



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. VIII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1857.

No. 9.

THE RIVALS.

By Gerald Griffin.

CHAPTER XIII.

A wild cry, sudden and hoarse, which burst at this moment from the lips of Francis, cut short the progress of the narrative. It was echoed, even before he could perceive the cause, by his attendant, who threw himself off his seat, and rushed in a paroxysm of terror towards the door.

After the first cry of wonder and affright had burst from his lips, Francis remained rigid in the attitude into which the sudden terror had surprised him. With hands thrown back, as if in search of some support, with head put forward, with eyes full of a wild and joyous terror, he continued to stare upon the body, which began to alter fast beneath his gaze.

"She's risin'!" roared David, "that I mightn't die in sin, but 'tis risin' she is to us."

Francis raised his hand, as if to impose silence, and continued to watch the movements of the maiden. Sigh after sigh burst from her lips and bosom; and, at length, the fringed eye-lid rose, and the watery ball became revealed and fixed upon his own.

"She lives! She lives!" cried Francis, springing to his feet, and tossing his clenched hands above his head, while his hair stirred, his eyes shone, and his whole frame shook with an ecstasy of delight. O death, I thank thee! I thank thee for this gift! Do you know me, Esther?—Look on me! Do you know your own Francis?"

While he spoke, he endeavored to awaken her to a state of perfect consciousness, but it was a long time before his efforts were in any degree successful. Some words escaped her lips, but they were either wholly unmeaning, or had reference to objects absent, and events long past; she murmured the names of her uncle, and of old Aaron.

"They are near, they are safe," said Francis, soothingly, "dear Esther, you will see them all soon."

"Is Lacy gone yet?" murmured Esther, still in a listless tone.

Poor Francis felt a little pang at this enquiry, but his affections, at the instant, were too keenly aroused to allow the entrance of so ungenerous a sentiment as that of jealousy amongst them.

"He is near you, Esther; you shall see him soon again," murmured Francis, at her ear, while he removed the heavy grave clothes from her neck.

Lenigan had now recovered his courage sufficiently to approach his master, bearing in his hand the cloak which the latter had laid by.

"Row! this about her, masher Frank, asthore," he said, while his limbs trembled with affectionate anxiety, "row! the cloak about her, the way she wouldn't be frightened at the grave cloths, afther she comin' to."

"My honest, thoughtful Lenigan, I thank you," returned Francis, while he wrapped the garment around her person, and concealed the funeral garb, as far as it was possible.

"Masher Francis," continued the honest attendant, "I'm thinkin' it will be better, may be, if you lave her to myself awhile now, as she's comin' to, in thred she'd be frightened when she'd see you that way of a sudden. Go into the little room, awhile, an' when she's herself again rightly, I'll step over to the ould mother, or Harry's wife, an' bring 'em in to tend her."

Francis complied in silence, and entered the little apartment, where he overheard the following conversation between the awakened Esther and his attendant:

"Stir yourself, a-chree! Stir yourself, Miss Esther, asthore!" said David, in a tone of comfort and entreaty. "Open your eyes an' look about you. Here's the masher and the mistress, an' Aaron, an' all of 'em. See, here they're comin' in the doore; look up, asthore, an' bid 'em welcome."

"O nurse, I am dying!" murmured the patient. "Where's the nurse?"

"Here, a' ragal, here, at your elbow. How are you now, Miss?"

"I am very well, nurse, better. Oh, my fate!"

and looking fixedly in the face of the attendant. "Your voice reminds me of old times, and old friends. Why are you here? What dreary house is this?"

Francis now approached, from the inner room, his face concealed by his hat, and by the deep shade. He signified to David, that he should hurry away for the female attendant, and assumed, himself, the place by the side of Esther which he had occupied before. The anxious girl, stretched out her hands before Davy when she saw him about to leave the cottage.

"Why will you go? Stay with me," she exclaimed, "where are you going? Do not leave me here alone, and in the power of a stranger."

