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THE LIMERICK VETERAN; OR, THE FOSTER SISTERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "FLORENCE O'NEILL."

(From the Baltimore Catholic Mirror.)

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.—THE RAISING OF THE STANDARD.

Oh, better loved he canna be
Yet, when we see him wearing
Our Highland plaid so gracefully;
Tis aye the mair endearing.

Though a that now adorns his brow
Be but a simple bonnet,
Ere long we'll see, of kingdoms three,
The royal crown upon it.

"I know you far better than you know yourself; I pray you dear Lochiel, do not expose yourself to the fascinations of the young Prince; if he once sets his eyes upon you, he will make you do whatever he pleases. Write to him, but on no account see him. At this very moment, is not our own father wearing out a life of exile in France through his attainer in the Rebellion of 1715? Should not this thought operate as a warning to his sons?"

Thus spoke Cameron, of Passfern, to the chieftain Lochiel.

With but seven followers, afterwards called the seven men of Moidart, the gallant Prince Charlie, eldest son of James, and of Clementina Sobieski, had landed in an almost inaccessible district of Invernesshire. Caution, worldly wisdom and cold circumspection were fast giving way in the presence of the noble and dignified youth, whose easy and graceful manners won upon every heart.

Lochiel promised his more prudent brother that he would be firm, and not compromise himself by any rash or ill-advised step; but his colder feelings were scattered to the winds when in the presence of the irresistible and fascinating Prince.

The standard is unfurled in the wild valley of Glenfinnan, and the veteran Marshal hastened from St. Germain, attended by his grandsons, Maurice and Edward, to join the gathering of the clans. Thither also sped his brave brother-in-arms, Lord Balmerino, with many whose hearts beat high with hope, as they advanced from various points, to meet each other at the great place of rendezvous in the valley.

Escorted by two companions belonging to the Macdonalds, a young man, with regular and well-formed features, fair-haired and of dignified mien, entered, at an early hour on the morning of that memorable raising of the standard, the narrow and sequestered ravine called the vale of Glenfinnan. On either side it was sealed by lofty and craggy mountains, between which the little river Finnan wended its silent way to the sea. The desolate loneliness of the scene impressed the heart of the adventurous Prince with awe; but the silence was at last broken by the stirring sounds of the pibroch, and soon a body of seven hundred Highlanders rapidly descended the mountain paths from various directions, and loud and joyously rose the strains of their national music.

A mound in the centre of this romantic

valley was chosen as a fitting spot for the raising of the standard, and a monument, bearing a Latin inscription, still points out the spot to posterity.

As the crimson silk banner with a white centre, on which was written the celebrated motto, *Tandem Triumphans*, was unfurled by the aged Marquis of Tullibardine, and waved in the fresh breeze of the mountains, the Highlanders made the air echo with their acclamations. Bending beneath the infirmities of age, the Marquis craved support. Two Highlanders advanced and stood on either side, and the old man read in a clear voice the manifesto of the old Chevalier, exhorting his subjects to join the standard of their lawful sovereign, setting forth the grievances his people had suffered under the new dynasty, and expressing his resolve to redress them, as also to maintain all existing privileges.

This document was dated at Rome, and signed James the Eighth. Another was afterwards read, in which James commissioned his son to act as Regent. The young Prince then presented himself to the enthusiastic soldiers, and made them a short but animated speech.

It was a proud and happy moment for Charles when he joined the veterans who had followed him, and the brave men who had accompanied him from France, to hear that on the same day on which his standard was raised his small army was reinforced by Macdonald of Kappoch, with three hundred of his clan, and the next day by Macdonald of Glencoe with a hundred and fifty, by the Stewarts of Appin, under Ardshiel, with two hundred, and by Glengary the younger with about the same number.

And yet there were many, and amongst them was the Prince himself, who ascended the mountainous paths leading from the valley, after the raising of the standard, with anxious and throbbing hearts. The House of Hanover had firm possession of the throne, the troubles of 1715 were fresh in the minds of many present, either they or their parents having been involved in that unfortunate attempt to place James on the throne of his forefathers, and they were again about to stake their fortunes, their estates, nay, their very lives, in pursuance of the same object.

CHAPTER II.—THE BETROTHAL.

"I promise you, fair Marion, that as soon as my duty to the Prince is at an end, I will beg your uncle to bestow your hand upon me, and in token of our betrothal, suffer me to place a ring upon your finger. May the day not be long distant when I may have the happiness of placing there in its stead a simple circlet of gold."

