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LORENZO; OR, THE EMPIRE OF RELIGION.

BY A SCOTCH NON-CONFORMIST, A CONVERT TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

Translated from the French by a Lady of Philadelphia. CHAPTER I. Lord Seymour to Signor Alphonso of Mancini. Bayonne, July 16th.

Give thanks to the God of goodness, who watches over His children with eternal love.— Congratulate me and participate in the holy joy which fills my soul. Yes, dear Alphonso, your friend has surrendered to truth, has entered into the fold of the church, and has now a claim to be united with you in eternity.

You left me undecided, irresolute, half-convinced. On arriving here, I found myself more unsettled than ever. Providence willed that I should have a letter to deliver to the guardian of the convent of St. Francis. I resided at the monastery. The conduct of those saintly monks completed the work which you had so happily commenced.

A happiness for which I had not dared even to hope, awaited me in this retreat. I here found Sidney, that son of a beloved sister, whom I had so much lamented, and never expected to see again. My joy was not clouded in finding him a Catholic and a monk. He is twenty-seven years old, during eight of which he has devoted himself to God in this retreat.

The relation of the events which have cheered his life, and of the graces which conducted him hither, sensibly moved me. You also will be equally affected with me, and you will bless the memory of those who have brought back the wandering sheep to the fold, and who are now, we may trust, numbered with the people of God.

Two months have passed since my abjuration; two months of peace and happiness. Adieu; I have delayed my letter in order to add Sidney's recital, which is subjoined. Pray, to obtain for me the grace of perseverance. I need not tell you that your religion, in becoming mine, has bound closer, and rendered more strong and indissoluble, the ties which have ever endeared you to your true friend,

SEYMOUR.

SIDNEY'S NARRATIVE.—HISTORY OF HIS CONVERSION TO THE ROMAN CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

Addressed to Lord Seymour.

You remember that having left the university of Oxford, after receiving your adieus, your excellent advice, and all the recommendations, which you judged necessary for my happiness, I set out with my guardian, the marquis of Rosline, to whom you had confided me to accompany him in his travels.

We rapidly traversed France. I loved study and read a great deal. I visited the most remarkable places, taking notes, sketching, seeking only instruction, and participating but little in the pleasures which the marquis thought necessary occasionally to grant me, as a relaxation from my pursuit of knowledge.

Whilst my mind became enlightened, my heart remained barren, deprived of the aliment which age rendered every day more necessary; I mean sentiment and reflection to combat its inclinations and growing passions.

Amiable, well informed, but too much occupied by his quality of minister to be often with me, the marquis left me a liberty which I might have abused. I had not yet experienced either pains or pleasures. I had neither friend nor confidant. I felt the void of this privation without being able to define its cause. He who has his eyes ever fixed on the work of his hands, had not forgotten me.

Our tour upon the Continent being terminated, we went to the port of T. to re-embark for England. The marquis invited me to accompany him in a visit to a galley; his intention was to profit by the privilege which his position gave him, of releasing a slave, if he should find one who merited this favor. We attentively examined all. The marquis asked several the reasons why they had been put in irons. All were, to listen to them, victims of the darkest injustice, and I could not help smiling to see with what seeming sincerity those malefactors unblushingly told their tale.— One of them, placed in a corner, and much occupied with little works of interwoven straw, took no part in what passed. We drew near to him, but he did not raise his head. He might have been twenty-two or twenty-three years of age; his expression was remarkable and full of sensibility.

"So young!" said the marquis; "what unhappy affair has brought you to this place?" He received no reply. "He is blind," said one of our conductors; "it is a punishment for his crimes." "So guilty at this age!" I exclaimed, with a deep feeling of surprise and compassion.

A slight smile partly unclosed the lips of the captive, but he appeared not to feel any emotion. "How can you work so well without seeing?"

asked the marquis. "A God infinitely good," he answered, "offers us resources and consolations, even where it appears that his providence has most abandoned us. He gives us on one side what he has taken from us on the other.— There is not one of these unfortunate men as happy as I am;—what do I say—there are few men upon the earth.—"

"It is a happiness which no one will envy," said the marquis, smiling. "No, without doubt, because they know it not; the inexhaustible source of my gladness is increased by the mystery in which it is enveloped. But you are English," added the captive in a voice somewhat moved; "has the marquis of Rosline arrived here yet?"

"It is he who speaks to you," replied the marquis; "do you know him?" "Not personally; but his name is dear to me, and it ought to be—" He paused; a quick blush suffused his face; he bowed his head upon his breast and continued his work.

"Of what country is this young man?" inquired Lord Arthur; "what has he done? what is his name?"

