



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XV.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 1865.

No. 35.

THE TWO MARYS; OR, THE O'DONNELLS OF INNISMORE.

CHAPTER IV.—THE FIRST INTERVIEW—MARIA MAKES ACQUAINTANCE WITH MRS. MONTAGUE.

It is the morning following the arrival of poor Fraulein; she wakes full early after such a night, but there is no dear old Frau bending over the bedside, with her *guten morgen, meine liebe*, to her darling child. Mrs. Somers has not yet called her, but no matter, Maria dresses, without delay, in a tight-fitting robe of brown merino, with her abundant and fair brown hair, parted over her open forehead, and then disposed of in braids behind the head; then Maria Floberg kneels to pray to Him who holds the hearts of all in His hands, begging Him to guide and protect her. To His gracious love she commands her thoughts, words, and actions, and rises from her knees a thought happier than before her prayer was offered. She opens her box and deposits in the drawers, placed for her use, the various articles it contains, ever and anon a tear rising to her eyes as she gazes on some mute token of affection from those she has left; there is a prayer book from the good pastor who had brought her Mrs. Montague's advertisement, and she kisses with affectionate reverence the lines his hand has traced in the fly leaf of the book; then there is a brooch from the old General, a silk dress from his wife, and her miniature, set in valuable pearls; a writing desk from her father, who, amidst his poverty, would find the means to purchase this for his child; and a work box from that dear mother whom Maria loves so well.

Sadly she lingers over each souvenir of affection, when Mrs. Somers tapped gently at the door, and evinced much surprise on finding that, notwithstanding the late hours, and, consequently, disturbed rest of the previous night, she had risen so early.

'I wish to tell you, Miss,' said the good woman, 'that I just had one word with Mrs. Montague last night, she enquired had you come, and told me to bring you to her boudoir at twelve to-day.'

'I will be ready at the time you name,' replied Maria, also signifying her readiness to breakfast that morning in the housekeeper's room, as the ordinary apartment was in disorder, having been used on the previous evening, and after partaking of the comfortable meal, Mrs. Somers placed before her, she retired again to her own room, till the hour fixed for her visit to Mrs. Montague.

Save and except the occasional footfalls of the wearied servants, and their movements whilst rearranging the apartments which had been required for various purposes on the previous night, there was no evidence of any of the family being up; till the hour named by Mrs. Somers, when, true to her time, the worthy dame presented herself, saying—

'Now Miss, Mrs. Montague is dressed, and will be glad to see you if you will follow me.'

Maria instantly rose, glancing as she passed the glass, at her face, a thought paler than usual. For a moment she nervously placed her hand on her heart, but the next instant was as calm and composed as the lady she was about to meet.

Poor Fraulein had been reared in poverty and seclusion, and if she gazed somewhat in bewilderment at the evidences of wealth which met her eye at every step, how much more so, when conducted into the luxurious boudoir of Mrs. Montague. The walls were hung with draperies of pale blue satin, festooned and looped with silver; the curtains were of the same costly material, and the ottomans and couches were covered with the same. Though the depth of winter, the choicest flowers of the conservatory adorned the costly vases of Sevres China; and tables of rich mosaic, overloaded with expensive articles of bijouterie, were scattered around, showing the want of a correct taste and refined mind, whilst on a low couch reclined the presiding genius of the place, the wealthy Mrs. Montague. It was certainly not the awkwardness which vulgar persons experience when they are brought in contact with persons superior to themselves, or the foolish bewilderment of one accustomed to such scenes, which caused the confusion which poor Fraulein felt at the moment she entered the lady's apartment, for she was naturally endowed with a calm presence of mind, and that quiet dignified manner, which all more or less of refined minds possess; but it had all suddenly vanished, and she stood in the lady's presence half hesitating, and for one moment irresolute whether to advance or not. Why this should be, she could not herself explain, but a sudden trembling seemed to seize her whole frame; it seemed to her as if some vision of the past had been conjured up, as if she had seen that face before; it was strange, but so it was. Was it in her dreams? Was it in her

early infancy? Where?—when?—how? she asked herself in the short two minutes that elapsed as she stood irresolute and trembling in the lady's presence.

