



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XXIV.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUG. 14, 1874.

NO. 52.

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FINE ENGRAVING OF FATHER MATHEW. We take great pleasure in announcing the publication of a beautiful portrait of the GREAT APOSTLE OF TEMPERANCE. It represents him as he appears giving the TEMPERANCE PLEDGE; and below the Engraving is a facsimile of his handwriting endorsing this likeness of himself as "A CORROBORATOR."

It has been gotten up at a very great expense and is, without doubt, the finest and most LIFE-LIKE portrait of Father Mathew that has ever been published.

THE WITCH OF OAKDALE; OR, THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE.

CHAPTER XXIII.—A SICK CALL. A deep silence, the unmistakable sign that a sick person was about, reigned in the room of the forge. Hans Netter and his wife stood silently gazing with sorrowful eyes through the window. The forge men rested; the hammer did not call forth by its strokes the echoes from the hearth hills; the master had ordered all noise to stop on account of his suffering guest.

The old man on his couch of sickness turned to the young girl, who stood weeping by his side, and whispered: "Johanna sing to me the beautiful song of yesterday. It gives cheer and tranquility to my sore heart."

And Johanna grasped the harp, and with great emotion intoned a song telling of hope and trust in Providence, and of a peace that knoweth no end beyond the grave.

Cheered and consoled by the sweet voice and the words of hope the sick harper sank back upon his pillow; soon after Gertrude of Oakdale entered. She greeted all present with a courteous nod, and immediately proceeded to examine the condition of her patient.

With the greatest care and tenderness she inquired about his condition, and having satisfied herself as to the state of the disease, she brought forth her medicines, and having prepared them over the hearth fire, she presented a cooling drink to the harper who was racked by the pangs of thirst and fever.

After the lapse of half an hour she again enquired about the sick man's condition and was gratified to learn from his lips that he felt quite refreshed and considerably better. The witch now addressed him: "Concerning the condition of your bodily health, the Lord has blessed you and my feeble efforts. You have narrowly escaped a very dangerous illness. But my art as well as experience tell me that the root of your disease lies deeper, namely, in your mind. And your fever will soon return if you do not relieve your spirit of its burden. It is clear to me. You are harboring a secret in your breast."

A deep silence now pervaded the sick chamber. Gertrude stood before the bed and looked with a pitying eye upon the reclining form of the harper. Johanna stood beside the wretch, silent and tearful. Hans Netter and his spouse, too polite to intrude upon the secrets of their guest, had retired from the room.

The sick man's face now lit up with a bright smile, and he answered to Gertrude: "Gratitude for your speedy help and efficient services require of me that I disclose my heart and all its sorrows and secrets to you. The dear child at your side is also concerned in what I have to tell. So mark me well and give your earnest sympathy to my avowal. I am the Fish Veit of Costnitz, former confederate of the Knight of Ulm, Sigismund Gassler, who discarded his wife unjustly, and who, in company with me, did such horrible deeds at Rabenfels Castle. Misfortunes and grace from above have brought both of us to a sense of our moral depravity, and to a sincere repentance. The knight took the red cross to atone for his misdeeds by partaking in the war for the release of the holy cross from the sacri-

legious hands of the Turks. When we parted he enjoined me to hunt day and night, in fair weather and foul, through all the provinces of our beautiful German fatherland for his wife and his only daughter, the latter of whom I had sold to a band of wandering gypsies contrary to his injunction to drown the child in the waters of the river Danube. In vain I sought for the poor, outcast wife. Alas, she is now, perhaps, lying under the green sod, at rest from all earthly troubles and sin. But I have been fortunate enough to find the child. Here, the weeping child at my bedside is Johanna, the daughter of Sigismund Gassler and Edeltrudis, his wife."

During the recital of the invalid, the old woman seemed moved by strange and conflicting emotions; her features at one time expressed the deepest sorrow while at another moment her face was lit up with smiles of the most lively joy. And when the harper had ended his simple story copious tears flowed from his eyes. She lifted her hands up to heaven and a fervent prayer of thanks ascended from her heart. Then she approached the maiden, took her in her arms, kissed her, and invoked blessings upon her head.

Johanna and the Fish Veit could not explain to themselves the mysterious behaviour of the old woman; they did not, however, disturb her, nor did they venture to ask questions.

