

THE TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

[For the True Witness.]

THE DEAD CHILD.

Written at the Request of the Parents of a Young and Beautiful Girl, who died at Quebec, 1879.

[Aim: "The Exile of Erin."]

"Twas eve as I strayed towards the home of the lowly,
Where the fair and the good have gone to their Like the halo that gleams on the brow of the holy.

The day-god in splendor was low in the West; Through the shades of the twilight his last ray was streaming; On the dark hill-side his last light was bazing;

Like the radiance of glory that ever is gleaming,

Through the dark shrouds of death, on the bleak.

I stood by the mound where the fair one was sleeping—

Green, green was the grass on that sanctified sod—

The moon on the verge of the night-sky was creeping over.

All lonely and all silent I stood.

I stood where the spring flowers in beauty were growing—

A soft, gentle breeze o'er the churchyard was blowing,

My thoughts were afar, where the pure light is glowing;

Eternally bright round the Throne of God.

I thought of the one that was deep in the slumbers more.

I knelt o'er the grave and I slowly did number

The rosary-bead, as the prayers did outpour,

I thought of the world that was darkening around me,

Of the woes and the fears, and the pains that surround me,

I thought of the ties that to earth long had bound me.

And sighed for repose on Eternity's shore.

I thought how the sun in the grand west was sinking—

His couch lit with hues, like the painting of dreams—

I thought how his steeds at its fountains were drinking—

To refresh and invigorate when a new morning beams;

And I thought how the soul that was sleeping did borrow

New strength, like the sun, when the dark clouds Had fled from its face, and it shone on the morrow.

In the nimbus of glory that immortality gleams.

And I wept then no tear, for I knew that the maiden

So lovely, so pure and so glowing and fair,

In the rich light of heaven, at present, was laden.

With the beauties that lie not, eternally rare,

We shall see no more, fairest Minnie, at morning;

At noon, thy own beauty adoring,

But we think not on thee with sad thoughts of mourning.

We know we shall meet you in happiness there.

Then sleep, Minnie dear, where in sorrow we laid thee;

And rest 'till the note of thy triumph shall ring:

Ah! sleep in the grave that, in weeping, we music thee.

Unstained as the slate from the wintry wing,

We'll pray for and think of Minnie for ever;

Forget her, our child—for thee we'll never wait for the hour when, ne'er, more to mourn;

When we join thee with saints and with angels to sing!

JOSPEH K. FORAN.

Laval University, Quebec, 1879.

REDMOND O'DONNELL;

or,

LE CHASSEUR d'AFRIQUE.

CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED.

"You are sure of this, Katherine?"

"Certain, Gaston; your poverty will be no obstacle to him."

"Then he's a greater fool than I take him for," thought Mr. Dantree. "It were in his place, I would kick Gaston Dantree out of the room. Good Heavens! If I should marry this girl and it should get to Marie's ears! If I shall marry her—come what may, eight thousand a year at stake, and Marie the only obstacle in the way, and hundreds of leagues of sea and land between me and that obstacle! There is no turning back now; come what may, I shall marry the heiress of Scarswood." He turned to her with almost real passion in his voice now.

"Katherine," he said, taking both her hands in his and looking in her eyes, "whatever befalls, for good or for ill, you will not draw back—for good or for evil you are mine!"

She met his eyes full for the first time. She was pale, but there was no tremor in her voice as she slowly repeated his words. Clearly and firmly they came:

"Yours, Gaston—yours only. For good or evil, to the end of my life—yours!"

For good or for evil the vow was plighted; and she stood under the lamp pledged to become Gaston Dantree's wife.

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE BREAKFAST.

In the bleak, raw dawn of the wet October morning, Sir John Dangerfield's guests went home. While the lamps still gleamed among the flowers on the landing and stairways, Mrs. Vavasor, trailing the yellow glamour of her silk robe behind her, went up to her own room—went up with the fog end of a tune between her lips, a feverish lustre in her eyes, a feverish flush, not all rouge, on her cheeks, looking, as a hopeless admirer at the foot of the stairs quoted:

"In her lonely silken murmur
Like an angel dead with wings."

The admirer had taken a great deal of champagne at supper and biccousins interrupted the poetic flow of the quotation.

