



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. IX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JULY 1, 1859.

No. 47.

THIODOLF THE ICELANDER.

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CHAPTER LXII.

The old priest Jonas had before him a large open book, and earnestly read in it, although the hour was late. Just then some one knocked at the door of his cell, and opening it himself, he saw, with great amazement, the young Væring chief standing before him, together with his companion, Bertram.

"Dear, reverend Sir," said Thiodolf, with tears of joy in his eyes, "here is one who desires to receive from you the sacrament of Holy Baptism."

Jonas looked awhile at his guests in astonishment. At length he said, "Thiodolf, my dear son, how hast thou so suddenly attained to the knowledge of the holy mystery? For I can never believe of thee that thou wouldst present thyself at the table of the Lord only half converted by some passing ecstasy."

"God forbid, dear father," said Thiodolf; and he related all that had happened to him in the last hours.

The priest Jonas looked with wonder into Bertram's eyes, and said, "You must be a priest? or, perchance, even a saint?"

"I am no priest," answered Bertram, "I am no saint; but an honest, industrious man I may be, and to such our Heavenly Father often grants a happy success. You must not so greatly wonder that my simple words should have brought the young warrior to a knowledge of our Blessed Saviour. Your teaching and the Princess Theodora's have long been silently working in his strong spirit. Only the last fluctuating rain-drops were needed, and they were given by my words on the meaning of St. Sophia's Church—by chance, in so far as anything can be by chance in such holy and all-important things."

"No, thou art right," said Jonas. "To speak here of chance, is little less than a denial of God. Then wilt thou be baptized, my dear son Thiodolf? The imperial family have designed for thee a very pompous baptism."

"But I a very simple one," answered the young northern hero. "I am athirst for the water of life; Bertram will be my sponsor.—And He who from the cross stretches forth his arms to us in ever-present love, has provided that water should everywhere be ready."

The master bent his head to the scholar in joyful consent, and the holy rite was secretly and solemnly completed; the new Christian, according to his earnest prayer, retaining the glorious name of Thiodolf."

In the bright early morning of the next day, the three men stood before the chamber of the great baron; and when he came forth to them, Thiodolf solemnly asked the hand of Isolde, praying as a Christian that it might be granted him to lead the maiden to the altar. The old hero, with tears of joy, embraced his renowned son-in-law, and led him to Isolde, whose heavenly countenance, lighted up by humility and love to its full angelic beauty, gave her lover a foretaste of the joys of paradise.

He knelt down, and extended his arms towards her; then she gave him her hand, saying with earnest gentleness, "Thou must kneel before God, not before his creature, thou newly baptized disciple of the Lord." And she raised him.

On the next day, the delighted Emperor appointed the wedding-feast of the princely betrothed, which was to be preceded by the conferring of knighthood on Thiodolf and his friend Philip. The sound of the trumpet called all the troops to arms; and the bells of St. Sophia announced the glad festival to the citizens and their wives. The streets were crowded with people; there were no loud acclamations, but all bowed in deep humility before her whom they had been accustomed to revere in silence as the Secret Helper, and before the mighty chief, the deliverer of the land, the lion who had bent his powerful neck to the yoke of the Lamb who has borne the sins of the whole world. When the procession had entered the holy building, one of the chief lords of the empire placed himself at the altar, with a golden sword in his hand; and keeping the most precious till the last, called first on the young Philip to receive the honor of knighthood. At a sign from the Emperor, the young Zou girded on his sword. Then the solemn word was spoken to Thiodolf; and as he approached the altar, the Emperor suddenly stepped forward, took the golden sword from the hand of the state-officer into his own, and said aloud, so that the whole assembly could hear it, "It befits an emperor's hand alone to confer knighthood on such a hero, and that hand gains thereby undying honor."

With what feelings Thiodolf knelt down to receive the sacred dignity—his blessed Saviour shining in his soul, the love of Isolde in his heart, and such wreaths of honor alighting on his brow—thou mayest thyself judge, dear reader; for if thou be right-minded, thou canst feel it!