The young girl whom Edward, the younger of the Marshal's grandsons, thus addressed had but few pretensions to beauty, but her figure was faultless, and though her features were far from regular, there was a sweet and pleasant expression in the face of Marion Chalmers which amply atoned for their lack of beauty.

They stood beneath the walls of an old castle not far from Inverness. It was the residence of Arthur Elphinstone, Lord Balmerino, and this young lady was the niece of his wife. Marion's fingers had fashioned the white cockade with which his cap was adorned, she had seen her veteran uncle go forth to the vale of Glenfinnan with all the enthusiasm of the Scottish women of the period, and yet her heart sank within her as Edward St. John bade her farewell for an indefinite period. They stood beside the dry moat, the sides of which were thickly planted with shrubs, and as Marion looked up at the castle windows, furnished with the glories of the setting sun, she said:

"I mind me, Edward, 'twas just on so fair an evening as this I arrived with my dear uncle at the old chateau at St. Germain. Sad enough would my lot have been had he not bade my aunt rear me as her own child, and that same adoption of myself leads me to think about those foster-sisters, Margaret and Isabel, of whom I heard Lady Florence speak so often. Have your family ever heard from Margaret Lindsey? or, will the mystery that drove Isabel from your father's roof ever be cleared up, think you?"

"Humanly speaking, Marion, when we take into consideration that ten years have passed, I think there is but little chance of such a finale. My brother Maurice was far more tenderly attached to Isabel than my family imagined; nay, it is quite possible he may never marry should that mystery never be solved."

"But was it not to be lamented, Edward, that, aware of the affection with which Lady Florence regarded her, unbroken even by that strange affair, Isabel should have fled from the chateau as she did?"

"It is hard to say, Marion. Supposing she was not in fault beyond having granted those stolen interviews (there was, of course, always a doubt against her in the minds of others), who was that man? when and in what way did

she first become acquainted with him? and having made his acquaintanceship, then comes the why and the wherefore of an oath being necessary, unless to shield from the law some guilty person? Then the theft of the jewels and a large sum of money, together with the letters Margaret Lindsey had secured, contributed, one thing taken with another, to make people look coldly upon her. That was not the case, however, with our own family, and believing, as we have always firmly believed, in her innocence, I can well understand that, as years passed on, and, for some inscrutable reason, her lips still remained sealed, why she should have taken such a step as to leave her home."

"How terrible for a cloud to settle on the character of an innocent woman, Edward! And yet it is, and must ever be, that by our actions we are judged. Poor Isabel! I wonder will the truth ever be known? How old is she, and do you think Maurice will ever marry?"

"My fair querist, you have asked me two questions at once. Isabel was born in the year 1715, and as this is the year of grace 1745, you see she must be now thirty years of age. As to your second question, I must reply in the negative. My brother is not likely ever to marry unless he after all wed with the object of his first choice. But time wears on. Marion, I must bid you farewell."

"My mind is full of fear on your account and that of my dear uncle. He has been an exile for twenty years already in the cause of the Stuarts. Is it to be wondered at that my aunt and myself are tormented with the most melancholy presentiments? But to return to your own movements. Where do you join the Prince, Edward?"

"In Edinburgh. He intends to take up his quarters within two miles of the city. My brother and grandfather are already on their way thither."

"And you ought to have joined them ere this, Edward St. John, instead of losing your time in making pretty speeches to my niece," said Lady Balmerino, now making her appearance through a thicket of trees hard by, near which she had been seated. "And I beg to remind you, Marion," added she, "that the harvest moon is up," and she pointed to the glorious luminary, now rising beyond the grey walls of the old mansion, "and that Edward's steed has been neighing at the gate this half hour, and I have become weary of waiting for you. So, young people, I charge you make your adieus as speedily as possible; the more brief the parting the better for both of you; and God send it may herald a happy meeting."

Fair Marion Chalmers did not, indeed, endorse her aunt's wise view of the question, but was yet obliged to yield to that better judgment which decreed that the painful word, "Farewell," should be pronounced without further delay, and again bonny Marion and Edward St. John renewed, in the elder lady's presence, their vows of everlasting constancy, and, amidst words of hope and encouragement on his part, they reached the gate, and vaulting gracefully into his saddle, he set spurs to his steed and was swiftly out of sight.

Long stood Marion, straining her eyes in the far distance. The flood of silvery light gleamed on the summits of the mountain height, on loch and glen, shedding its radiance over the verdant meadows and rich lands, fertile in wood and water, that stretched beyond and around her Highland home, and again revealing on the rising ground the solitary horseman in the distance, till a bend in the road shut him from her view.

