THE DOUBLE SACRIFICE

OR .THE

PONTIFICAL ZOUAVES.

A TALE OF CASTELFIDARDO.

Translated from the Flemish of the Rev. S. Daems Canon Regular of the Order of Premonstratensians. (Abbey of Tongerloo. Belgium.)

CHAPTER XVII .- CONTINUED.

Come, come,' was the cool answer; this is all childish nonsense, which he will be ashamed of when he gets better. Has he not often desired us never to give beed to such a request, should be make it from weakness of mind.

But he expressly wills it.'

Aud I will it not; and one day he will thank me for relusing it."

A priest! a priest!' implored Ernest, writhing in his bed.

The physician tried to give him something to drink.

A priest, a priest !"

Morren, who was looking in horror on a scene which had driven his own sorrow from his memory, turned to Ernest's sister.

'Mejufvrouw,' said be, 'will you have the cruelty to refuse your brother's last request ?"

We know no priests, sighed the unhappy girl.

Oh? answered Morren, 'any one in the street will direct you to one." He will not come with me into the house of

a free-thinker, as they call us.'

lay an everlasting burden upon your beart."

'A priest! a priest!' screeched Ernest again. in a tone so terrible that his sister fled from the room to fulfil his desire. 'He shall not come in,' thundered Ecnest's

brother as she left the room.

Meanwhile, Morren drew nearer to the bed. What ails you, Ernest?' asked he kindly.

'Ah, my friend,' sighed the sick man, ' this morning I was perfectly well, and suddenly, in a moment, death seized upon me, my whole body was convulsed. Morren, Morren, it is a punishment. A few days ago I also acted as the devil's watchman by the death-bed of a free thinker. He, also-he asked for a priest, and I refused him. I mercilessly closed the door against the servant of the Lord; fiend like and cold-blooded, I let my companion die like a helpless beast. Ab!' cried he, gnashing his teeth in despair, 'A priest; he will not come, for they'-and he pointed to his three friends-'are watching round my bed to keep him away. I have deserved it, Morren, I have deserved it.

Indeed, Ernest's brother, with his accomplices, bad already moved towards the door.

'To die,' meaned the sick man, 'so young and so full of life, to die like a perishing beast. Woe is me, and what will follow after death? -Morren, do you know what will follow after death?

The philosopher stood dumb, as if struck by fire from Heaven.

Ernest raved like one possessed, rolling round fearfully drawn together.

'He will not come,' he howled again. 'The priests-I have persecuted them, slandered them, poured forth all my gall upon them, and they know me - they know the free-thinker, they know their enemy, and they will not help me .-If they would, what will it avail me? It is too late, there is no forgiveness for me now. I have blasphemed everything, despised everything, mocked at everything.

And he tore his hair in despair.

The door of the room opened, the sister of the sick man had returned with a priest.

'This way reverend sir,' said she as she entered the room.

She was followed by an ecclesiastic, a tali, to his bed. venerable old man. But before he could set his foot within the room, the free-thinkers stood

pale and threatening before him.

The priest seemed startled for a moment, but cape. soop recovered his composure.

ministry was asked for a sick man.

'No one here wants your help.' 'But the poor dying man yonder!' and he

pointed to Eraest. 'A priest! belp! belp!' cried he. 'Out of my bouse, hypocrite,' stormed the

brother, 'out of my house, or else----But I was sent for.'

'No one could send for you, no one has authorsty here but myself.'

'Your victim, then, has no right to my assistence? no right to his freedom, of which in so fiendish a manner you will rob him.'

Begone,' answered Ernest's brother, 'and quickly, too, or I will call my zervants to turn you out like dog.'

The priest drew bimself up to his full beight, and answered with calm dignity-

'Well!' said he, 'do your worst, but be assured that I am not to be intimidated. This is a serious matter, Mynheer, and in the name of the freedom of conscience which you so highly extol, and which you are now so grievously op- air, as if he were in danger of suffocation. pressing, I defy you to prevent my access to the dying man.'