When the ceremony was completed, the great baron drew near, fastened on the gilt spurs, and girded his son-in-law with the sword of his ancestor Huldibert. "Thou must not yet put away from thee thy good sword Throng-piercer," said he afterwards. "A hero such as thou can give work enough to two brave swords."

The Priest Jonas, with holy joy, united Isolde and Thiodolf; and immediately afterwards the great Baron took his grandson from the minstrel Romanus, who had till then carried him, and laid him, with his blessing, in the arms of Malgherita. Then father, mother and child caressed each other with a heavenly delight.

As the procession was returning from the church to the imperial palace, there came suddenly a man from out of the crowd, dressed in strange, and bright, and gorgeous attire, who drew near to Thiodolf in his glory, and bent low, with his hands folded on his breast, saying, "Uncle Nefioff and Aunt Gunhilda send greeting. When I set sail from Iceland, they were of joyful mind, and so also was the faithful wolf."

Thiodolf recognized Prince Achmet, whom he had sent into the North, and a flush of joy colored his cheeks at the recollection of home; but there was a slight hue of shame mixed with it, for the spectators smiled; and the Emperor, who led the bridegroom, heard every word, and said, with a kindly nod, "This must come from one of Thiodolf's mad deeds of yore. Come with me, good stranger-guest; you shall relate all fully to us in the palace."

And now, when Achmet began to relate the whole of the fearful events on the African shore, and then made known his journey to Iceland, acknowledging with shame that afterwards he had thought of escaping all more distant expeditions, and of taking Laura by force from the cloister, but had been repeatedly solemnly warned away by the repentant lady; finally, declaring his world-famous name, and announcing that he craved to receive holy Baptism, to do penance in a religious order of knighthood—then what before had appeared but a sprig, placed jestingly in Thiodolf's laurel wreath, shot forth into a fresh, brightly-blooming branch; and Isolde whispered in his ear, "O my hero! if thy glory grows thus brighter and brighter, how then shall Isolde yet venture to look up to thee?"

The Emperor bade the noble Icelander to ask for a free boon from him. Then he asked for the happiness of his brother-in-arms, Philip; and with a gentle beating of her heart, Zoe extended her fair hand and pledged her troth to the young hero. Romanus sang to his lute:

"Now after many wanderings strange and sad,
True love hath met, and sorrow hath found rest;
The deepest wounds are healed by kisses sweet,
And children long estranged by parents blest.
Then, 'mid the wreath of myrtle and of laurel
One olive-leaf let now the minstrel twine;
'Tis he, who like the gentle dove of yore,
Brought to your hearts a gentle pledge of peace divine."

CHAPTER LXIII.

Some happy months of re-union had passed away, when Isolde, though with her angelic gentleness undiminished, began at times to sink into deep thought, which seemed so to sever her from the outer world that she often heard neither the questions nor the entreaties of her friends; only the appearance of Thiodolf ever broke the spell, so that he long remained in ignorance, till at length Malgherita informed him of it.

Isolde, questioned by him, answered with a sweet, dreamy smile, "Be not alarmed, beloved; the good people speak well of thee."

"The good people!" repeated Thiodolf; "the elfin sprites from Iceland?"

"Yes; so it is," said Isolde. "But wilt thou allow me to be silent? I think it were better. For who would build their wishes and plans on what those childish visions of the night may tell us? But if thou biddest me speak, my noble lord, thou must truly hear everything."

Thiodolf closed her lips with a kiss, and asked no more. Soon after this, Wladimir and Wlasta returned home to the land which they were henceforth to govern under the protection of the Greek Emperor. Thiodolf and Isolde accompanied them part of the way. And now when the Bulgarian prince, together with his wife, had given the last farewell greeting, and their swift Tartar horses had borne them rapidly down a hill where a wood hid them from sight, Thiodolf turned the two white horses of the chariot wherein Isolde was seated, to take their homeward way; but suddenly tears streamed from the eyes of the fair wife, and she sighed: "Oh, happy are Wladimir and Wlasta, who returned to their beloved home!"

Thiodolf, amazed, looked at her.

