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THE LIMERICK VETERAN; OR, THE FOSTER SISTERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "FLORENCE O'NEILL."

(From the Baltimore Catholic Mirror.)

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

Here Lady Florence for a moment paused, and the Sister observed; "It was not proved, however, that this Margaret, of whom your Ladyship has told me, had spoken falsely concerning her foster-sister, was it, Madam?"
"Alas! no. For the time being, and, indeed, for all these long years have Isabel's lips remained sealed as to the past. Only very lately has it been made known to us that she was as innocent of evil as—"
"Indeed! Madam, can that be true?" eagerly exclaimed the usually calm and self-possessed nun.
"I was about to say, Sister, she was innocent of evil as the babe unborn. During the late battle at Gladsuir, my grandson, Maurice, was called to the death-bed of an English officer. He was one of the soldiers of the man they call King George. Oh! wonderful and inscrutable are the ways of God. Can you believe it, my good Sister, this man declared himself the half-brother of my poor Isabel, of whose existence even we were not aware. He had committed a crime in France for which he would have been condemned to death. He made himself known to my poor child, worked upon her feelings in various ways, extorted a vow of secrecy, and, to fill up the measure of his iniquity, made a forcible entrance into the chateau; and aware, as she undoubtedly was, as to who was the nocturnal intruder, the fact of her being found in a swoon in this very room, in which the robbery was committed, clears up everything that has for years appeared to tell against her. Heaven knows I never believed her guilty; but others did. She keenly felt their coldness, and left us, almost without a word, to bury herself in the retirement of the convent in which she had been educated, until, as she afterwards wrote me, her innocence should be made manifest."
"O! my God! how sinful it is to judge one's neighbor from appearances," said the nun.
Struck with the earnestness with which she spoke, Lady Florence raised her eyes. The Sister's face was shaded by her veil, but she remarked that her countenance was even paler than usual, and she beheld tears falling down her cheeks.
"My dear Sister Madeleine, how I thank you for your sympathy. Well, I have nearly finished my story. I had written my poor Isabel to come here immediately, not aware that she was ill; but as soon as Maurice returns they will be married. I have forgotten, however, to tell you, that from this attachment of Isabel and Maurice proceeded one of the causes of Margaret's aversion to her foster-sister. She had suffered her own heart to be taken captive, and it was hard to love her as I once did, Sister, because it was impossible to blind one's eyes to the fact that she felt a sat-

isfaction in dragging forward every circumstance that could tend to the ruin of Isabel."
" And when did your Ladyship say that Isabel would be at the chateau?"
And the pale, beautiful woman rose and turned aside to pour out a cordial for her patient.
"I hope very soon; but do you not remember, Sister, I said that at present she was very ill? Ah! me, one fixes one's affections on the children whom we rear and love, but what sorrow are we often doomed to suffer on their account! I have thought about that perverse, proud Margaret so often, and sorrowed so much, wondering what her fate has been, for the end of her story, up to the time when we parted, was painful enough, and I try and banish it from my mind; and I have also wept over Isabel's troubles, poor, silly girl, till my heart has been well nigh broken."
" But, your Ladyship, in His boundless mercy, God may have touched the hard, proud heart of Margaret and called it to Himself. Have you never thought that this may have been the case? This Margaret must have been well and carefully reared, and as she advanced in life, grace may have been given to her to look back and sorrow over the errors of so proud and wilful a heart, and in lieu of that unrequited, earthly love, which she doubtless felt in the full force of her impulsive, passionate nature, when she did give her heart to God, with that gift she would taste an ecstasy of heavenly love, of which all earthly passion is but as the shadow, and out of that same love would spring a heartfelt sorrow and repentance."
As the Sœur Madeleine spoke these words, the natural beauty with which she was endowed seemed to become almost superhuman, the sentiments with which her heart was filled reflecting themselves in her countenance.
" You are right, Sister," said Lady Florence, warmly pressing the white and almost transparent hand which rested on her pillow; " you are quite right, and I thank you for having inspired me with such a train of good and holy thoughts. My poor Margaret! yes, it is quite true she may, if still alive, become, if not so already, eminent in holiness and virtue. God grant it may be so, and, for this end, do you add your pious aspirations to my own unworthy prayers. The day of my life is fast spent, Sister. Oh, that it may be given me to behold yet once again those whom I love, my husband and my sons, with my adopted daughters, and then let me but hear that our rightful king has his own again, and I shall have no earthly wish ungratified."
" And now you must say no more, dearest Lady Florence. We will both unite in prayer for Margaret before we close our eyes this night, and, like a good nurse, I shall watch by you for awhile till you are asleep, and then I will take a little rest later. I am a light sleeper, as you know, and the slightest movement on your part will rouse me immediately, should you require attendance."