The dream was dispelled, shall we not add, for we are faithful chroniclers, disagreeably so, by the voice of Mrs. Montague, who, half rising on her couch, stared at Maria with surprise, and then exclaimed, with a touch bordering on the satirical in the tone in which she spoke,

'Fraulein Floberg, I suppose, you must permit me to say, young lady, that you prepossess me with no very good opinion as to your ability or power of communicating a proper *maitien* to my daughters; how extremely *gauche* is the manner in which you have behaved.'

Poor Fraulein felt the rebuke, the more so because she knew she must have looked very much like some awkward, silly school girl, and she also felt that she had to do with a severe unfeeling woman; and, striving to conquer the unpleasant feeling, and the strange idea which had caused her confusion, she advanced, with something of her usual self-possession, and faltered out a few words of apology.

Who could look on that candid and open countenance of Maria Floberg, and not feel that it carried with it a letter of recommendation?—And so it was that even the hard Mrs. Montague softened, and, pointing to a chair, requested her to be seated.

Can there be a more terrible ordeal than for a sensitive, high-spirited, and, perhaps, well educated and accomplished woman, to be catechised by one who is herself grossly ignorant, but who, by virtue of her position, assumes the place of enquirer into things about which she knows nothing?

Now, unhappily for poor Maria—and it is too often the case with foreigners who come to England, as governesses, allured by the prospect of a much higher salary, than they can obtain in their own countries, or, than the poor English lady may ever hope to look for on the Continent—she was not what we may call proof in any one thing beyond German itself. She indeed lacked sound, general information in many points; but, so far, she was left at peace, as her enquirer was herself not well informed enough to probe sufficiently deep to find out the truth of the case.

That Maria could not play difficult music at sight; that she could draw, but knew nothing of water-colours, or painting in oil; and that she could not sing at all was sufficient for her employer; and fixing her eyes full on the ingenuous, truth-telling, but unlovely countenance of the poor young German, she said, to the infinite horror of the latter,

'Well, Fraulein Floberg, you will consider yourself engaged for six months, though whether you will remain longer is doubtful, as you are, evidently, too unaccomplished to finish my younger daughter's education. And now there are some things I wish to mention to you. I must request that you hold no conversation with ladies maids, or with the house-keeper, much less with any of the other servants; occasionally, when we are quite alone, which is rarely the case, by the way, you have permission to come into the library in the evening; at all other times you will remain in your own room. To-morrow morning my youngest daughter will return, and her studies will commence immediately. I will order the housekeeper to place the books in the school room, and you can employ yourself to-day in looking them over and making your own arrangements. I generally visit the school room myself every morning, as I wish to see with my own eyes how things are managed. So good bye for the present, and make yourself as comfortable as you can,' said the lady, ringing a small bell which stood on a table beside her.

The servant who entered was told to conduct Fraulein Floberg to the school-room, and, drawing a deep sigh, as if the weight of all this world's woes rested on her shoulders, the lady again reclined on her voluptuous couch, murmuring to herself,

'So strange a resemblance, but it cannot be; there, her's is a type of true German countenance, plain enough, too, in all conscience; really ugly, were it not a little relieved by the deep blue eye, and rich brown hair.' Thus speaking the fair little woman again placed herself at her ease, and, in a few moments, was deep in the pages of the last new novel.

Let it not be imagined that the scene we have attempted to describe is other than a faithful record of the private dealings of some of those apparently amiable beings who have the power thus to torture their own sex. We speak, of course, only of those illiterate and narrow-minded persons whom dame Fortune has raised above their own proper position in life; not of the well educated lady, who assumes not the post of an unfeeling catechist, and who knows by her own experience that one poor brain, over which, perhaps, a quarter of a century had scarcely passed, cannot, by any human possibility, be well-read,

well-informed, speak three or four languages, and be a brilliant pianist in the bargain. Alas, no; she is perfectly well aware, that those who profess so much, can frequently do the least, and are the mere female charlatans of a profession which not one in five hundred enter for the mere love of the thing. Oh, no; the task is too arduous for that. We have no faith in the truth of the poet's words,

'Delightful task to rear the tender root,' &c.