"Oh, then, Miss, if nobody ever injured you, until that stranger would do it, I'd lay my life you'd be the happiest lady on the earth."

A deep sigh from the stranger seemed to corroborate this assurance.

"But wherefore do you leave me?" continued Esther.

"To get the ould woman over, to come to tend on you, Miss. Herself, an' myself, will be back here together in less than no time."

He departed, and Esther sunk back again, with a moan of weariness and pain.

"And who are you?" she said, after a silence of some minutes, "that are left to watch me?"

"A friend," replied Francis, in a low voice.

"But what friend? Let me see your face.—My brain is so confused that I can scarcely understand how or why am I here, or what is my condition. I know I have slumbered long, and some strange alteration has been effected in my sleep. I am not at home. I am not among my friends. Oh, speak, to me, in mercy! Let me hear some sound of comfort. Where are my friends? Where am I? Who are you?"

"One," said Francis, still in the same deep voice, "who was once accounted a friend, although years and sorrow have changed him."

"And your name?"

"Turn this way from the door. The wind blows keenly in."

"I am very well. Pray, answer me."

"Be more concerned, young lady, for your own health, at this moment. My name is almost a forgotten sound, not worth reviving now."

"Be it as you will," said Esther, "I will not press you. Nevertheless, I am anxious to hear it, for there is something in your voice that moves me like a recognition. You have called yourself my friend, and truly say you are forgotten now. And yet I never knew a friend whose name departed from my recollection. Others have ceased to think of me, but Heaven can witness that I was never forgetful of an early affection yet."

Francis paused in deep silence, for some moments after the speech, and then said, with a deep inspiration and in his natural voice, "Ah! Esther! Esther!"

These words were the first that recalled the heart of Esther to the recollection of its living passions. Immediately her pulses beat freely, and all her senses acquired a vividness of perception that resembled the change from sleep to waking. And with the swift transition, came a new confusion of the intellect, and a new doubt of her position. The fire light seemed to burn with a brighter hue, the darkness deepened, and the strange gloom that surrounded her once more brought back the horrible idea that she had in reality changed the condition of her existence.—And this impression, in itself sufficiently startling, was rendered yet more fearful by the apparition (as she believed it) of her long perished love, whose face she now beheld pale on the fire light, and bent on her with an expression of mingled love and reproach. While she continued to gaze upon him, gasping for breath to speak, and leaning forward on her hands, the latch of the door was raised, on the sudden, and he disappeared in the dark.

Lenigan now entered, accompanied by his brother's wife, (the young mother whom the reader lately met at the school), who lifted her hands and eyes, and crossed her brow, her lips, and her bosom, at every step she made. Without any conversation worth detailing, they prevailed on Esther to suffer herself to be conveyed to the dwelling of the schoolmaster, which could afford her means of accommodation somewhat superior to that in which she lay at present. To her inquiries respecting her late companion, they returned little more than those general and evasive answers, for which people in their rank appear to have a peculiar talent. Their humane attentions during the night completely recovered her from the effect of that paroxysm of her neuralgic illness which had for so long a time left her in a trance resembling death, and had maintained the latent principle of existence for so many hours even in her coffin.

It is not necessary to detail all that took place on the return of Francis Riordan. The explanations which followed, were so far successful in appeasing the wounded affections of the latter, that the schoolmaster's brother, on his return

home, was astonished at the warmth of devotion with which the former compensated for his passing indignation. After much debating, it was arranged that Esther's resurrection should still be kept a secret from her friends, and another week beheld the exile and his bride (for such had Esther consented to become), occupying a small residence, on one of those lonely little lakes, which are found among the mountains in the interior of the country.

CHAPTER XIV.