Then the Sister of Charity began to make her preparations for the night, and as her tall and elegant form, which even that coarse robe could not disguise, moved noiselessly about the room, the heart of Lady Florence rejoiced that this particular Sister had been the one selected to attend her in her illness by the Mother Superior of the convent. A something there was about her, too, which forcibly recalled to her remembrance the unworthy daughter of her adoption, the cast of features, so classically regular in their outline, being the same; but there the likeness ended. There was nothing of Margaret in the subdued expression of those features, in the timid and downcast look of the meek and humble nun, nor between the slender Margaret, quick and light of step, and the staid, majestic woman who hovered near her, and yet—and yet, the Sister of Charity ever and again brought Margaret more present to her mind, ever, in some little trifling way, awakening a remembrance. Thus ran the current of the aged Lady's thoughts both before, and after, having joined the nun in prayer for her former protegee, till she lost herself in sleep.
The old clock in the turret had struck the hour of midnight. Lady Florence was buried in a profound sleep, the rest of the small household, consisting only of servants, for times had indeed changed, had gone to rest, but the nun kept watch, watch not only over the invalid but over Self.
With folded hands she sat her down to think over an unforgetten past. The early days of childhood are hers again, the stormy youth, the passionate womanhood, the sin, never to be forgotten, wrought by one master passion, with which even now she wrestles; the red spot on the pale cheek and the rigidly clasped hands clearly tell the tale.
For a moment, only. Then, like the Magdalen of old, whose name, out of devotion to that great penitent, the Sister bears, love wins for her the victory. See, she draws the crucifix from her side and, her eyes swimming in

tears, she bows down her head, and after a moment spent in silent contemplation she is herself again.
" My Love, my crucified Love, shall I shrink from the very cross I have so long sought after? Strengthen me to accept it cheerfully, nay, gladly, for this can but be the beginning of the end."
CHAPTER VI.—BAFFLED HOPES.
Notwithstanding the hopes of Maurice St. John to the contrary, many weary months passed after the discovery of the innocence of Isabel before there could be any possibility of their meeting each other.
The victory won by Charles Edward's troops at Preston Pans filled him with an earnest desire to march into England, rightly judging that to remain longer in supineness in Edinburgh, whilst a superior force was preparing to meet him, must lead to fatal results. But such a course was violently opposed by the Highland chieftains; also by the humbler clansmen, who entertained a superstitious horror of being taken across the border.
After a faint show of resistance, Carlisle surrendered to the Duke of Perth, and the keys were delivered to Charles, at the little town of Brampton, by the Mayor and Aldermen on their knees.
During his march southward, the greatest good order and the strictest discipline were maintained; every article, however trifling, being promptly paid for, the poor Chevalier himself being the first to set the example to his people, who, by his orders, rigorously abstained from pilfering or plunder.
The Highland army marched out of Penrith with the various clans in their picturesque costumes, commanded by Charles Edward himself; whilst to Lord George Murray was assigned the regiments which had been raised in the Lowlands.
At the head of his men marched the Prince, clad in his Highland costume, and with his shield slung across his shoulders. In lieu of the hideous periwig he wore his own fair hair; his complexion was dark, and his open countenance and bright lively eyes interested all who beheld him.
In common with the humblest of his followers he shared all the fatigues and privations of the march. As to dinner, he was never known to partake of one, his principal meal being his supper; then he would throw himself on his bed without undressing, and generally rise the next morning at four. Daring and intrepid, no obstacle daunted him. Thus, on finding, when he reached the Mersey, that the bridges were all broken, he forded the stream at the head of his division, though the water reached his middle. Only on one occasion is he said to have been overcome with fatigue.*
At Manchester, he was received with acclamations of joy. Throngs of people presented themselves to kiss his hand and make him offers of service. Bonfires burned in the streets, the bells were rung in the churches, thousands of the townspeople wore the white cockade, and, amidst a band of chieftains and gentlemen, he entered the town on foot, arrayed in a light tartan plaid, his belt and blue sash, and with a blue velvet bonnet, ornamented with a knot of white ribbons, on the side of his head, beneath which strayed a mass of yellow hair.†
He then took up his quarters in a large house in Market street. For many years afterwards it was still called the Palace. Later it was converted into an inn, and has since been pulled down.
A body of about two hundred men were here assembled together, and Mr. Townley, a Roman Catholic gentleman of ancient family and considerable literary attainments, was appointed their colonel.
With colors flying and bagpipes playing, Charles Edward then made his entry in the town of Derby, and was received by the people with every demonstration of attachment as at Manchester.
But the King's army, amounting to 12,700 men, was drawing near him, and the news of the approach of the veteran regiments, commanded by the Duke of Cumberland, filled the minds of all with alarm. Not only did his army double that of the unfortunate Prince, but another of 6,000 men, under Marshal Wade, was skirting the western side of Yorkshire, whilst a camp was forming at Finchley for the protection of London; George the II. declaring his intention of taking the field in person at the head of his force.
Still sanguine, Charles resolved in his own mind not to stay and give battle to the Duke, but to hasten on to London, confront the forces