He also had Mrs. Vavasor herself. Perhaps a little of the brilliancy of eyes and color were due to the Cliquot, but then a good deal more was owing to triumph. Everything was going on so well. The little debt she had waited so long to pay off was in a fair way to receive a full receipt.

Peter Dangerfield was pitiable as wax in her hands. Gaston Dantree was the man of all men whom she would have chosen for Katherine Dangerfield's affianced husband. And Sir John had passed the night in a sort of earthly purgatory.

"Poor old Sir John!" the little woman said, airily, to herself. "I'm really concerned for him. He never did me any harm—poor old soldier. How plainly he shows his abhorrence of me in his face; foolish, uncivilized old man. If his precious daughter were not so wrapped up in her curled darling she could not fail to see it. I suppose our handsome tenor proposed in the conservatory? What a capital joke it would be to let him marry her after all, and then speak out. I think I'll wait until the wedding day. Ah, my lady! my lady! You were a great peeress and a brilliant woman in your day, but you're dead now, and forgotten, and little Harriet whom you circumvented so cleverly, lives still, and prosper, and hates you dead as she hated you alive."

The fire still burned on the marble hearth, the waxlights glimmered softly. She drew the window curtain and looked out at the

tiny morning light struggling feebly in the stormy gray sky. The elms and beeches rocked in the October gale, the swaying of the giant trees was like the dull roar of the sea. She dropped the silk curtain with a shiver and turned away.

"It gives me the horrors," she muttered; "it makes me think of old age, and death, and the grave. Will I live to become old, I wonder? and will I have money enough left to pay hirelings to smooth the last journey? This visit to Sussex will surely make my fortune, as well as give me my revenge. And when—all is over—I will go back to Paris, oh, my beautiful Paris! and live the rest of my life there. Whether that life be long or short I shall at least have enjoyed every hour of it. And, my lady, I'll be even with you to the last, and carry my secret to the grave."

She crossed over to the wardrobe where they had placed her trunks, opened one, and took out a book of cigarette papers and an embroidered tobacco-case.

"It's no use going to bed," she thought.

"I never can sleep at these abnormal hours. A cigarette will soothe my nerves better than slumber."

She began, with quick, deft fingers, to roll half-a-dozen cigarettes, and then lying back in a luxurious arm-chair, with two slender arched feet upon the fender to light and smoke. One after another she smoked to the last ash. The rainy daylight filled the room as she flung the end of the last inch in the fire.

She arose with a yawn, extinguished the light, drew the curtains and let in the full light of the gray, wet morning. The great trees rocked weakly in the high gale, a low leaden sky lay over the flat, wet down, and miles away the sea melted drearily into the horizon. In the pale bleak light brilliant little Mrs. Vavasor looked worn, and haggard, and ten years older than last night.

"Such a miserable morning! What a wretch I must look in this light. Captain Devere paid me compliments last night, tell me with his eyes, I believe, at least as much in love as a heavy dragon ever can fall. If he saw me now! I believe I'll go to bed after all."

Mrs. Vavasor went to bed, and her eyes closed in graceful slumber before her head was fairly on the pillow. And as the loud-voiced clock over the stables chimed the quarter past ten well, she came floating down the stairs in a rose-cashmere robe de matin, and all her feathered black ringlets afloat.

"Am I first, I wonder?" she said, peeping in. "Ah, no; dear Sir John, what an early riser you always were. You don't forget your morning habits, though you are one of the wealthiest baronets in Sussex."

She held out one slender white hand all aglitter with rings. But as he had refused it last night so the baronet refused the proffered handclasp this morning. He stood tall and stern, and grim as Rhadamanthus himself, drawn up to his full height.

"We are quite alone, Mrs.—Vavasor, since you choose to call yourself by that name, and we can afford to drop private theatricals. I fancied you would be down before Katherine, and I have been waiting for you here for the past hour. Harriet Harman, you must leave Scarswood and at once."

"Sir John's guest had taken tea-rose from a glass of flowers on the breakfast table, and was elaborately fastening it amid the luxuriance of her black hair. She laughed as her hot ceased speaking, and made the rose secure as she turned from the mirror.

"That is an improvement, I think—yellow roses always look well in black hair. What did you say, Sir John? Excuse my inattention, but the toilette before everything with us Parisiennes. I must leave Scarswood at once? Now, really, my dear baronet that is a phase of hospitality it strikes me not especially Arabian. Why must I go, and why at once?"

