

FATHER DE LISLE.

By Miss Taylor

(A Tale of fact in fiction's garb).

CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

The silence of night fell on the prison. Some slept after their drunken revelry, some forgot their sorrows in slumber, some counted the weary hours as they passed, but to the two priests the time fled by, for they had much to say, and Father Gerard desired first to hear Walter's history since they parted.

"And you, Father—still laboring, still suffering?"

"Yes," said the old priest, "About two years after your mother's death, I was apprehended and thrown into prison, but there were many others in the same case, and the governor and magistrates happened to be interested in some, and therefore they procured the banishment of all, and we went to France. There I stayed two years, till my health was strengthened, and my superiors at last, to my joy, allowed me to return on the English mission, and in it I labored till eight months since, when I was interrupted while saying Mass. Just as I had begun the 'Gloria in Excelsis,' the pursuivants rushed in and took me in my vestments before the magistrate, and I was condemned to prison, and here I have remained, desiring but one thing, my dear son, to see a priest and have the sacraments, and that Christ has now granted me, praised be His name!"

"I perceive, Father, you are not ironed," said Walter.

"I was to be," said the priest, "but whenever they attempted to put them on, they always fell off, so at last they gave up trying."

"You are cheerful under your cross, Father," said Walter.

"Why should I not be?" said the priest. "My life draws to a close. If I am not called speedily to the gallows, I feel a fever in my veins, which I cannot survive; and it will not be long," continued he, looking up earnestly to the roof of his prison.

"What do you see, Father?" said Walter.

The old man only smiled.

"Not when you are here; she only comes when I am alone."

"Who comes, Father? Tell me."

"The Mother with the Child," answered Father Gerard. "Oh! so glorious a vision! and this dark dungeon is full of heavenly light, and she bids me be of good cheer, and confess to the end the faith of her Son. My son," said he, turning towards him, "have you the Blessed Sacrament with you?"

"I have, Father, all that is necessary to celebrate Mass. See, this stone in the wall will serve as our altar, and as soon as midnight chimes, I will begin."

Father Gerard sank back upon his straw, and Walter saw that he was dying. He hastened to give him a little of the wine he had brought with him, and the old man revived, and was able both to make his confession and hear that of Walter. Then Walter said his Mass. Soon after it was finished Father Gerard died.

No words can express the wrath and disappointment of Dame Louth when she found her new and pattern servant, had, without staying to ask for wages, actually departed.

"No wonder she is wroth," said the other prison servants; "I warrant as 'twill be a long time ere she gets one like Joseph again."

Note.—The incident of the falling off of the irons and the vision of our Lady will be found in the "Life of Thomas Atkinson, Priest."

CHAPTER XIV.

"A gloom doth fall o'er baron's hall,

A gloom o'er peasant's cot;

The woodland bower, the lordly tower,

Show one dark, dreary lot."

Historical Ballads.

The soft moonlight was playing in gleams on the walls of Thoresby Hall, and the trees and bushes

around stood out, some in silver brightness, some wrapped in gloom. The same beams fell strangely among the leaves of the lime-grove with its interlacing branches, and the perfume from the blossoms, always so much more powerful at night, floated on the air. The sweet influence of the scene did not seem lost upon the two persons who were pacing up and down the avenue.

"You have no 'real' objection, my Mary," said Lord Clinton, stooping to try and see the face, half hidden on his shoulder; "for if you have, even my eager love shall not be so selfish, but I have waited long, have I not? almost as long as Jacob for Rachael. It is full six years since, in this very spot, you gave me that dear assurance which has brightened life since then."

"No, Edward," answered Mary Thoresby in a low and trembling voice, "you have never been selfish. You know that such has been the state of Blanche's health, I have scarcely looked for her to live from month to month. I think now there seems appearance that her life of suffering may be longer, and since my marriage is to make no difference, is not to lead me from my father nor my suffering sister, I can no longer refuse that which—which—" Mary's face was once more hidden, and the lover understood the unspoken words.

"Then, my own Mary, why a sort of shade of melancholy which hangs over you when the subject is mentioned? Forgive me, but I am too anxious, too fearful, lest there should be some secret cause of grief or anxiety I do not know."

"Oh no, it is not that Edward, but how can any woman's heart not quail to think of a bridal such as mine will be, in secret and in fear, with no festive gathering, no joyous looks, such as attend the brides of half England when they wed; and then it is so strange that the occasion of my cousin's arrival should give us the opportunity. He whose life has been so strangely mixed up with a romance of love and suffering. It is only, Edward, that when I think of all these things—of the sorrow that is around us, of the clouds that hang over our heads, of the woe and persecution that attend our faith,—a doubt crosses my mind whether or not it is a time for 'marrying and giving in marriage.'

"Away with those fears, my own love," answered Clinton; "you cannot doubt the right of a union that has sanction and blessing from all we have been bound to consult. Your cousin last of all, you know;—did I tell you I had a long conference with him last night?"

"I saw you together," she answered, "and I was so glad, I wanted you to know him better. Is he not noble?"