of George, and make himself master of the Capital.
But, alas! for his hopes and desires. With Lord George Murray at their head, the commanders of the several battalions, to his unfeigned surprise, urged him to return to Scotland. There was no evidence, they insisted, of a general rising amongst the English; no descent, in their favor from France.
The Duke of Perth alone took no part in these debates. Leaning his head against the fireplace, he heard the disputes without a word, but at last declared himself of the opinion of the other chiefs.
" Rather than go back at such a crisis," exclaimed Charles, vehemently, " I would wish to be twenty feet under ground. Let me entreat you, gentlemen, to consider what it is you ask of me."
But vainly did he argue and entreat. His remonstrances were disregarded by his council, which he at last broke up in silent indignation and open and avowed disgust.
He then had recourse to another expedient. He sent for each individual member, and remonstrated with him in private, but with the solitary exception of the Marshal, he found one and all inflexible.
The evening of the day so full of anxiety to Charles Edward was drawing nigh, when he hastily summoned another council, and an air of the deepest dejection sat upon his countenance as he approached the council-table.
" Gentlemen," said the Prince, " I am prepared to return at once with you to Scotland, and," he added, in a tone of mingled bitterness and vexation, " this council will be the last I shall ever hold. Henceforward I hold myself responsible for my actions only to God and my father."
Unfortunate Charles Edward! how little was he aware when he consented to allow those timid men to drag him away from Derby, that ten thousand French troops, headed by his brother Henry, were about to land on the south coast of England. Little did he know that the premier peer of Great Britain, whose example would doubtless have been followed by most of the influential Catholics, was on the very point of declaring himself in his favor; that many Welsh gentlemen had already left their homes to join him; and that a messenger was actually on his way from Lord Barrymore and Sir Watkin William Wynne, not only assuring him of their fidelity, but also pledging themselves to join him at whatever spot and in any manner he might please.*
It may be considered as highly probable that had the Prince really been allowed to push on to London as he desired, the dynasty of Great Britain might have been changed, and the Stuarts again have held their court at Whitehall.
As it was, the retreat from Derby sealed the fate of Charles Edward and his followers. The embarkation of the French troops was at once countermanded, and the English Jacobites remained in their quiet homes.†
Then commenced the mournful march from Derby, and not till after the dawn of a new day revealed to them the familiar objects they had so recently passed did the Highlanders become aware that their chieftains were leading them back, when the rage and vexation to which the dispirited men gave free vent almost exceeded that of their broken-hearted Prince, the whole army resounded with expressions of sorrow and anger.
Alas! the case was altered now with the ill-fated Chevalier. He was like the generality of sanguine persons, who, when a reverse of fortune happens, yield to the most terrible depression.
" This change is terrible," said Maurice to the aged Marshal, as he watched the Prince, who, miserable and dejected, instead of sharing the fatigues of his men on foot as formerly, now lingered gloomily behind till the army was in advance of him, riding forward only by fits and starts to take his place at the head of the column, and then after a while falling back.
With the majority of the English Jacobites, the position of the Marshal and Maurice was critical enough. At present they could not think of leaving the cause in which they had again taken up arms by escaping to France, but decided on retreating with the Highlanders to the fastnesses of their mountains rather than trust, as some few did and were proscribed for so doing, to the tender mercies of the Government.
CHAPTER VII.—OUT OF DANGER.
" And what weather to travel in, my dear Marion!" said Lady Balmerino, as she looked out one cold, misty morning on a cheerless and dreary prospect. " It is enough to give us the ague for life. My love, take heart and postpone our intended journey. You see we have been kept in ignorance of Edward's illness till the worst was over."