Richard Lacy was disappointed in the information respecting Riordan which Tobin led him to anticipate at the Police Station. The latter never made his appearance there, and Lacy returned home towards midnight, fatigued and irritated. He continued, however, to pursue his schemes with unexhausted vigor. But day after day as they proved less successful, his altercations with his creature, became more frequent and more passionate. Tobin, however, usually succeeded in restoring himself to a show of favor, by some mysterious allusion to a certain incident, in Lacy's magisterial life, the memory of which the latter did not seem willing to have revived. Frequently, their connexion seemed on the point of being suddenly dissolved, when this mysterious threat came in, like an all powerful mediator, to lull the awakened storm, and to restrain, if it could not remove, the excited passions of the parties.

But all Tobin's misdeeds were forgotten, upon the instant when he made his appearance in Lacy's office, upon one occasion, with an extraordinary piece of news. This was, that Francis Riordan had been seen the preceding evening, walking alone on one of the mountain roads in the interior of the country, and that there was little doubt that he might still be found within Lacy's commission, provided a little diligence were used in finding out precisely where.

This was a species of inquest upon which Lacy had no reluctance to enter. He set out, accompanied by two of his police, armed, and on horseback, and consumed that night and the succeeding day, in unavailing efforts to ascertain the correctness of Tobin's information.

Wholly unconscious of the active measures that were undertaken for the disturbance of their blissful solitude, Francis and Esther were enjoying, meanwhile, the happiness of a full domestic contentment. They had prolonged their residence at Lough B—beyond the term which was originally proposed, and on the very evening when Lacy was returning from that excursion, which was projected for their confusion, they sat by their fire-side, talking of matters indifferent and interesting, according as they arose; of their past adventures, of the state of the weather, which seemed to portend a storm, and of the state of the country, which promised little better.

At the desire of Francis, Esther threw open her piano, and sung some verses of the following sort, to which he entertained a liking that had its origin in past associations of place and circumstance:—

Faded now, and slowly chilling,
Summer leaves the weeping dell,
While, forlorn and all unwilling,
Here I come, to say, Farewell.
Spring was green when first I met thee,
Autumn sees our parting day;
Never, if my heart forget thee,
Summer shine for me again!

Fame invites! her summons only
Is a magic spell to me;
For when I was sad and lonely,
Fame it was that gave me thee.
False, she is, her slanders sing me,
Wreathing flowers that soonest fade,
But such gifts if fame can bring me,
Who will call the nymph a shade.

Hearts that feel not, hearts half broken,
Deem her reign no more divine;
Vain in them are praises spoken,
Vain the light that fills her shrine.
But in mine, those joys Elysian
Deeply sink and warmly breathe;
Fame to me has been no vision,
Friendship's smile embalsms her wreath.

Sunny lakes and spired mountains,
Where that friendship sweetly grew;
Rains hoar and gleaming fountains,
Scenes of vanished joys, adieu!
Oh, where'er my steps may wander,
While my home-sick bosom heaves,
On those scenes my heart will ponder,
Silent, oft, in summer eves.

Still, when calm the sun, down-shining,
Turns to gold that winding tide;
Lonely, on that couch reclining,
Bid those scenes before thee glide
Fair Killarney's sunset splendor,
Broken crag, and mountain grey,
And Glengarriff's moonlight tender,
Bosomed on the heaving bay.

Yet all pleasing rise the measure
Memory soon shall hymn to thee,

Dull for me no coming pleasure,
Lose no joy for thought of me.
Oh, I would not leave thee weeping;
But, when falls our parting day,
See thee hush'd, on roses sleeping,
Sigh unheard, and steal away!

This performance gave occasion to one of those delicious entertainments, which can only be enjoyed, when sympathy of tastes, as well as of affections, occurs, to give the highest finish to the happiness of married life. They brought down favorite authors, compared, repeated, censured, and defended, rallied each other into laughter, and argued without wilfulness, each drawing forth the other's store of talent, and talking affectionately, without the admixture of a single dose of sentiment.