At length Veit continued: "Although I was inexpressibly happy at having found Lady Johanna and rescued her from the contaminating influences of the gypsies and their life, still I was undecided under whose care to place her for the future. At last I remembered the convent of St. Galls. The convent and its inmates had often been spoken of as models, and I determined to place her under the care of the pious sisters, who would certainly give her a good Christian education. I applied to the venerable abbess, who promised to be a mother to the girl, and to instruct her in every thing befitting the daughter of a nobleman. Only a few days ago I wended my steps thither again and reclaimed my precious treasure from the hands of the good abbess. Without hesitation Johanna was again placed in my charge. My first intention was to repair directly to Rabenfels Castle; but a mountain stream had carried away the bridge by which we were to cross, and I was compelled to go by way of Augsburg. Then I remembered good old Hans Netter and his well-known hospitality, and I turned my footsteps in this direction; and very glad am I that I did so; for without the kind offices of that noble man and your invaluable help, I would have become a prey of my sickness. And now, having relieved my heart of its weight, I am so well, so well I and I feel it within myself that I shall recover to complete my atonement to those whom I wronged at Rabenfels Castle, and after that I am ready to meet my Creator in the land of spirits."

The sick harper ceased and wiped a silent tear away. Johanna had dried her tears, and the sure prospect of her dear guardian's recovery filled her heart with gladness and wreathed her fair face in smiles.

Gertrude was still contemplating the innocent face of the new found heiress of Sigismund Gassler; at last she approached the girl and embracing her fervently, she said:

"You may rejoice and give thanks to the Lord. Gertrude of Oakdale prophesies you much happiness. The day of St. Michael is drawing on! O blessed hour that bring the dawn of joy to Rabenfels Castle, and restores to Johanna both father and mother!"

Then she called in Hans Netter and all his men, and addressed them with these words:

"All ye of the forge, great and small, hasten ye to the neighboring valley when the bell signals the festival, and the horn of the warden announces the happy day; Veit of Costnitz may lead the van. The great secret will be solved! The long night of misfortune will be superseded by the bright morn of sweetest ecstasy!"

And after having once more embraced and kissed the maiden she threw her cloak over her shoulders and with a light step she left the room, and was soon seen ascending the path leading to her humble cottage.

The long wished-for morning of St. Michael's day at last appeared. Knight Otto had risen early to inhale the balmy fragrance of the morning air. He had hardly reached the outside of the hut when a slight noise issuing from Gertrude's chamber attracted his attention. He involuntarily cast his eye in that direction, and there a sight met his eye which made him dumb with astonishment and wonder.

The room was dimly illuminated by a lamp, and reflected in it stood the form of old Trude, who was employed before a secret mirror, to bring the long black hair of her head in order, as the noble ladies of that age were wont to do. No longer was her body bent as that of an old woman, but erect and tall, robed in the tasteful, though plain, dress of a knight's lady.

With scented water and the strengthening dew of the autumn violets she washed the yellow color from her face, and the dark wrinkles from her brow; and her expressive features now exhibited a middle aged, handsome woman, who, in her happy youth must have been a great beauty.

When she was through with her mysterious employment, she threw the witch garb over her shoulders, covered her head with a bonnet of fur and hid her face in a black veil. Then she took her juniper staff, assumed her former stooping figure, crossed herself, put out the lamp and left the room.

Hardly had Otto time to recover his senses at this strange disguise of his foster-mother, when the witch and Knight Gassler approached him. Then she addressed them both in a solemn voice:

"St. Michael ascends in you beautiful aurora! In the golden scales which he carries in his left hand, he balances for us much pleasure and joy. The sword of the conflict for virtue and justice, that he wields in his right, he will lower in the halls of peace, to which I shall now conduct you. Mount, mount your horses, you brave warriors of the Orient!—The Witch of Oakdale goes in advance to show you the way over the forest-covered mountains. Come, and follow, all will be over soon!—Huzza, you noble knights! Praise and thank the Lord of nations!"

CHAPTER XXIV.—THE HAPPY REUNION AT RABENFELS.

Count Walter and Lucinda sat upon the porch of their new castle and gazed down upon the beautiful valley, upon whose narrow paths crowds of gaily dressed people advanced towards Rabenfels, to participate in the joys and pleasures of the announced feast. And soon the court yard was filled with hundreds of joyous guests, who all took a hearty part in the happy return of their noble count and master, Walter and his beloved wife Lucinda. All were dressed in their holiday attire, and in their variegated colours the festive crowd swayed to and fro.

Only the count and his lady were dressed in the sombre garb of deep mourning. For even amidst the joys of the day, which Walter had prepared for his subjects in commemoration of his return, should be visible the sorrow at the loss of a son and sister, of whose life or whereabouts no trace was discernable. From the steps of the castle the count welcomed all his people praised their true adherence to the old, venerable race of his ancestors, their longing with which they had expected him back from the Holy Land, the punctuality with which they had always paid their rents and obligations during his absence; and then he promised them, with a solemn voice, that he, for the future as well as in the past, would protect them always, and look to their interests and welfare with fatherly care. Loud cheers greeted the conclusion of the count's speech, and soon after the bells of the chapel invited the people to solemn service, which all attended. After service the people congregated in the large hall, where a splendid repast awaited them, and from the galleries burst forth the joyous strains of music, and twelve selected minstrels sang in jubilant songs the happy return of the noble couple and the new joy of home in Rabenfels castle.