Believe us when we say, that all those patient, young, and middle-aged ladies, who dwell in your houses, gentle reader, or who plod with weary steps and aching hearts, the streets of England's great metropolis, are teaching; not because it is their vocation, but because it is their destiny; they must live, therefore, must they teach, for a great social evil, which right thinking men are studying to amend, has decreed that thousands of women, gently born and reared, but unbled by independent means, however, modest, shall find but few paths, we may also add, scarcely any by which they may live without losing caste as ladies, save by becoming governesses, by the pencil or the pen. And it is, after all, a vexed question, this about governesses and their employers; and there is much to be said for and against on both sides. Heaven forbid we should attempt to assert that there are no faults on the weather side; a stern necessity oftentimes forces a woman to do that for which she has naturally a positive aversion, and if the task be really odious, then the person who performs it will surely not be gracious, patient, or gentle. Children are apt imitators, and clever observers, and will see, quite as soon as you, my dear reader, when temper steps in, and little Miss, or Master, will not fail to take speedy advantage of the fault of the instructor, and then good bye to respect and obedience.

But return we from our digression; it was not very likely, with such food for reflection, that our poor Fraulein could follow Mrs. Montague's advice, and 'make herself comfortable.' Again and again she reproached herself for the bashful awkwardness she had shown on entering the presence of the lady. And as often did she fancy, that somewhere, and connected, too, with some unpleasant far off scene, she had beheld those features; and sometimes, we are bound to admit, she almost felt nervous at the duties she had to discharge, so sharply had Mrs. Montague spoken as to the nature of the accomplishments she possessed, the hard woman's severity increased by the very bashful timidity, which was, in truth, praiseworthy in the character of Maria; though prejudicial to her interests, for the diffident and the timid are ever their own enemies; self-conceit is never the accomplishment of such dispositions as that of Fraulein Floberg.

Painfully, too, did the conviction press on Maria's mind, that the education which enabled her to pass through life as a lady was not the one calculated for a governess. She could play very fairly, and perfectly understanding the theory of music, had thought this quite sufficient; in the same manner with foreign languages, she could read and appreciate their beauties, for she was by no means wanting in talent; but her conversation with Mrs. Montague roughly dispelled the illusion, for she found she was required to speak those languages with which she was acquainted; now, she could only speak French and a little broken English, and awfully nervous was the poor Fraulein. Such a woman as Mrs. Montague was the very worst into whose hands she could have fallen, for, if there were a weak point in those with whom she had to deal, were to them; Mrs. Montague would never grant any truce, but would drag the defect unmercifully forward; and, if a dependant in any capacity whatever, a quarrel was sure to be the result.

Yes, we grant that the poor Fraulein was wanting, especially in general information; but, by the way, there are very few foreigners thoroughly up to the point in this matter; still, in her own country, or in England itself, as a private lady, she might have passed through life without reproach on the score of mental culture; perhaps she might have been thought a not very clever personage; a quiet woman with but little to say for herself, doing whatever she had to do silently, and well. And in what, reader, would she have been so very unlike you, or your humble servant? We are not all born to 'set the Thames on fire' with our surpassing talents, you know, but, as the case now stood, it made our poor little German maid very miserable indeed, and, being one of our good and conscientious people, the thought uppermost in her poor mind was, 'have I done wrong? have I not undertaken that for which I was not qualified? Ah! why did I ever leave Coblenz? I am not clever, I am not accomplished, and I dread meeting again the cold, hard looks of that fine lady, in whose presence I felt so uneasy, even before she questioned me so harshly as to my accomplishments.'