"It must all be spoken out," said she, after a pause; "and I feel now how greatly I erred in concealing from my hero any thought that lived in my heart. Hark! for many past nights dainty little creatures hover around me in my dreams; they sing wondrous songs in thy beautiful northern tongue, which is dearer to me than

any language in the world—I learned it from thee; and they draw aside a veil, as of clouds, from my eyes, so that the snowy island of Iceland becomes visible to me, with her fiery Hecla—a flaming ruby set in a pure crystal. At first I understood not rightly the words of the song, or I forgot them on awaking; but, by degrees, more and more of them remained in my memory, and now I know well that they call us to Iceland, and promise me golden tablets with mystic images, which I shall find in the grass, if I can retain the verses of the riddle when I awake, and can solve them. All prophecies, say the elves, are now fulfilled, and they chant:

"When the two sisters dwell by the same hearth,
And again:

"When the two swords the same scabbard
Shall yield."

And then I see Malgherita and myself happily living by the same hearth in this our dwelling; and thou, when thou waldest Throng-piercer in thy right hand, and the ancient blade of Huldibert in thy left—O Thiodolf, the longing after thy home will consume my heart!"

The young hero looked up to heaven with a thankful glance; then he tenderly embraced Isolde, saying, "And thou didst conceal from me this wish, the burning wish of my own soul?"

"I saw thy glorious course as chief of the Værings," answered Isolde, "and I bade all other feelings keep silence."

"Oh!" exclaimed Thiodolf, "thou didst not fully know the northern heart. Didst thou deem that we come into foreign lands to sojourn in them? Our hearth, the well-beloved hearth of our home, draws all our hearts with magnetic power; and he who is not exiled, like the great Helmfrid, by an adverse destiny, returns, and lays down all the wreaths which he may have won on strange seas, on foreign shores, upon the holy bosom of his dear fatherland!"

Isolde joyfully embraced her eager lover, and like the steeds of the sun, their white horses flew before the shining chariot.

CONCLUSION.

Each one had long before felt that it must at length come to this, and now, without resistance, they all submitted to the solemn parting. The Emperor took leave of his young hero with a blessing; the eyes of Philip and Zoe glistened with eager gratitude; the pale princess Theodora laid her hands in prayer upon heads of Thiodolf and Isolde.

The great baron also took his departure from Constantinople, and returned with Pietro and Malgherita to the fertile plains of Tuscany. He built up Castel-Franco anew, and the castle, in protecting strength and splendour shone for long centuries over sea and land. He saw the restored happiness of his children, he saw the noble Tristan Giocondo grow and flourish; for fate seemed to have saved him from the flames by the minstrel's hands, and led him back to his parents by the most wonderful ways, in order to form a hero of him who should shine with a peculiar and unwanted brightness. Perchance his history may come into the mind of him who has written this tale, and if so, he will give it forth to you, dear reader, should you take pleasure therein.

Far north, like dazzling stars, Thiodolf and Isolde shone in their radiance. A new sun arose on the life of Nefioff and Gunhilda when the noble pair entered their hall—a new sun of joy and brightness over the whole island. But they brought also to their countrymen the brighter light of faith by their deeds and example, and soon all the strong and true-hearted Icelanders knelt before Him whom Thiodolf, in the dawn of knowledge, had called the White Christ, and to whom he now, as his eternal Saviour, clung as to the Giver of all good in this life and in that which is to come.

Bertram and Romanus, gaily traversing all land, and bearing greetings and tidings, drew yet closer the bands of love and joy from Tuscany to Iceland, and from Iceland to Tuscany; and each time, when minstrel or merchant drew near, there was held a joyous festival, in which were lost all thoughts of separation and distance.

