little aloof.—There is one more passenger in that boat; it is a young woman, shrouded carefully in a penitent's garb. She has begged, for the love of God, a passage on board, and it has not been denied her by the munificent and noble travellers who chartered it the day before, after arriving in a beautiful galley, which bore the banner of the Cross displayed at its mast, from the Western seas.

Our readers will have made out long ago that they are in the company of their old friends, come to fulfil their vows, and accompanied by the two knights in pilgrim's garb, and that all this gathering of the islanders, and the symptoms of joy on all sides, are to hail the eve of the day which is to see the translation of the body of Monsignore Carga to its resting place in the cathedral of St. George. All are thoughtful, all calmly joyous, except that poor weeping figure, who, crouched in a corner of the deck seems unable to lift her head from her knees to her utter prostration of mingled shame and woe. Her face is carefully concealed in the folds of a large veil: her thin hands alone are to be seen, clasped round her knees, and sometimes they quiver, as if in agony, when they catch the low musical tones of Angela's voice; but this is the only sign of consciousness she gives.

'See the bonfires, Angela,' said the young knight; 'and only look at the illuminations that are spreading like wildfire through every window of the town. We are in time; for Monsignore Rigo's bark was not an hour before us, and they told us the ceremony would not take place till to-morrow morning. What, weeping, sweetest!' he added, as the tears made their way, one by one, irresistibly down his sister's cheek;—'thou art little of a heroine, pretty one, though thou triest hard to be so sometimes.'

Angela turned away; she sank down on her knees beside her mother, buried her face in that mother's lap, and wept without restraint. Emilia checked, with a smile of half-sadness, the eager movements of the young knight, who would have raised and soothed her, and passing her hands over the glossy hair, said softly and calmly, 'My child, hast thou reason to weep thus?'

'O sweetest mother!' she exclaimed, 'I cannot be a heroine if to look unmoved on the spot where I saw him basely murdered be necessary.'

There was a low musical laugh, which reminded Angela of the moonlit night before the church of St. John; only there was more sadness in it, as her brother leaned over her, and said:—'Angela, wouldst thou have bent over his death wounds like her on whose lap thou art pillowing thy head, and whispered the names Jesus and Mary in his fainting ear, till the spirit had sped to a better world, and then rose and gone about thy work in this weary world as though nothing had damped thy heart's first affections or robbed it of its only earthly love, hadst thou been in her place?'

Angela raised her head and gazed into the calm loving depths of that mother's tranquil eyes and then fixed them for a moment on the heightened color and bright look of her brother bent upon her.

'Nay, Ferdinand, but you are hard upon her,' put in old Sir Diego. 'Did she not do that very thing for thee, when thou wert borne into her arms with very nearly a death-wound on board the gay galley which dances now so blithely yonder in the port of St. Nicholas? Be not hard upon her, for she is but a child.'

'Oh, no, uncle,' said Angela; 'Ferdinand is right; he wants me to be quite like our own sweet mother. There, we are passing the rock cave, Ferdinand,' she said, rising at once.—'Look mother mine; it was there when your silly Angela stood braving the storm, till she fell unconscious for hours, on the sandy floor, and only waked up to find the ghostly St. George was her own brother, dreaming, like a very knight errant, of some fair maiden in his sleep, and little thinking of defending his hapless sister from the clutches of Francesco Commens, who had hunted her thither from the chapel yonder on the hill. By the way, Ferdinand, what became of that villain after you knocked him down, and had him carried off prisoner to the galley?—Surely you did not have him hung up to the yard-arm? I never saw him since, and never thought till now of asking?'

'Did I not spare his life at thy request?' returned the knight; 'but when the Turkish galleys attacked us, I suppose he escaped, or was thrown overboard in the conflict; for nothing has been seen or heard of him since.'

A low moan from the veiled figure attracted their attention at this moment; but she did not raise her head; only a convulsive clenching of

the hands was seen, and then she was motionless as before.