"He is generally called here Lorenzo," replied one of the directors; "but as he has been sent from another galley, we know neither his country, nor the nature of his crimes; subjects on which he observes an obstinate silence. For the rest he has an unvarying sweetness of disposition; always in peace, he often quiets the dissension which arise among his companions. He works unceasingly, scarcely sleeps, and takes very little nourishment. His temper is cheerful, he prays a great deal, and sings hymns almost continually. He is much beloved by his companions, although he never takes part with them in their little seditious and murmurs."

My looks asked his freedom. Lord Arthur smiled, and again approaching him, said, "would liberty increase your happiness?"

"My happiness depends no longer on the inconstancy of events. Free or loaded with irons, I shall be in the same hands, under the same master, under the same protection."

"But if I burst your chains," resumed the marquis, "that I may retain you with me, you will then depend for nothing on those who now have power over you, and would not your life be more agreeable?"

"It would be embellished by the sentiment of gratitude, the charm of which is not indifferent to a soul capable of feeling it ardently."

These few words, which he added with warmth, discovered to me great qualities in that heart, which apparently desired only to be enclosed within itself. "Have you been long here?" I asked; "and have you never had any friends?"

He remained some time in mournful silence; then said with a deep sigh: "You think, no doubt, that this abode is inaccessible to the sweet sentiment of friendship; but when the compassionate and merciful being, who watches over his creatures, has rendered friendship necessary to the agony of grief, He knows how to introduce it into the habitation of crime, as well as on the throne; in the most obscure dungeons, amid the comforts of palaces. It is then, indeed, that it is most pure and heroic. Who can resist the All-Powerful, and who would dare to put limits to His goodness and his love! Yes! I had a friend, and the thought of his felicity is a balm, which He who took him away has applied to the deep wound his loss has made on my heart. I have not lost him! he has but gone before me into the regions of eternal happiness!"

On concluding these words, he raised his weeping eyes by a kind of habit towards that heaven which he saw no more, but which, doubtless, imagination and memory depicted to him. His eyes still retained an astonishing beauty and vivacity; he had lost only the faculty of seeing, like those who have been deprived of that sense by a flash of lightning.

"I believe," said the marquis, "that in a soul like yours, wickedness has been but transient, without reflection, and deeply expiated by repentance."

"The man who does not mourn his faults, has no happiness to hope for in a better life."

"There are faults, and there are crimes," replied Lord Arthur, smiling. "All men commit the first, and the justice of this world generally reaches only the latter."

"Without doubt, my lord; but those who execute it, often know not what they do. A more powerful arm, which guides them, disposes of the fate of the guilty and innocent. He who has placed me here, alone knew what He did." After a long pause, Lorenzo resumed: "Will you be kind enough to tell me if the count of Walsingham died a Catholic."

The marquis slightly frowned. "Yes; were you acquainted with him? He abjured his religion, but it was on the bed of death. He was led astray by his wife; he had but little of his own will."

"But his son Henry was already converted: is he still living?"

"He now resides at Walsingham castle; he is married, and has two or three children."

"Oh! mighty God," exclaimed the prisoner, with animation, "behold thy work, thy clemency—thy mercy! and could I believe myself unhappy? May thanks be for ever given thee!"

"You interest yourself exceedingly in Henry of Walsingham," said the marquis, "do you know all my family?"

Lorenzo made no reply. A moment after, drawing nearer, and lowering his voice: "My lord," said he, "if it is your design to have compassion on one of the unfortunate men, condemned to this abode of shame and grief, I ought not to be the object of your favor. Of what importance is it to me where I dwell, or how can it affect my happiness? I can imagine a delightful abode to be but a vast solitude as imagination and memory are alone left to me. My conversation is no longer on the earth; unknown, and determined always to remain so, the benefits which are not necessary for me, might save some other soul from despair, or from the danger of criminal example."

"Is there any one, then, among these unhappy men, whose situation merits and calls for prompt relief?"

"As but eight months have passed since I was transferred to this ship, I know not all my companions; but, among those who changed their quarters with me, there is one who is not chargeable with any crime. He wears the fetters that should be worn by a rich and powerful man in the world, who having succeeded in hushing the noise of his orders, prevailed upon this honest artisan to become his substitute in this place, in consideration of the sum of fifty pounds sterling, which is annually given to his large and destitute family. God has given you fortune, power, and a charitable disposition; release this man, who, until now, without reproach, may perhaps be corrupted by the dangerous examples of the criminals, with whom misfortune associates him.— Save his family, by securing to him an honest subsistence; you will make them happy, and heaven will reward you. I shall not speak to you of the happiness which you will experience; you have a heart, and you already know that all the troubles to which our frail humanity is exposed, are not capable of entirely destroying the delightful remembrance of a good action."

The marquis and myself were equally filled with admiration and surprise at the conduct of this extraordinary man. He sent for Robert, who was the galley-slave just mentioned. He asked him if all that he had learned about him was true, and added: "I intended to liberate this young man, but he entreats me to give you the preference. I shall inquire concerning your family, and if all is true, I will insure you a pension of twenty-five pounds sterling. Be upright and pray for the prosperity of England."