THE DEAF AND DUMB BOY.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

One winter evening, as the watchman on the Pont Neuf at Paris was going his rounds, he found a child, clad in the very extremity of ragged wretchedness, standing alone in a corner, and uttering low and scarcely articulate moans, while the tears fell fast from the poor creature's eyes, and his unprotected body shivered with the piercing cold of the night. As the boy seemed of an age to be able to tell so much, the guardian of the bridge demanded "Where his mother—where his home was?" The question was repeated again and again, but a continuation of the same low moans was the only reply. The interrogator began to shake the boy roughly, attributing his silence to peevishness or obstinacy, as the child's face, seen by the light of the lamp in the

watchman's hand, disclosed no want of intelligence, or inability to comprehend the queries put to him. While this scene was passing, an elderly gentleman came up to the spot and listened to the watchman's reiterated questions. The boy still gave no reply, and the watchman was about to take him away to the guard-house, when the gentleman cried, "Stop for an instant; give me the lamp." He then threw the light full on the boy's face, and repeated in a gentle tone the same inquiries that had been already made. The expression of the child's face satisfied the questioner. Turning to the watchman, the gentleman said, "The boy is deaf and dumb?"

The person who gave this decision, and whom the studies of a long life had well qualified to give it, was no other than Abbe de l'Épée, a man not less distinguished for genius than for benevolence. The Abbe had at an early period of his life become convinced of the possibility of instructing to a certain extent the deaf and dumb—a task previously regarded as utterly hopeless—and he had subsequently applied the whole energies of his mind to the subject. His success had been great, and had won for him an honored name among the benefactors of his species. Fortunate was it, indeed, for the poor boy of the Pont Neuf, that accident had brought the Abbe to the spot on the evening referred to. The watchman readily surrendered the child into the Abbe's hands, at the request of the latter, and on his promise to make all due inquiries for the parents, and to give up the young unfortunate, should they appear to claim him.

On taking the boy home with him, however, the Abbe de l'Épée soon adopted the opinion that his charge would never be claimed at his hands. He became convinced that the boy's unhappy defects had made him the victim of fraud and treachery. Many circumstances tended to lead the Abbe to this conclusion. He observed the boy, before the rags which he wore were taken from him, to look upon them with surprise and disgust; and his satisfaction and gratitude, when a better dress was put upon him, was obvious. Besides the skin of young Armand (as the boy was named by his new protector) was as white as snow, when the impurities with which it seemed to have been intentionally daubed, were washed away. His look and bearing, also, were intelligent and noble, and served to confirm the Abbe in the impression that some foul play had caused the boy's exposure. By setting food of various qualities before him, moreover, the Abbe discovered readily that Armand had been accustomed to such nutriment as is only given to children in the highest and wealthiest ranks of life.

All the inquiries which the good de l'Épée set on foot in consequence of this conviction, and all the advertisements which he put into the public journals, failed in eliciting the slightest information relative to Armand's history. Meanwhile the boy gained daily on the affections of his benefactor. The Abbe's house had long been a school, or rather an asylum, for unfortunate orphans of Armand's class, but none of all the pupils who had ever entered it, made such rapid progress as he did, in acquiring a command of those substitutes for speech and hearing which the genius of the teacher had invented. Not many years had passed, away, ere Armand could converse by signs with the Abbe as readily as if the gift of speech had not been withheld. This great object effected, it was the Abbe's delight to store the opening mind of the youth with all the riches of learning and knowledge. Anxiously, also, did the priest watch, as Armand's intellect expanded, for any glimmering recollections of infancy which might lead to the elucidation of the mystery in which his early fortunes were involved. When questioned on this subject, all that the youth could remember was, that he had been brought a long journey before entering Paris. But the memories of other days existed, though in a dormant state, in the boy's mind, and only required favoring circumstances to call them forth. In one of the many walks which the Abbe was in the habit of taking with his young charge, they chanced to pass the courts of justice as one of the judges was getting out of a carriage. Armand instantly gave a start of eager surprise, and informed his companion that a man, robed in ermine and purple like the judge used to hold him in his arms long ago, and bathe his face with kisses and tears. This trait of remembrance struck the Abbe forcibly. He conjectured that Armand must be the son of a judge, and that that judge, from his dress, must have lived in some capital town, where superior courts were held. From the tears as well as kisses of which Armand had a recollection, his protector concluded that the mother of the boy must have been previously dead.