In the midst of this enjoyment the Witch of Oakdale was suddenly announced. She said she had come to wish joy and good fortune to the people of Rabenfels. Lucinda, well remembering the hour which she had passed with Gertrude one afternoon in autumn, years ago, and the good service the key had done her in saving her life, gave immediate orders to admit the quaint old woman.

The witch appeared at the large gate, and after a short reflection stepped into the centre of the hall. The populace fell involuntarily back, deep awe becoming manifest at her sudden appearance. The crooked woman with the black gown over her shoulder, the strange figure in the long dark veil, from under which neither a correct form of the body or an outline of the face was discernable, presented an awe inspiring spectacle. The witch raised her staff and the deepest silence reigned through the apartment. Then, with a loud voice broke the Christian's greeting from under her veil: "Praise be to the Lord."

As if touched by a supernatural power, all bowed down in reverential silence. And the monks of Ursberg reposed in the deepest bass. "In eternity, Amen."

Verily, new a silence as that of the grave prevailed, and last the wonderful woman said: "Dark are the ways of fate, they carry the deep imprint of sorrow, and strike down the heart of man. But again it rises by the aid of the Lord. When misfortunes draw near look for succour from above, which is sure to come. People, praise the Lord for his unbounded grace, the hour is not far distant, and will arrive before the sun reaches noon. Now, let joy reign supreme, and cast off all sorrows. Unknown bliss will soon be the lot of us all."

Surprise and a strange feeling seemed to overcome all present, as the Witch of Oakdale continued her speech:

"Why so terrified, festive people? Old Trude brings no misfortune to Rabenfels. Let your joyous strains of music peal forth, you jolly musicians. Sound, sound, all ye trumpeters, and let your lutes pour forth melodious strains, ye gentle minstrels! Old Trude of Oakdale also knows a song or two, particularly appropriate for the present occasion."

And approaching Count Walter she saluted him respectfully, and said: "May I bring you a new guest for the festival? You shall know him; it's the Unknown of the Burning Castle!"

"Can it be possible," cried Walter, rising hastily from his seat: "or dare you to carry the illusion of your mysterious art into this honest assembly?"

Without answer to this query the witch had hurried to the grand hall door, threw its wings wide open, and the announced guest stepped in with youthful, elastic, yet proud and knightly bearing. Walter's eyes rested immediately on the shield and armour of the knight of the Orient. Not even a momentary doubt crossed his mind, but with a sudden bend he arose from his seat, and with the words—

"My noble saviour! Welcome to Rabenfels. The Lord be praised that I behold you again," he fell into the arms of the brave youth.

A solemn pause of universal surprise kept the eyes of all present directed to the beautiful group. But old Trude advanced toward Countess Lucinda and said, with a voice that trembled with joyous emotion:

"Not the count's alone, but also yours shall be joy. See here," she continued, taking a piece of paper from a small golden casket and handing it to the lady: "do you remember this sign? It belongs to the Knight of the Burning Castle. Behold in him your long lost child, your Otto!"

"Holy God," were the only words that trembled upon Lucinda's lips. But the young knight pushed back his visor, and when he exclaimed, "My father, my mother!" he lay on Walter's breast, he wept on Lucinda's heart.

The music pealed forth its joyous strains, the trumpets rang their exultant blasts, and the guitars of the minstrels their sweetest harmonies. It was a moment of indescribable bliss. The tears of untold joy flowed in abundant streams, and the witch knelt down and appeared to offer a prayer of thanks to the Almighty. But when after the first embrace, when after the first moments of blissful joy, the history of the past should be made the topic of conversation, old Trude interrupted them and said:

"We are not at the end yet. I have ordered a second guest. I sent a courier to the convent at Diessen, and he has brought here another being to participate in the joys of this meeting. By accident I gained knowledge that she had secreted herself in a lonely cell near Ammerlako! Praise be the Lord in his mercy!"

The door opened again, a veiled nun entered she then threw back her veil, and "Eliza!" rang in joyous surprise through the hall. Oh, wonderful meeting; how beautifully had old Trude arranged the joys of this festival day. Warm embraces took place again among the newly found. Again rang the music, and its beautiful strains melted with the tears of bliss of this happy family.

But now, the witch raised her juniper staff, and the joy of exultation was interrupted by an expectant silence. It took several moments before Trude, whose face was still veiled, could utter the trembling words:

"Count Walter, noble Lucinda; now that the Lord has blessed you with this happy hour, would your hearts deign to forgive a man who has been the source of so much misfortune; who has been the perpetrator of so many deeds of unheard of crime; but who has become a better man; who in the field of battle has endeavored to atone for his many misdeeds, and who comes now to beg at your feet for forgiveness?"