Enough,' interrupted the elder Van Dormael, furrously snatching a pistol from the wall, and pointing it at the priest's bead, fout of the house, or I will send a bullet through your brain.'

Morren had thrown himself between the two speakers, and dashed the fatal weapon aside, but the free-thinker was beside himself.

la vain did Victor's father try to bring him to Can you think so? Go, unless you would reason, in vain did his sister fall at his feet and implore his mercy; be thrust them both aside.

Meanwhile, the physician and his companion took the priest by the arm, forced him out of

the room, and closed the door behind them. 'Mynbeer,' said they, 'we are witnesses of your proceedings, and you will have to answer for them before a court of justice unless you

eave this house without delay. The poor priest, hopeless of being able to do any good, descended the stairs with tears in his

He had hardly reached the bottom when the door of the sick room was once more opened, and this time it was the brother of the miserable free-thinker himself, who rushed frantically down the stairs.

'Horrible! horrible!' cried he. 'My friends, he will murder me.?

He was followed by his two companions, who, not knowing what had happened during their absence from the sick bed, thought he was lightheaded, and tried to hold him back.

He is turned into a devil,' cried Ernest's brother. 'Fly, fly! he will tear us to pieces.'

The room, indeed, was now a fearful scene. The free-thinker lay on the ground struggling to escape from the bands of his sister and Mynheer Morren.

'Let me go,' screamed he, 'I will follow them. The monsters! They will deliver me over to the devil. Where are they? I will tear every one of them to pieces. They called in a priest to mock me-to laugh at my sufferand round upon his bed, while all his limbs were | 13gs. Ab, ah! I am a free-thinker; I will have no prieste."

Poor miserable wretch. His face was now covered with purple spots, his glassy eyes stared wildly out of his head, and a white fram stood upon his tight-pressed lins.

" Where are they ?" screeched be again, " the priests and the free thinkers? I will make an end of them all together. Ha, ha! with a laugh that pierced the hearers' souls. 'Ha, ba! the cowards. Let them but show themselves, if they dare.'

It was enough to make the hair stand on an end with horror to witness this struggle between the sick man under his terrible malady and the two who tried to calm him and bring him back throat as if some heavy weight were pressing on

At last his strength was exhausted, and Morren succeeded in lifting him by force from the ground and laying him on his bed.

Begone, thundered the brother of the dying | Morren then placed himself with the sister them.

man, 'you shall not set foot in this room. close to the bedstead to prevent another es-

A convulsive shudder, which now and then 'Mynheer,' answered he, ' the aid of my holy passed over his body, was the only movement still visible.

> His mouth stood wide open, dis cheeks were fearfully drawn in, his lips white as a sheet; his eyes glowed like fire; his face changed from purple to black, from black again to purple.

Morren, with his arms crossed on his breast, mournfully and silent, kept his eyes fixed without a moment's intermission upon the dying man.

He saw death making rapid strides, and he would fain bave given some comfort to the unhappy sufferer; but alas! he found not in his a single word of consolation to soften the last conflict of his friend. He was forced to leave death, the terrible enemy of all evil doers, to deal alone, tremendous and irresistible, with his miserable victim.

The philosopher was no longer conscious of what was passing around him; it seemed as if he bimself lay outstretched there upon that bed of anguish wrestling with death, and with the power of a just and awful Judge; his heart shrank painfully, and his chest seemed to pant for fresh

The free thinker's sister sat sobbing with her head against the pillow; she dared no longer look upon the ghastly sight of the brother's face whose errors she had shared, and who was teaching her bow free thinkers die.

The sick man shuddered painfully.

The philosopher stood plunged in painful thought.

The sister rung ber bands in despair. In a room below, the devil the tehmen sought courage and strength in wine.

No one prayed in that accursed house.

So passed a few moments in anxious expectation, when at last the free-thinker drew a deep rattling breath.

His sister raised her head and looked at him with mournful anxiety; his expression, less wild than before, seemed to signify that his consciousness was returning.