Other circumstances occurred, as Armand grew in years, which strongly excited the Abbe's hopes of one day being able to get justice done to the youth; for, that injustice had been done to him, the good priest felt deeply convinced.—Passing on another occasion along the streets, Armand showed the strongest emotion at the sight of a funeral, and informed the Abbe that he

remembered being led along the streets, dressed in a black cloak, and with a great crowd in attendance like that before him; and that, after that time, he had never seen the person in purple robes again. "Poor boy!" thought the Abbe, "thou art then an orphan, and some base relative has taken advantage of thy defects to rob thee of thy heritage!" At another time, Armand, in walking with his preceptor through the Barriere or entrance on the southern side of Paris, stood still, and gazed attentively at it. He then told the Abbe that this was the gate by which he had entered Paris, and that he remembered stopping here in a carriage until some baggage was examined. In this carriage, he also recollected he had travelled with two persons for several days.

Meditating on these circumstances, the Abbe felt persuaded that Armand had been left an orphan in one of the cities of the south of France. Again did the benevolent de l'Épée conceive it his duty to make inquiries on the subject, by every channel he could think of, but the attempt was not more successful than formerly. Still the good priest was not disheartened. The conviction was firmly implanted in his mind, that a task had been assigned to him by heaven to execute, and that the endeavour to restore the youth to his right would be ultimately crowned with success. The Abbe revolved long in his mind the best means of prosecuting this endeavor, and came to the conclusion that the only way was, to travel with Armand through the district to which suspicion pointed, in order to give him the chance of having his early recollections awakened by the sight of the place of his nativity.—Weighty obstacles, however, stood in the way of the fulfillment of this scheme. A great part of the journey—and it might possibly be a very long one—would require to be performed on foot. Armand, now drawing to his eighteenth year, was not unfitted to sustain such fatigue, but his protector was far advanced in life, and, though in the enjoyment of good health, felt his strength little equal to the toil of such a search. But the desire within his breast to make the attempt, for the sake of his beloved pupil, was irrefragable. The journey to the south of France was resolved upon, and it was not long resolved upon ere it was begun.

A less generous heart than that of the Abbe de l'Épée would have given way under the toils which this journey entailed, more particularly as these toils for a long time seemed to be fruitless. From town to town, and from city to city, did the travellers pass, without the slightest recognition of them on the part of Armand. But it was not so when the travellers, after a route of three months, entered the gates of Toulouse. At first, indeed, Armand seemed to view city with the same absence of all emotion as he had viewed others; but on a sudden his indifference vanished. In passing a church he made an instantaneous pause, as if an electric shock had passed through his frame; his eyes were bent eagerly on the church and its gates, and he signed with trembling hands to the Abbe that he recollected this place—that this was the place whither he had followed the funeral, formerly mentioned, of the judge. It would be difficult to describe the mingled feeling of joy and anxiety that sprung up in the old Abbe's mind at this discovery. As they continued their course along the streets, every striking object was recognized by Armand as a once familiar spectacle, and the Abbe's impression that his pupil's native city was found out, was confirmed beyond a doubt. If any doubt existed, it was soon removed. On entering a large square, Armand's recollections became more and more vivid; and, at last, when he came in front of an old and noble-looking mansion, he uttered a loud shriek, and fell back in the arms of his companion and friend.

It was some time before Armand recovered from the swoon into which the acuteness of his recollections had thrown him. When he recovered his consciousness, he informed the Abbe that this house was the place of his birth—that here he had been cradled by the judge—and that here he had dwelt, after the funeral, along with a child of his own age, of whom he retained the clearest and fondest remembrance. It was with difficulty that the aged priest could draw the youth from before the house, which he was most anxious to do, ere premature attention was excited on the part of those within. Armand, however, was too much accustomed to reverence the dictates of his preceptor, to refuse obedience to his wish that they should leave the spot. They made their way to a hotel, and there took up their abode for the time. The bosoms of both, it may well be imagined, were filled with emotion and gratitude to Heaven for the prospects which this discovery held forth.

The first step which the Abbe de l'Épée took, after the occurrence related, was to make some inquiries into the character and history, of the person who occupied the house that had excited such emotion in Armand. The result of these inquiries was decisive. The Abbe was informed that the house in question, usually called the