In this condition they were surprised by a visit from the schoolmaster's brother who had been a frequent guest at their cottage. Lacy had been induced to turn in, he said, as well by his anxiety to learn the condition of Mrs. Riordan's health, as by the apprehension of the approaching storm, the signs of which were every instant becoming more manifest.

Lenigan was taking a tumbler of punch by the kitchen fire-side, and expatiating on the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, with respect to the veneration of Saints, when he was summoned to the parlor, by the desire of Francis.

"David," said the latter, "do you remember having broken off your account of purgatory, in the middle, on that night, in the cottage, when we were watching together by the fire-side?—I have got a book here, written by an Italian gentleman of the name of Dante, and it has so curious a resemblance to your story, that I am anxious to hear the end of it."

"What religion, masher, was that Misher Dandy, if it be his name, the gentleman that wrote that book?"

"He was a Catholic, Davy, and not only a Catholic, but a great theologian."

"Oyeh! Then you may take his word for it sooner than mine, a dale, I'm sure, sir. That is," Davy added with a nod, "providin' it be done right in the printin'."

"Well, for the sake of that doubt, David, let us hear the conclusion of your version."

David complied, and having, at the repeated instances of his patron, taken a chair at a respectful distance, he proceeded with his narrative:

"Well, sir, afther lavin' the married people that were so happy together (may you an' the mistress have a place among them I pray in the latter end!) they came to another gate, an' passin' in, they found themselves in a fine shrubbery with herbs, an' furze, and underwood of all sorts in great exuberance. There was a tall rock in the middle o' the place, and on the very top o' it was a goat with golden horns, and a long beard, and the hair sweeping down to his hoofs, an' he browsing for himself on the sweetest of herbage. 'What goat is that, father?' says the boy. 'Ask hisin', child, if you wish to know.' So the boy med up to the goat, an' axed him. 'If I might make so bould,' says he, 'who are you that has them fine golden horns upon your head?' 'Fermoorna-mown,' says the goat. 'Is it the common robber an' highwayman, that I seen prepared for death, myself, in our village,' says the boy, 'an' that the priest had so poor an opinion of it?' 'The very same,' says the goat, 'I'm here for ever with plenty of provisions, and a house to sleep in,' says he. 'I never turned a poor man out of my house, while I was in the world, and the Almighty wouldn't turn me out of his house afther I left it.'

"Well, the next field they came to, there wasn't so much as a daisy or a blade o' grass upon the ground, and the place looking very lonesome, an' a fat elderly man tied in chains in the middle of it, cryin' an' bawlin', an' dressed in the dirtiest rags, except the cravat that was about his neck, an' that was as white as the snow. 'That's a methodist preacher, that's tied there,' says the father, 'an' that's all the clothin' he'll ever get for all eternity.' 'An' tell me, father,' says the son, 'what is it makes the cravat so clean an' nice, an' the rest of his clothes not fit to be seen?' 'Of a day,' says the old man, 'when he was out preachin', his servant maid put that cravat upon her, as a hand-kitcher, goin' to mass, an' it got a sprinklin' o' the holy wather in the chapel, an' that's the only clane tack he has on him,' says he, 'for all eternity.'

"Well, an' good, they passed out o' that field an' they came, all at once, into a lonesome wood, with a lake as black as a cloud in the middle, an' three as high as castles hangin' over it, an' not a sound in the place, except a poor man that was wandherin' to an' fro on the borders o' the lake, an' cryin', as if all belengin' to him were stretched. 'Oh, the day!' says he, 'that I sold my child! Oh, brother, give him back to me again! Oh, who will spread my bed, or sing to me, or keep me company, in this lonesome wood, for ever?'"