"Yes," cried Otto, "forgiveness is our first duty. Our Saviour taught us its lessons in all his acts. Yes, my dear parents, you must forgive the man who even saved me in the greatest danger of my life."

Again Trude hurried to the door and opened it.

"You may enter," she exclaimed, "where God has shown such signs of his mercy and benevolence all bad feelings must pass from the human heart."

And there—upon the threshold—kneet Knight Gassler, before Lucinda, who, pale and trembling, recognized the enemy of her soul; the tempter who had dared to attack her innocence. But his downcast bearing, the sealding tears that ran unrestrained from his eyes, gave her convincing proof that he had become a better man. Her noble heart gained the victory. She offered him her hand, to forgive and to

forget. And as a token of forgiveness Count Walter drew the repentant knight to his manly breast.

At that moment rang from the passage in front of the hall, the beautiful accords of a lute, and a silvery voice accompanied them in a sweet song.

"That is right, my sweet minstrel, further joys," cried the wonderful woman of Oakdale, and assumed on her staff an erect form, straight and firm as a young oak-tree. "Trude has spoken the truth. Knight Sigismund, be cheerful and rejoice; God has accepted your deeds of repentance. The pinnacle of joy approaches its completion. O, loving God, how shall I withhold my long restrained feelings! Patience poor heart, do not break before the happy moment! Veit Jurgen of Costnitz, appear, and bring to the knight his long lost child."

The old harper entered and stepped before Gassler, and giving the maiden to his arms he said:

"Knight Sigismund, I here return to you your child, safe and unharmed as at that moment when I tore it from a loving mother's arms: Gassler sank upon his knees. "Merciful God," he exclaimed, and the hull re-echoed with his exulting voice; "you give me undeserved joy! Is it possible? Is it true? Johanna, my darling daughter!" And tears of untold bliss broke from his eyes, making further utterance of thanks to God impossible.

And at last he stretched both arms on high, His eyes stared through the painted windows, in whose fresh colors the sun reflected its beautiful rays. He prayed to the clear blue heaven above:

"Thou still remains absent one being, the better half of my heart, whom I cast off years ago; whom I threw with a fiendish joy upon the cold and unmerciful protection of the world. God of mercy, if my wife lives, conduct her to me. Thou Omnipotent, who has given me these jubilant moments, fill my cup of bliss to the brim!"

And the mantle of black cloth fell from Trude's shoulders; the dark veil dropped upon the floor, and in the centre of the room stood Edeltrudis, before her husband, in the same garb in which he had cast her off.

"Here," she exclaimed, "here you have me again, Sigismund; Johanna! THE WITCH OF OAKDALE IS EDELTRUDIS."

What brush could paint, what pen describe what was felt, enjoyed, wept and prayed in that happy hour. Reader, we drop our modest pen in description of this scene. The mysterious halo that had surrounded the Witch of Oakdale for so many long years was at last solved; and when upon their knees they had given vent to their feelings in a fervent prayer of thanks, she exclaimed:

"Old Trude brings no ill-luck to Rabenfels."

CHAPTER XXV.—CONCLUSION.

Peace and joy, happiness and bliss had returned to the castle of Rabenfels to take there a permanent abode.

Soon the parents of Rabenfels and those of Ulm, saw with heartfelt satisfaction, and with thanks to God, the conjugal union of their children, thereby eradicating every trace of unpleasant remembrances of the past, and forming the ties of friendship for the future more firm than ever. And the ballads of the minstrels ran in praise of Otto and Johanna.

After a few years the grandfathers had the pleasure to rock a boy of their children within their trembling arms; and the grandmothers smiled with heartfelt joy at the cradle of a daughter of the good Johanna. The Veit of Costnitz, who was allowed to pass his old days at Rabenfels, carried Otto's boy upon the banks of the Wertach and taught him how to catch the merry fishes; while the pago Kuno held him secure on the high steed, when he rode out into the forest. At home the daughter grew up under the watchful eye of the attentive ladies. Eliza had become, since the happy reunion, prioress of the convent of Odilstetten, which her noble brother had founded. There she prayed within the narrow cell for the welfare of the race of Rabenfels, till the grave received the earthly remains of the revered lady. Only a short time since the picture of the devoted prioress could have been seen upon the walls of the convent of Odilstetten.

In the forge of Nettershausen for a long time this strange occurrence was the topic of conversation. And the ignorant "Hammer-Stephen," as he was called, often shook his head with a knowing wink and said, with a hearty laugh:

"Had I known all this, had I been aware what was the matter with old Trude, I would not have crossed myself so quickly whenever I saw her. But, with your permission, comrades, I think it would not be so very bad if every ghost and witch story, and the many tales of dwarfs, giants, spirits and others of the same stripe would have as happy a termination as the history of 'THE WITCH OF OAKDALE.'"

(THE END.)