"He is, indeed, one of those to whom one looks up as scarcely having a place on earth."

"And, Edward, then to think what a fate awaits him."

"Surely there is little fear for one allied to Lord Beauville," returned Clinton; "but I confess to you my desire is to see him ere long in London, 'there,' close to those he is allied to, he might be safe, and yet do his work; but if arrested here and thrown into Clemsford gaol, to linger there for many months, the chances of an appeal,—'tis a sad prospect."

Mary sighed deeply. "And I have a feeling,—a 'warning,' as the peasants call it,—that there will be a search made here ere long. Oh, if we had (as I know they have at many Catholic houses) a hiding-place where he could go! Did you ever see the one at Clare Hall, Edward?"

"Never."

"It is a little chamber behind the great chimney in the hall; a few stones take in and out, and often and often have the pursuers passed it by; but here"—and she looked wistfully towards the hall as a break in the trees enabled her to

have a full view—"here I see no possibility."

"And yet," rejoined Lord Clinton looking at the house, "those walls of mighty thickness ought to be able to shelter a fugitive."

A cry almost escaped from Mary's lips; Clinton looked at her with a sudden horror.

"No, I see nothing, hear nothing," she answered; "but 'tis a sudden thought. Thou knowest Blanche's chamber."

"Certainly I do."

"There is between the further wall of it and the one of my father's room a space; 'tis very narrow, but high, and there would be air. Think you not it would do? In the very heart of the house no one could suspect."

"It seems likely," responded Clinton. "Blanche's room is the centre of the hall?"

"It is; at least, hers and my father's are both, and this division was put, I fancy, to correct some inequality in the building."

"How did you know of it?"

"When the house was repairing, it was such a nice dangerous place for us children to get into. Well do I remember how angry old Madge was with us, and how she said she would tell my mother, and the fear of alarming her made us promise good behavior for the future. Oh, I long to know if it is possible it can be used; we must wait till tomorrow morning for that however, for I think Blanche by this time sleeps. We must go in now, dearest Edward."

And they walked towards the house, the moonbeams shining full upon his manly form, supporting the fair and gentle girl whose fate had been cast in such rough circumstances. On reaching the hall they found Sir Robert, Henry, and Father de Lisle engaged in earnest conversation. Mary blushing, would have passed by, and gone to her sister, but her father called her back.

"We have heard rumors from Arthur Leslie which warn us it is no longer safe for Father de Lisle to tarry amongst us," said Sir Robert; "and we must not seek to detain him, for now we have had the sacraments, for which we were well-nigh fainting, we must not selfishly endanger his safety, nor deprive others of his ministry, and so the day after tomorrow he proposes to go."

"But," said Walter, in his clear, sweet voice, "there is one more rite I would fain perform in this house, and if tomorrow night the next Mass I offer here could be your vidual, dear Mary, I should be very glad."

"Tomorrow night," almost gasped Mary, clinging to her father. "Tis so sudden, so short."

"But it has been a long and sober wooing, my child," answered Sir Robert; "and there are no bridal festivities to prepare, and you leave not your father's roof for another. I think you must consent my Mary."

Aad Mary did consent, and then hastened to hide her confusion in her sister's arms.

Different indeed was the bridal of Mary Thoresby from the others which it has been our lot to describe.

It was just past midnight when the little household assembled in Blanche's chamber. Blanche, lying on her couch, fixed her gaze lovingly on her sister. Mary wore a dress and veil of white, of the most simple kind, but old Madge's heart would have broken to have beheld her young mistress wedded in any other color. A table, arranged as an altar, was placed at the foot of Blanche's couch, and the form of the crucified Master looked down on the little group. The two altar lights alone illuminated the room, for more display was deemed unwise, and so the rest of the large chamber, with the grim tapestry that hung its walls, remained in gloom. The lights shed their rays on the heads of the betrothed as they knelt before the priest, with his pale face and his glance of unearthly peace. Hushed was the silence while the low voices repeated the vows. No unmeaning words and no perjured ones were those which came from the lips of Mary and Clinton.

(To be continued.)

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One of the pictures is called

"Heart Broken"

We will not let the reader into the secret of what has happened, but one of the merry little companions of the woeful little maid who has broken her heart is laughing already, and the other hardly knows what has happened. Cut flowers nod reassuringly at them, and a bright bit of verdure covered wall stands in the background. There is something piquantly Watteauesque about one of the petite figures, suggesting just a touch of French influence on the artist.

The other picture presents another of the tremendous perplexities of childhood. It is called

"Hard to Choose"

As in the other picture, we will not give away the point made by the artists before the recipients analyze it for themselves. Again there are three happy girls in the picture, caught in a moment of pause in the midst of limitless hours of play. One of the little maids still holds in her arms the toy horse with which she has been playing. Flowers and butterflies color the background of this, and an arbour and a quaint old table replace the wall.

The two pictures together will people any room with six happy little girls, so glad to be alive, so care-free, so content through the sunny hours amidst their flowers and butterflies, that they must brighten the house like the throwing open of shutters on a sunny morning.

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