As Maria mused thus, blinding tears rushed to her eyes, and for a long while she wept on without an effort to control her grief; but the entrance of Mrs. Somers, who came somewhat abruptly, to announce dinner, which was to be served up in the study, served to check her grief for a time, the good soul exclaiming,

'My word, Fraulein, your eyes are sadly swollen. Nay, don't take on so, you'll see all you love again, you know; you must not fret, for sure. And, by the way, I had best tell you, Mrs. Montague is of a short temper, as we Lancashire folks say, when people are very hasty, but don't mind this, we all have a good scolding sometimes, no one escapes; so cheer up, don't fret about home, and to-morrow when the young ladies are with you, and your hands are full of work, for sure you'll feel happier.'

Of this, however, Maria did not feel quite so confident, but endeavored to smile through her tears, thankful that she had, at least, one friend at Fairview.

Wearily as was the day, it wore away at length, Maria passing much of her time in writing to those she loved, carefully concealing the causes she had for disquietude, the strange uneasiness she felt in the presence of Mrs. Montague, and the unpleasant tidings she had received from Mrs. Somers, as to her mistress's short temper, and then having enquired her way to the post office, she gladly embraced the opportunity of a stroll, by taking her letters herself. There was one person, however, to whom Maria had opened her mind, and this was to her kind friend the pastor Von Rosenheim; from him she concealed nothing, asking his advice, and begging his prayers.

On her return home she felt more composed; she had opened her heart to a tried friend who had never yet forsaken her, and, taking out her French and English books, she pored over them till the night was far advanced.

She retired to rest early, and passed a night of unbroken slumber, thoroughly worn out by the fatigues of her journey, the anxiety of her mind, and the disturbed rest of the previous night.

About ten the following morning Mrs. Montague entered the study, accompanied by her two daughters, Millicent and Alice, herself, to Maria's infinite surprise, arranging the course of studies they were to pursue, and then left the school-room with the consoling intelligence that she would return in a couple of hours, and remain whilst Alice took her music lesson.

In a state of nervous agitation, certainly not at all calculated to inspire her pupils with a wholesome respect for their preceptress, Fraulein Floberg began the day's instructions.—Miss Millicent, a tall, handsome girl of eighteen, looked far more womanly than her poor little timid governess, and Maria would have a little chance of success, I think, if she had her for her pupil in anything but German, of which she knew but very little, but as this was the case she lent a willing ear and received her lesson with perfect good temper.

To the sweet little Alice, a young creature of scarce fourteen summers, Maria felt irresistibly drawn, there was something so docile, so meek, in the child's manner, that one might almost love her at first sight, and Fraulein felt that here there would be no difficulty, where, perhaps, she had apprehended the greatest.

True to her promise the dreaded Mrs. Montague came into the school-room, bringing with her book, Maria well aware, although the lady never appeared to raise her eyes whilst she gave the little girl the music lesson, that the book was a mere pretext, for that Mrs. Montague's gaze was steadily fixed upon her the whole time, and that her ears drank in all her instructions.—The piece was a difficult fantasia, and Alice rather dull at music, there was room for patience, and, had Fraulein been untruthful in her assertion respecting what she said she knew of music, she would have betrayed herself, not indeed to the lady, who could play an easy waltz, or quadrille, but nothing more, but to Miss Millicent, who, Maria found a little later, was a brilliant pianoforte player.

CHAPTER V.—FRAULEIN MAKES A NEW ACQUAINTANCE. MRS. MONTAGUE THREATS HER HUSBAND TO AN AFTER DINNER LECTURE.

Agreeably to the rule generally adopted in all families of position; Maria dined at what was in fact the luncheon of the elder members of the family, and a good substantial repast too it was, the tables of the Manchester gentry always being abundantly spread. Not yet, however, had Fraulein met the gentlemen of the house, whom she wished, but feared, to make acquaintance with, lest he should behave as disagreeably as his lady. In the afternoon, however, as Alice and herself rambled into the town, she observed a good natured, stout gentleman (do not all stout gentlemen look more or less good-natured?) standing at the entrance of a huge manufactory

with a tall, high chimney looking as if it would like to run a race up into the clouds. This was one of Mr. Montague's mills, and Alice made Fraulein aware, as to who the gentleman was, by catching hold of her dress and exclaiming, 'look look, Fraulein, there is papa, come with me and let me introduce you to him, you know you have not seen him yet.'