It was the darling wish of Lady Balmerino's heart that the niece whom she had adopted in her childhood, not because she was deprived by death of her natural protectors, but because her father had lost his fortune in the rebellion of 1715, should be united in marriage with the grandson of her husband's old friend and brother in arms, Sir Reginald St. John. Lady Balmerino had great misgivings as to the result of the present enterprise, but she kept her apprehensions locked within her own bosom. At the same time she was one of the most enthusiastic of the Scottish ladies, and had sold her jewels, in common with others, in order to contribute towards the funds required for the use of the Prince. Indeed by far the greater number of the women of Scotland were devoted adherents to the cause of bonny prince Charlie. Young, handsome, chivalrous, and unfortunate, it was small wonder that he should have been regarded with so deep an interest by women when we remember that the hearts of the grave and the aged of his own sex were alike enlisted in his favor.

Weary waiting and watching it must have been in those days, when there were no penny broadsheets reaching as now even to the most remote localities, no electric telegraph, no railways bringing distance near, no speedy and well-organized postal system, and many weary weeks to pass ere reliable news could penetrate

to places like this old mansion in the wilds of Inverness.

When at last missives did arrive, they became informed of the routing of the Edinburgh town-guards and dragoons under Colonel Gardiner, that Lochiel and his Highlanders had made themselves masters of the city, that the Prince had entered in triumph the ancient kingdom of his forefathers, of the grand ball held in Holyrood palace, that Charles was received enthusiastically by the great bulk of the people, and that, at the head of his small army, he was about to march towards the enemy and force Sir John Cope, who was on his way from the north, to an immediate engagement. "Keep your mind at rest, dearest Marion," so concluded young St. John's epistle, "we are full of hope that we shall soon obtain a victory and before long establish the Prince on the throne of his forefathers."

Less of the expression of sanguine expectation was there in the few hurried lines addressed to Lady Balmerino by her husband, but he bade her hope the best, and promised to write again at the earliest opportunity.

CHAPTER III.—THE BATTLE OF PRESTON PANS.

"Nonsense, George, you will see we shall win the day. What will that wild and barbarous horde avail against our disciplined and well-trained soldiers?"

Thus spoke the English General, Sir John Cope, to one of the officers under his command.

"Nevertheless, Sir John, I cannot feel sanguine. Those same wild mountaineers bear a high character for endurance of hardship and steadiness of resolve. Their ardor and enthusiasm will perhaps more than atone for other deficiencies. If so, it will be a sorry matter for us."

"You are a downright bird of ill-omen, forever croaking presages of ill," observed Sir John. "Remember, we do not intend to enact the disgraceful scene at Colt Bridge here. Our infantry will strike terror into the hearts of the rude and undisciplined forces we are about to encounter. I regard them with unqualified contempt."

It was a misty morning, cold and frosty, on which Sir John prepared to lead his troops against the army of Charles Edward, at Glads-muir, or Preston Pans, as it was afterwards called.

"Well, indeed, might the General and his men have looked down upon the rude mass about to confront them with other feelings than those of fear if they relied only on the undisciplined state of the enemy."

Even as Sir John spoke the last words, the sun shone out, and the mist of the early morning rapidly clearing away, the General beheld the Highland army, its line broken up into clusters, whilst that of his own infantry presented the appearance of a compact and solid mass.

Riding rapidly along the front of his line, he addressed words of encouragement to his men, for the clans were preparing for the charge, as reverently removing their bonnets they for a moment paused in prayer, and then their famous war-cries resounded through the air, mingled with the wild din of the pibroch.

Reckless in their impetuosity, they dashed madly forwards, their wild valor not responded to by the English soldiers, who were wholly unprepared for the desperate charge that ensued, for, drawing their swords, and starting in the left hand the dirk and target, the Stuarts and Camerons the foremost of the foe, rushed forward and beheld the English artillery fly disgracefully from the field.

Sir John Cope and the aged Colonel Gardiner, aware that their sole chance rested between flight and a brave resistance, shouted in tones of thunder to their followers, encouraging and exhorting them by their own example.

With wild and frantic energy, born out of their ardent enthusiasm, the mountaineers rush onwards in the thick of the fight, aiming at the noses of the enemy's horses with their swords, by which they caused them to rear, start, or wheel suddenly round, throwing the whole army into inextricable confusion.