And fair Marion Chalmers heard and heeded not. When did passionate youth ever listen willingly to the calm reasoning of those of maturer years?
Starting from her seat, she stands beside the older lady, and grasping both hands of Lady Balmerino within her own, she exclaims with eager vehemence:
" If you ever loved me, aunt, you will not thwart my wishes. To Edinburgh I must go without delay. As soon attempt to stem the torrent in its course as to keep me in this place quiet and inactive when Edward is languishing and dying, perhaps, amongst strangers."
Lady Balmerino made no reply, but ringing a bell, she ordered a man-servant to be in readiness, and two horses to be saddled for herself and her niece, together with a portmanteau containing the necessary requisites for a journey.
Two hours later, the ladies escorted by a man on horseback, rode out of the valley in which the house was situated, and in a short time arrived at Inverness, and from thence made their way to Edinburgh with what speed they best might in the bad weather and unsettled state of the country.
Within a few days of his arrival in Edinburgh, after writing the letter I have spoken of to Marion, Edward St. John had been seized with a dangerous illness, and in the hope of leaving his grandson in the care of persons whom he already knew, the Marshal had turned his steps to the house in the Edinburgh Close.
But it had passed into other hands, and nearly all its former inmates had gone away, no one knew whither; only this much could they tell respecting those who had rented the Flat in which his family had once occupied apartments, namely: that the widow of David Graham had not very long survived her husband, and that his daughter had gone away and left no trace of her whereabouts.
Desirous for tidings of his former protegee, the Marshal enquired could they direct him to the residence of one Miss Lindsey, who was with the Grimshaws when the old man died?
The person to whom he addressed himself, however, remembered nothing beyond having a vague recollection of a very laughing and beautiful woman to whom Mrs. Graham attributed her husband's death, and who had gone away before the death of the widow.
There was no alternative but to leave Edward in the care of strangers, with the hope that as he was willing to pay a heavy price he would be well and properly cared for.
The gloom of the winter afternoon was fast deepening into night when Marion and her aunt entered the sick room of young St. John. The crisis of his disorder was past, but it had left him feeble, emaciated, and worn almost to a shadow. So unlike was the spectral form before her to that of him whom she had parted from a few months' since, that Marion fairly broke down, and gave way to a fit of hysterical weeping, for which she was chided by her much more sensible aunt. From the moment of her arrival, however, a perceptible change for the better ensued. Attention had not been wanting, but he was alone, dying he at one time thought, amongst strangers, and his heart yearned once again for the society of those he loved.
And at length the frail tenure of life, which so long had trembled in the balance, was again fairly restored, but with each day came an anxious, eager wish, which not even the presence of Marion could quell, that he had not been condemned perforce to inaction instead of being on the battle-field.
" I rejoice that you are out of its dangers," said Marion, in reply to his complaint, " though so sorrowful for the cause. But consider our anxiety concerning Maurice and my uncle, and your good old grandfather; perhaps you may see cause yet to rejoice that you are here in Edinburgh."
" Marion is right, Edward," said Lady Balmerino. " You may see cause yet to be truly thankful for the dispensations of Providence, which have decreed that during this sharp contest, your maiden sword shall not strike a blow. All you have now to do is to reward us for leaving our homes to be your nurses by keeping your mind at rest and getting well as fast as possible?"
And slowly but surely the color came back to the thin and wasted face, brightness to the eye, and elasticity to the step; and on the very day he first left the house for a breath of fresh air on the green slopes beneath the castle walls came the news of the defeat at Culloden.
Then, after several days of agonizing suspense, came the disastrous news of the good old Marshal's death, and of the flight of Maurice; also, that Lord Balmerino had been taken prisoner on the field, and was now on his way by sea to London.
For awhile Edward and his fair companions were stunned by the news they had received,

* On this occasion, when between Penrith and Snap, he walked for several miles half asleep, leaning on the shoulder of one of the clan, Ogilvie, to prevent himself from falling.—Chamber's Hist. of Rebellion.
† Reception awarded to the Prince at Manchester, &c.—See Chamber's Rebellion.

* Chambers, p. 56.
† Jesse's Hist. Pretenders.