There could be nothing to fear from the owner of that benevolent countenance; oh, no; George Montague had not the cold, cruel eye of his wife. A smile was ever on his lips; he was sure the stranger was 'the new governess,' and he hastened forward, warmly welcoming Fraulein Floberg to Fairview, looking, with pleasure, into her honest face, admiring its frank open expression, and liking her the better, may be, because she looked timid and diffident. Then after a little pleasant chat, he asked her how she liked England, what she thought of Fairview, bid Alice bring her, a few days hence, to the mill, when she should see his hands at work, and treated her with such cordiality that she forgot the shrieking reserve of her character, and amused him then with her simple, yet naive remarks, and with the pretty broken English that fell so trippingly on his ear.

At length they neared Fairview, and Mr. Montague bade them farewell, previously cautioning Alice to be a good girl, and give as little trouble as possible to the young lady who had come from such a distance to be her governess.

'That day the family, consisting only of Mr. and Mrs. Montague and their eldest daughter, dined alone, and when the servants had withdrawn, and the wine was on the table, Mrs. Montague began as follows:

'You mentioned, while the servants were present, that you had just met this German lady, along with Alice. In consequence of your absence from home, my dear, since the night on which the ball took place, I have not had an opportunity of speaking to you till now, and—'

'I do hope you are not going to trouble me in the usual way, my love, but that at last you have met with a person who is likely to suit you,' replied Mr. Montague, in a somewhat petulant tone of voice.

'Well, for the matter of that,' replied the wife, 'as far as German goes, she is, of course, unexceptionable, but I fear she is not up to the mark in other respects; I think she will not suit for a permanency.'

'And I fear,' said Mr. Montague, 'you will never find any one who will, but I have already told you not to trouble me about governesses, servants, or anything else coming under the range of a woman's government. Do not fancy, Ellen, that because I do not weary you with complaints, that things always go right at the mills; that there are no refractory work people, idle porters, or neglectful clerks, to trouble me; do let me have peace when I return home after the anxiety of the day.'

'But I must, and will tell you, George, why I have spoken as I have done. I have closely questioned the Fraulein Floberg myself, and find that she is not up to the mark in anything except her own language, therefore, I told her she must leave at the end of six months.'

'Woman!' thundered out Mr. Montague, putting down the untasted wine he was carrying to his lips, 'you do not mean to tell me you have had the brutality to say this, the moment this poor lady is beneath your roof?'

'Certainly, sir,' replied the lady, bridling up with anger. 'I shall not retain the services of any but qualified persons.'

'Your conceit, madam, is without a parallel,' replied the indignant husband. 'How you, uneducated, ill informed, unaccomplished, as you really are, can presume to lecture and talk to the poor ladies, whom we have had beneath our roof as you do, I really can not imagine. This poor Fraulein seems to me the very person for Alice, and yet, the moment she enters the house, you find fault, as you have always done with all her predecessors, and, without even the justice of a sufficient trial, at once inform her that she will not suit you.'

A violent and passionate fit of hysterical weeping—the usual resource of such women as Mrs. Montague—was her only answer. To this her husband was well accustomed, and when for some time she had indulged herself in this way, and found that he took up a paper and made no attempt at conciliation, she broke out anew.

'Anxiety, indeed! it was ridiculous for men to talk about anxiety; they should have the trouble of servants on their minds, the management of household matters, and bringing up of children, and then they would know what anxiety was.'

(To be continued.)

'John, where is your master to-day? Oh! he's off recruiting. Recruiting, is he? that's good! where is he recruiting? Up in the White Mountains air, recruiting his health. Ah! he's sick, is he? What's the matter with him? He took cold on account of the draft!'