'Ernest,' said she, 'shall I call the priest

'The priest,' cried be, as if the word had excited all his fury, 'no, no, away with him .--Have I not told you he can do no good for me? that there is now no forgiveness for me? that I

Morren tried to calm him.

Ah! Morren, said be, with a borrible laugh. it is all over. This is the hour which your nephew foretold to me. Do you remember it now? 'There will come an hour,' said he, when you will believe; an hour when you will call in despair for the belp of a priest, and who knows whether God will then hear you?' Yes, ves : that hour has come. I feel it in my heart. Here,' and he pressed his arms strongly one over the other : 'here, it rages here, it burns in my inmost heart. There is already the fire of hell, which in a few moments will swallow me up; for I feel it now, there is a hell, there is a God, Morren; you do not believe it. Well, I tell you-I, the free-thinker-there is a hell and there is a God.'

He turned himself again in his bed, and the cold sweat of death stood upon his brow.

Suddenly, as if some horrible vision were before him, he opened his eyes, and with a howl of

terror stretched out both his arms. 'Look, look!' cried he, 'look yonder-there they are. I know you, you come to murder me. One, two three-Van Dael, the old beggar-woman, and Maso, and another still. Ab ! I know him, too, Victor Morren with Maso's dagger in his breast, and I sharpened that dagger-1 set Maso on to murder Victor. Ah! the serpents, there you are; come, then, fail upon me. Ob, they are trampling me to pieces,' and the miserable man stretched out both his arms and breathed painfully; and there was a gurgling in his

At that moment the door opened, and the watchers of hell again entered the room.

The dying man fixed his flaming eyes upon

to carry me away.' As it to fly from his approaching doom, be

and despair. sound upon the floor. The free-thinker was

Mynheer Morren fled with all possible speed

from the accursed house. What a lesson for the proud philosopher!

'See,' thus spoke a voice within his heart, see whither erring reason leads. See how a free-thicker dies. See the fate which awaits you yourself, unless you return to the faith and the worship of your youth."

But Ernest,' whispered the spirit of evil in ear, 'but Ernest was a bad man. Do not his despairing revelations show it? Did he not declare in his delirium that he set the Italian upon Victor? What wonder then if the voice of his conscience awoke at the hour of death and reproached him with his crimes? But an upright free-thinker, who has not acted against the dictates of reason has nothing to fear.'

Bu! death,' resumed the voice of the good spirit, ' puts an end to all, the testimony of conscience is but a mere chimera, frightening those who will escape all punishment; but if, after this life, a righteous judgment awaits us, death must be as terrible to him who has denied and blasphened the Judge as to him who has followed the dictates of his passions."

Again there was a strife between the spirit of good and the spirit of evil for the possession of Morren's heart.

These thoughts chased each other through his brain as he pursued his way home.

The terrible picture of the free-thinker's death was still before his eyes.

The fiendish barbarity of Van Dormael's bro ther and friends filled him with intense indignation; the despairing death-struggle and terrible raving of the miserable man seemed to freeze the blood in his veins, and his ghastly corpse, deformed and blackened by death, seemed to haunt of Sin Pietro in Montorio. bis shuddering sight.

Meanwhile anxiety as to the fate of his son pierced his heart like a flaming sword. Had fano, came out of the house and walked down not Ernest spoken of Maso's dagger piercing the street. Victor's breast? Had the carbonaro indeed accomplished his revenge?

durst not purse the fearful thought. But when he reached his house another sor-

rowful scene awaited him. He had hardly set foot in the room when a cry escaped him, his wife lay weeping in the arms of

her sister and her niece. "What is this?" cried he, hastily.

As her only answer, Mevrouw Morren gave bim, with a trembling bad, a letter with the Roman post-mark.

No sooner had the unhappy father cast a hasty glance on its contents than, with a piercing cry, he sank as if crushed upon a seat.

CHAPTER XVIII. - FOR TWO FATHERS.

'Good morning, Nina.'