"Do you see that man?" says the father. 'I do to be sure,' says the boy, 'what is it ails him, his cries would move the Danes?' 'That's Peter Duhig,' says the father, 'that lived a-neighbor you formerly. He had a brother that was very rich, an' drove in his gig, while Peter hadn't so much as would buy kitchen for the pates with his wife an' children. One evening, after his eldest boy's death, his brother's servant was going for wather, an' he heard some one singin' most beautiful in the wood. He looked in among the threes, an' there he saw Pether's child, that was bured the week before, rovin' about, singin' an' pullin' rushes. 'Erra, is that you, Johnny?' says the servant boy, 'To be sure it is,' says he. 'What are you doin', Johnny?' 'Pullin' a bed for my father, the way he'll have it to lie upon in heaven, when he dies,' says the child. So the servant went home, an' told it to his masher.—'O, then, what luck had,' says the masher, 'that didn't marry, like my poor brother, an' have childer to spread a bed for me in heaven?' Well, he went himself to learn was it fact, an' when he did, he med off at once to the brother's cottage, an' offered him a farm, an' money, if he'd only sell him the child, an' never left him pace or quietness, until he took the offer. Well, the next time the servant went out, in place o' hearin' him singin', 'tis cryin' he heard the child. 'E' what ails you, Johnny?' says he. 'It's little admiration I should cry,' says John, 'an' my father to sell me to my uncle, so that I can't do anything now for him, but the bed that was lain for him must be given to my uncle.' An' sure 'twas true for him, for when the father came to hear of it, he got a stitch an' died, and there's the way with him now."

"An' now, my good boy," says the father, "it is better for you to go no farther, for you'll see sights, an' hear sounds, beyond this place, that would make you a mournful man for ever. Return now to your house, do all the good you can while you live on earth, give alms to the poor, never turn away a beggar from your doore, never grudge a night's lodgin' to a weary traveller, be regular at mass every Sunday, and at your duty o' Christmas an' Esther, beware of dances and tents at the patherens, an' jig-houses, an' benefits, say your prayers mornin' an' evenin', an' hearken to your parish priest; do your duty by your family an' those dependin' on you, take care how you lay out the mains the Almighty gave you, an' my hand to you, the finest bed of down that was ever spread in a king's palace upon the earth is a flinty rock in comparison of the bed that'll be spread for you by the angels in heaven."

"He said the word, an' led the boy back by another way to the gate of the house, where he entered first. He opened a door in a high wall there, and what was the surprise o' the boy to find himself in his own garden, with the birds singin' an' the sheep bleatin' in the paddock.—He went into his house, sayin' nothin' to anybody, an' he led such a life afther, that the priest himself wasn't a patch upon him for piety."

While the narrative proceeded, the wind had been gradually rising, and now moaned around the solitary dwelling, with fitful and uneasy violence. Gusts of light rain beat frequently against the window panes, and the deep purple clouds, that, during the afternoon, lay stored upon the horizon, heaved up their gloomy masses into the midst of heaven, and seemed to marshal their sullen forces, for the elemental war that was expected. The oppressive closeness which was in the air, began to diminish, and faint flashes of a reddish lightning, followed at long intervals by the muttering of distant thunder, were reflected on the bosom of the basined lake, which lay before the cottage windows. Davy Lenigan observed, that the storm would, doubtless, be a great one; for he had seen the earth worms creeping out upon the dusty roads, as he came along, and the smoke from the cottage chimnies ascended straight, and almost without a curl, into the rare and heated atmosphere.

The heavens made good his word. The color of the lightning shortly changed from red to a pale and vivid blue; the flashes became more frequent and irregular, and the voice of the thunder sounded nearer, louder, and clattered above the mountain tops, with short and sudden reverberations.

"There is yet enough of day light," said Francis, "to see the cascade, and the spectacle would be magnificent in such a storm as this.—I will leave you here, Esther, for one hour, alone."

Esther endeavored to dissuade him, but without success. He only took the precaution of avoiding the common roads on which he had been seen a few days before, by the man who had given the information to Tobin. His apprehensions had been excited by the manner in which the man stared upon him, and he was not willing to renew the danger of such an encounter.

He entered a path, leading through a glen of pine and birch wood, in which the waterfall was situated. A broken stream, half smitten into