'That is a strange woman,' said Angela;—'and somehow her form seems familiar to me. But see, mother mine; we have cleared the point. Ah, Ferdinand, how different the scene we last saw here a few months ago. That starlight night; the supernatural glow, that lighted up the very faces of the cruel Turks below, who were gazing up in awe; and then those balmy odors, wafted even to our passing galley; that gaze, so beautiful in its supernatural loveliness!'

She seemed determined to proceed, but paused at this point.

'And you can weep for such a death!' said the sweet voice of her mother. 'Ah, Angela, we must put aside this veil of earth, and learn to live in the unseen.'

The small bustle of furling the sail and letting out a rope here occurred; then the sailors made for the shore, and slowly drawing the boat nearer to the beach made it fast to a rock.

'Shall we land to-night?' said Angela.

'I think not,' replied Emilia. 'It is late, and it would only create a sensation. To-morrow will be time enough. The boat is our own; the night as mild and as hushed as a sleeping babe; and we can spread our coverings here on the deck.'

The night had closed in, and this advice seemed the most feasible; so, resting on the cushions and coverlets that were scattered profusely around, they ate their evening meal; and the soft murmured notes of their night prayer were borne over the still waters, which had echoed to so far different sounds on the last night of Angela's sojourn in the island.—They looked around for their veiled companion, but she had disappeared; and the sailors said they had seen her take her solitary way along the beach.

The morning dawned, and with it rose the sea, as calm and as brilliant as when he ushered in the bridal day of the martyred Bishop. Early the stream of population began to defile towards the seashore, and soon covered it with their gay attire. Men, women, and children, youths and maidens, mingled together in picturesque groups, as they stood curiously eyeing the new arrivals, or watching for the procession of Bishops and clergy to descend the hill. Among them might be seen, strange to say, the Turkish governor and all his followers, slowly arriving from the town, just before the procession appeared in sight. Even the schismatic Greeks stood mingled with the Catholics, showing a true feeling of sympathy in the honor about to be paid to the remains of the venerable Carga.

Just as the Bishops, with their cross-bearers, and the whole train of priests, in their richest sacerdotal attire, turned the corner of the last house on the hill, the strangers prepared to leave their boat, and slowly making their way along the shore, stood silent beside the little chapel of St. Mark. Many were the glances cast upon Angela; but too much absorbed in the thoughts that crowded on their mind, and disguised, too, by the rich habiliments in which she was so well dressed, according to her new rank in life, though words of suspicion and astonishment were interchanged by some of the by-standers, yet it was not till the ceremony was over that she was thoroughly recognised. The procession wound its way silently across the fields, and entered the chapel, where few of the people could be admitted, on account of its very small size.

The earth was gradually removed, and Angela's heart beat fast at every fall of the pickaxe or the noise of the spade as the work proceeded. They were standing close by the door, the forms of the knights and attendants forming a barrier against the people, who, however, stood instinctively aside to allow the noble strangers room. A surprised and stifled cry of devotion and admiration was heard at this moment in the chapel. The boards that covered the body had been removed. A sensible fragrance began slowly to diffuse itself through the air, filling every sense with unspeakable delight and consolation. Again the miraculous odor was clearly felt, testifying the sanctity of the servant of God. Months had he lain in the cold damp earth; the winter rain had found an easy entrance between the crevices of the roof, and forced its way through the thin layer of wood and earth, till the garments of the Bishop lay mouldering around; but the body itself was as fair and as white as on the day of its burial; and after seven long months they looked again on their Pastor and their Father. There was the silver beard, in its waving beauty; the eyes closed, as in sleep; the crossed white hands; the ineffable look of holiness and recollection, just as they had left it; and throwing themselves on their knees, that whole band of Bishops and priests wept tears of love and devotion.

It was at this moment that the young Ferdinand stepped forward to proffer the rich gifts brought by his mother to clothe the sacred remains; and in doing so, the crowd separated,