Robert cast himself at the marquis' feet, who took him aside, and asked him if he knew not some circumstances of Lorenzo's life. "I have never seen in him but an angel of peace and consolation. He was already a captive, when I went to Bayonne, to share in his lot, about twenty-seven months since. A Catholic priest, Signor Don Silva, nephew of the governor, frequently visited the galley-slaves, and manifested a very particular affection and esteem for Lorenzo. He was his confessor, and he came almost daily to read to him, whilst at work. He died nineteen months ago, but before this happened, Lorenzo was taken to him to receive his last sigh; he then fell into so alarming a state, that the governor sent him to this city, in order that the change of air might re-establish his health. I was among the number of prisoners who were transferred with him."

Lord Arthur looked at me with an undecided air. "If I release Lorenzo, and take him with us, his situation demands attentions which we would scarcely be able to render him. It is true, I might place him in a hospital."

"I eagerly grasped the marquis' hand. "My lord, you have never refused me anything; but, as I have yet asked nothing of your kindness, grant me now the liberty of this extraordinary prisoner, and give him altogether to me. Let me keep him at my home; I promise you that he will never be a burden to me; I will take care of him, and you will see that we shall have no cause to repent it."

Lord Arthur smiled, and granted my request. He begged the governor, who was his particular friend, to have Lorenzo conducted to his dwelling; to give him suitable clothing; and it was arranged that we should call for him towards evening. He then gave Robert twenty guineas for his journey, and approaching Lorenzo, "My ward wishes to make you happy, and to have you near him. I am going, therefore, to take you with us."

"There is nothing surprising to me in this generosity on the part of lord Arthur," said Lorenzo, with evident emotion.

At this moment, Robert came to bid him adieu, and to express his lively gratitude. Lorenzo

embraced him with delight. "May you be happy, Robert; remember Don Silva, and his advice: live no more for this world, but for that future life which shall never end; and pray, ah! I conjure you, pray for the generous man who restores you to liberty. If you still think of Lorenzo, ask of the All-powerful the conversion of Arthur —. Pray for me; alas!" he added, sorrowfully, "I leave a uniform and peaceful existence, for a life of struggles, and perhaps of tribulation. I know all that awaits me in England, and in the family of the marquis of Rosline."

I alone overheard this conversation, the marquis being occupied with the governor. I did not, however, repeat it to him. We departed. Towards evening, the marquis wishing to pay another visit to the governor, went with me to look for Lorenzo.

I read on the face of the prisoner that he had wept and suffered. "Can it then be possible," I said, in an under tone, "that in wishing to increase your happiness, we lessen it?" He pressed my hand. "My heart," said he, "is not equal to the gratitude which overwhelms it, or to the feelings which arise within me."

The governor was conversing with lord Arthur. He afterwards said to me; "You would have been affected, had you witnessed the parting of Lorenzo with his companions, and their grief; there is yet some feeling in this class of beings, although supposed to be entirely depraved."

A deep blush mantled the face of Lorenzo, who remained silent. We left the governor's house, and directed our way to the ship, where the marquis, leaving us in our apartment, went to give the necessary orders for our voyage.— Lorenzo appeared absorbed in reflection. Fearing that he was dissatisfied with the change in his destiny, I expressed my apprehensions with all the delicacy and respect which his situation and character imposed upon me; for I had already discovered that he possessed elevated sentiments, and an uncommon magnanimity which did not permit me to treat him as an ordinary man.

He seemed much affected by my conversation, and learning that we were alone, he asked if we were not going to Scotland. Then, upon my affirmative answer, he added: "There are so many persons in that country, whom I cannot see again, that I am forced to regret a change, which, from personal considerations, would be so dear and sweet to me. But," he continued with animation, "what can lead you to pour consolation into my soul? What can induce you to retain near you a man who is a burden to the world?—Curiosity or novelty? Oh! my lord, I can support, without offending you; at your age, the first impulses of a kind heart, and the little prospects of innocent diversion, are sufficient to induce a young man to interest himself in an unfortunate being from whom, some months after, he will esteem himself happy to be freed." He leaned his head upon his hand. "Who else but you, Don Silva, could interest himself for me? Who else will ever love Lorenzo? But yet," he added in a low voice, "on the shores of his native land, as in Spain and in France, the forsaken Lorenzo will always be in the hands of Providence!"

Tears bedewed his face. My heart was bursting. "Know Sidney better," I exclaimed, "and believe that if he cannot mitigate your grief, if he is not worthy of knowing them, nothing at least can take from him the consolation of sympathizing in them. Moreover, you have nothing to fear from your residence in Scotland. You shall be accessible to those only whose visits you desire. Your apartment shall be with mine, and not open without your consent. I alone will come to interrupt your solitude, and to pass my happiest moments near you."