Is there anything in what are called presentiments? Amidst the first brought to the ground, beneath his own horse, was the cavalry officer who had differed with his general that morning as to their chances of success. "Perdition seize the cowardly scoundrels," said Sir John beneath his set teeth, as he beheld his disciplined troops betaking themselves to a shameful flight before the rude Highland forces. But yet again he hoped, for the infantry at once poured forth a volley of shot which did fearful execution.

But onward, still onward, press the wild Highland clans, grappling with the enemy in hand to hand combat, till at length the latter, seized by the panic which had caused their companions to make a disgraceful flight,

also fled from the field, and a scene of the wildest confusion at once ensued.

But a very small party of English infantry, left without any commander, remained true to their colors on that eventful day of the battle of Preston Pans, and won for themselves the commendations of the unfortunate Colonel Gardiner, who, exhorting them to continue the contest, met with his own death by a blow from the broadsword of a Highlander on the back of his head.

The Prince was elated with his cheaply bought victory, and, wearing the Highland dress, a blue bonnet on his head, and a St. Andrew's cross on his breast, he traversed the field whereon lay the dead and the wounded; but, with a truly noble spirit he refrained from any unseemly exultation, rather betraying sorrow for the misfortunes of those whom he termed "his father's deluded subjects," and, with Maurice St. John, the Marshal and Lord George Murray, he was busily devising plans for the comfort of the wounded when a sturdy, thick-set Highlander made his appearance, bringing with him no less than ten English soldiers, whom he had contrived to make his prisoners.

The unmitigated rage of these unfortunate men may be better conceived than described.—Their valor had been proved, for they had fought bravely on the plains of Dottingen and Fontenoy; and yet, panic-stricken, they had suffered themselves to be captured by one man.

"These ten shentelmens, your Highness," said Dugald, of the clan Gregor, making an awkward reverence to the Prince, "these ten shentelmens didna ken precisely whilk way to rin, sae I made sae bauld as to take the liberty of pringing them to your Highness."

With an almost unparalleled rashness, Dugald had pursued alone this small party, and striking one of them down, had commanded them to lay aside their arms. The terror-stricken soldiers had obeyed, and suffered themselves to be made prisoners by a single man grasping a sword in one hand and a pistol in the other.

Then, after the Prince had extolled his courage and ordered the prisoners into safe but kindly keeping, the Highlander resumed:

"And if his Highness will pe so goot as to excuse my abrupt departure, I I maun gang to a Sassenach soldier tat I hae carried into a put but, forbye, the creature asked me to pring to him Colonel Maurice—Maurice, fat ta doll, the name has rin clane out o' my head," and here Dugald ran his fingers through his thick, sandy locks, as if he thought the action would refresh his memory.

"Was St. John the name," said Maurice, stepping forward from the knot of officers that had gathered round the Prince.

"To pe sure, sir, tat was ta name," replied Dugald, adding, "if I may take ta liberty of asking ta shentelman to gang wi me, I will peg him to pe quick, as ta purr mon is wrastling wi death. I would be unco glad to ken fut business the fule carle had to pe fighting at all."

CHAPTER IV.—THE CONFESSION.

Accompanied by Colonel St. John, whose curiosity was excited, and who vainly hazarded a conjecture as to who amongst the English soldiers could have sent for him, he left the field in company with the Highlander, and after a sharp walk of about a quarter of a mile, the latter conducted him to a hut, built of round stones, without cement, and thatched with sod, on entering which, as soon as the smoke from the peat fire which burned on the earthen floor in the middle of the hovel had cleared away, he beheld stretched on the ground, a man about thirty-five years of age, with the expression of whose features he seemed familiar, though not aware that he had ever met him before.

Leaning over him, and endeavoring to staunch a wound in his side, was the old man to whom the hut belonged. The face of the stranger was pallid from loss of blood and approaching dissolution; his blue eyes were dim, his fair brown hair, that clustered over his temples, was marked with the stain of blood.

For a moment the dim eyes were fixed on Maurice with an uneasy stare, then he beckoned him to his side.

"I am not known to you, Colonel St. John," said he, in a low voice, "nevertheless, I have much to tell you, and I must be quick, for I am quite aware that I am a dying man. But, before I begin what I have to say, can you tell me if Sir John Cope has escaped?"

Maurice replied in the negative. "It is well," he said, with a melancholy smile, "his expedient of adopting the white cockade in a moment of peril has, I hope, carried him unharmed through your savage Highland clans; but to the point. I must make a clean breast before I die. I owe reparation to you and yours, and, such as it is I must make it quickly."

Much surprised, Maurice, with folded arms,

* Jacobite Song.
* Hist. of Rebellion of 1745.