'Good morning, Carlotta: where do you

These were two of the young girls with whom

we made acquaintance at the fountain of ' Acqua What do I see?' continued Nina, without

giving her friend time to answer, ' Your eves are quite red, as if you had been crying,"

'Indeed,' answered Carlotta, ' and if you had been with me, I am sure you would have cried too. I am just come from Nunziata's house, where I have been to visit that dear sick Zouave. Ob, Nina, he is an Angel, so good, so gentle, so calm;' and she began to weep again; 'my beart is full when I think of him.'

'Is he no better since yesterday?'

Better? oh, no, I fear that our Lord will very soon take him to Himself.'

' Yet we had such good hopes of him when we felt for Nunziata's sorrow when she said Our to his sufferings.

Woe, woe,' burst from him in a sufled voice; Lady's Litany with so many tears, and how there you are, devils from the bottomless pit, heartily we all answered 'Grazia, grazia; you will give us this grazia, dear Mother."

There is a touching custom among the women sprang from his bed with the strength of frenzy of the Trastevere, that whenever any of their neighbors or friends fall sick, the young girls of It was all over: his body fell with a heavy the neighbor hood assemble together, and go to our Lady 'dell' Orto,' or of the Pantheor, or especially of S. Augustine, to pray for his recovery. The greater number of the pious petitioners prepare themselves by confession for the work of charity, and go barefoot to the church. Then they kneel before the sacred image, and if there is no great number of people in the church, one begins the Litany, to which the others answer in chorus, Grazia, Maria. Mother of God, grazia, let us not go away unconsoled. You will give us this grace, will you not, dear Mother?'

> 1 believe, said Carlotta, in answer to ber companion's last words, ' that our Lord indeed means to take him to Himself, for truly, Nina, I tell you he is an Angel as sure as my name is Carlotta. You should see with what tender care Nunziata nurses him; she could not do more for ber own brother.?

But how comes he to be so intimate with the Bianchi, that they treat him like a child of the

'E chi lo sa? Stefano and Nunziata say nothing about it, and do you suppose I could ask them? What are you thinking of? Mastro Toto, my father, taught me better manners; and my mother, Sora Cecca, whom you knew so well (may she rest in peace), always said to me, Carlotta,' said she, ' do not interfere in other people's business farther than they are willing to let you.' But what I have to say is that this poor young man is, I think, the very same whom we saw pass the Acqua Paola with a strange Signor.'

Bah, do you think that I remember anything

'I remember it well,' answered the unwearied gossip, and all the better, because I saw Stctano come back with him and go into the church

While the two Trasteverine were thus discoursing, Joseph and Martin, together with Ste-

'Ah,' continued Carlotta, 'I should not have forgotten to tell you that these are the sick The unhappy father turned deadly pale, and Volunteer's comrades. They are from Belgium, a country very far from this as Nunziata has told me, and they keep so closely together, that they never leave their companion by night or by day; now they are going with Stefano to the railway to meet the poor young man's parents. Unhappy father and mother ! how sad it must be for them to see their child die so far from home.

> It was so, then. The sick man who was the subject of this long conversation, was no other than Victor. The fatigue and difficulty of the journey, especially over the Appenines, had thrown back the invalid, whose health was far from restored, into an illness which left little room for hope.

> The first day of the journey had been got through tolerably well, but Victor soon began to complain of unusual fatigue and of renewed pain in his wound.

> They rested more frequently, but all their precautions availed nothing, and they were obliged to go on, cost what it might. Martin's broad shoulders were again in requi-

> sition, to Victor's grief, who, to spare his fatigue. represented himself to be far stronger than he He complained as little as possible of fatigue.

> but his knees failed beneath him, and he was obliged to lie down under the trees. As they approached the journey's end his in-

tense eagerness to reach it seemed to give him tresh strength. It seemed to be the desire of that noble heart to die upon the ground hallowed by the blood of the martyrs.

But his illness increased daily. He frequently went with Nunziata to pray to the 'Madonna di fainted from fatigue, and a bard, painful cough, Sant' Agostmo' for his recovery. Ob, how I accompanied with pains in his chest, now added

The second of th