"Young man, how amiable are your words! and how well they picture the kind heart, and generous devotedness which characterize the loyal Scotch! But soon your generous sentiments will be changed by a cold reason, and by the influence of those under whose guardianship you are. My benefactor, yes, Arthur himself will be the first to blame an indiscreet affection based solely upon the interest which misfortune inspires, and carried (he will say) beyond the limits of common prudence."

I felt too well the force of these reflections, not to be afflicted by them. I flattered myself, however, that before our arrival in Scotland, Lorenzo (better known to the marquis) would cause him to feel the same attachment with which he had inspired me; and that then he would cheerfully lend his aid in obtaining from my parents that Lorenzo should not be separated from me.

CHAPTER II.

During the voyage, the marquis manifested a great esteem for Lorenzo, and showed him many attentions. Nobody knew him; not even our servants, for we had brought him from the governor's house, just at the moment of embarking; and the marquis presented him every where under

the name of the Chevalier Lorenzo, a young gentleman entrusted to his care, who accompanied him in his travels.

Lorenzo did not in the least belie the representations which we made of his birth. He was perfectly acquainted with the English and French languages, and conversed agreeably in German, Italian, and Spanish. His manners indicated an education equally brilliant and solid. He had made excellent drawings; played upon the mandolin; and a voice more full and melodious I never heard.

Nearly every evening, whilst at sea, the marquis played with me at chess. Lorenzo remarked that he knew this game, and his memory was such, that he directed my play altogether upon being informed of lord Arthur's moves; he remembered all the positions of the game from the beginning to the end. This wonderful memory was a source of great amusement to the marquis, who was a very skilful player, and over whom I had not been able to gain any advantage, until Lorenzo assisted me with his instructions.

It is said that the character of a man discovers itself at play; and it was here in fact that I perceived Lorenzo's delicacy and generosity, in his solicitude to avoid offending the marquis, or wounding his self-love; and in the cheerfulness with which he often acknowledged himself conquered, when he might easily have won the game.

I remarked, on the part of the marquis, a profound and continual study of Lorenzo's character, and I rejoiced at it, because his observations could not but tend to my friend's advantage. At first, he left us together alone with regret and pain; but this reasonable distrust visibly diminished, in proportion as he became better acquainted with the purity of Lorenzo's principles and morals.

We travelled by sea to St. Andrew's in order to avoid passing through England; the troubles with Scotland having increased since our departure. Lord Arthur, who loudly censured the queen, Mary Stuart, but had not, however, declared himself for her enemies, repaired with us to —. There he had an establishment in which he resided; the apartment which he gave me was next to his, and the room of Lorenzo opened into mine, an arrangement which afforded me much pleasure.

Taking me aside, the marquis observed, in a very affectionate manner: "You know, Sidney, that I love you; it is not my wish to refuse you anything that I can reconcile with the confidence which your parents repose in me. For you burst Lorenzo's fetters; I do not prevent his being near you; I must, however, confess that during our voyage, I often trembled to leave you alone with him. What confidence can a galley-slave inspire? Could I, without shuddering, behold you seeking among such a class of persons a friend, an intimate associate; I who dreaded to let you associate even with companions of your own age and rank, that seemed to be equally free from vice and misfortunes?—The study of Lorenzo's character has diminished my fears, without, however, removing them entirely. Let me hope that you will ever recognise in me your sincere and your best friend, and that you will never conceal from me any of your conversation with this stranger, nor the principles that you may discover in him. I shall continue, then, to confide in you, Sidney," added lord Arthur, assuming a yet more affectionate tone; "I shall not curtail your liberty, and I shall expect from you that perfect frankness which should be observed towards one who holds in your regard the relation and respectability of a parent."

These words caused me to sink at the marquis' feet. He lifted me up, and tenderly embraced me. We then separated.

A month passed away in great seclusion. Lorenzo became each day more familiar and communicative. I regulated my daily employment and studies. I devoted one hour, morning and evening, to reading near Lorenzo; but, beside this appointed time, I went almost every day to study in his room; he was so instructive that I gained more in one morning from his society, than from the solitary application of a whole day.

His deportment continued to excite our admiration; and my friendship for him increased with the esteem that his character inspired. Always awake at the dawn of day, he passed a considerable time in prayer before he commenced any other occupation. He never breakfasted; taking only a glass of water in the morning.

We generally retire at ten o'clock, P.M. He would converse some time with me, and then fall upon his knees in prayer; and often during the night I have again seen him in this attitude, having left the door open, which communicated from one chamber to the other, in order to render him any assistance that he might need. He refused to be attended by a servant, whom we had offered him, and he now was so well acquainted with the house that he went through it alone.