"Why! you ask that question?"

"Certainly I ask it. Why am I not to remain at Scarswood as long as I please?"

"Because," the Indian officer said, frigidly. "You are not fit to dwell an hour, a minute, under the same roof with—with my daughter. It you had possessed a woman's heart, a shadow of heart, one spark of womanly feeling, you would hunt me down as you have. It would be better for me I were a beggar on the streets."

"Again I ask why!"

"I have given you your answer already.

"Then go and be a beggar on the streets," she responded; "nothing is easier. Throw yourself upon your nephew's generosity—tell him that little episode in both our lives that happened in the Paris hospital fifteen years ago—tell him, and see how generous, how magnanimous he can be. You saw me talking to him, you say, in the conservatory last night. Would you like to know what we were talking about? Well—oh, Katherine!"

"I know it!" the baronet said with a growl. "I know it too well. My life has been a life of terror since this inheritance fell to me—fearing him, fearing you. If he had been any other kind of a man than the kind he is, I—think—I know I would have braved all consequences and told him the truth, and thrown myself upon his generosity. My life has been one prolonged misery since we came to Scarswood. I knew if you were alive, you would hunt me down as you have. It would be better for me I were a beggar on the streets."

Mrs. Vavasor listened to this passionate tirade with airless indifference.

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"I know it!" the baronet cried eagerly; "he asked Katherine to marry him? And she—what did she say?"

"Called him a ricketty dwarf—truthful, but unpleasant—and said me as high-spirited daughter knows how to say it. He's not handsome, and Miss Dangerfield dearly loves beauty. She resembles her mother in many things—in that among the rest. She refused Mr. Dangerfield last night—still I think, my dear baronet, I shall have the pleasure of congratulating you upon the accession of a son-in-law."

"What do you mean?"

"Excuse me; our haughty little Katherine might not thank me for muddling with her affairs *dans le cœur*. And I wish so much to stand well with the dear child. So affectionate a daughter can have no secrets from you—she will tell you all about herself, no doubt, before the day ends. And, Sir John, I can safely promise you this much—I shall leave Scarswood before your daughter's wedding day, to return no more."

He looked at her in painful anxiety. She clapped her little hands with a sly smile, and lifted two great imploring eyes to his face. The baronet shrank heavily.

"Heaven help you, Harriet! You might have a better woman if you had loved the child or anything else. But you never loved any human creature in this world but yourself, and never will. I suppose it is not in your nature."

Have you ever seen the swift pallor of sudden strong emotion show under rouge and pearl powder? It is not a pleasant sight. After the baronet's last words there was a dead pause, and in the dull, chill light he saw that ghastly change come over her.

"Never loved any human creature in this world!" She repeated his words slowly after him, then broke suddenly into a shrill laugh.

"Sir John Dangerfield, after half a century of this life's vicissitudes, the power to be astonished at anything earthly should have left all men and women, but you are sixty odd, aren't you? and I chose I could give you a glimpse of my past life that would rather take you by surprise. But I don't chuse—least not at present. Think me heartless, unprincipled, without conscience or womanly feeling—what you will—what does anything in this world signify except enjoyment, good wines, and comfortable incomes? And that brings me back to the

point, and I tell you coolly and deliberately, and determinedly, that I won't stir one step from Scarswood Park until I see fit."

She folded her hands one over the other, and looked up in his set, stern face, with an aggravating smile on her own.

"It is of no use your blustering and threatening; if you should feel inclined that way, my dear baronet, it will do no good. I won't go. But you are too much a soldier and a gentleman to even try to bully a poor little woman like me. I have an object in view in coming to Scarswood; when that object is attained, I shall leave—not one instant before."

"And your object is?"

"A secret at present, Sir John. As for your daughter,—with sneering emphasis—I should be the best judge, I think, as to whether or not I am a fit associate for her. Miss Dangerfield appears to be a young lady in every way qualified to take care of herself. And now, dear Sir John, as we thoroughly understand each other, suppose we take breakfast. It is paston, and I am hungry."

"I will take ten thousand pounds, and I will leave Scarswood a week preceding Miss Dangerfield's wedding-day. The sooner that day is named the better. That is my ultimate."

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