



# CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 1870.

No. 32.

## 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,  
(Abbot of Tongerlo, Belgium.)

CHAPTER VII.—CONTINUED.

'Be it so,' answered Victor; 'but this does not free me from a debt of eternal gratitude and friendship. But what extraordinary disposition of Providence were you sent just now for my preservation? and, if it be not an indiscreet question, how comes my antagonist, who has lived for so many years in Belgium, to be so well known to you?'

'It was indeed a disposition of Divine Providence which sent me to this spot. Know then, my friend, (but ask me no more than I am about to tell you,) your base antagonist is my own brother—a prodigal son who has overwhelmed his family with sorrow. You may judge whether I, even in the midst of my grief for his wickedness, have reason to account myself happy to have saved him from a horrible crime. My poor brother! he was once brave and good; but evil companions and above all, secret societies, have been his destruction.'

'Terrible events, which alas! have laid a weight of years upon my heart, obliged him to leave this country. We had heard nothing of him at the first glance, for, in the days of his innocence, Nunziata was Gennaro's darling, and years of crime had not so utterly changed his appearance, but that she at once knew the face which was ever before her memory. Seeing him in company with a Pontifical Volunteer, anxious forebodings filled her heart, and she hastened home at once to make known the matter to me. I followed you immediately in the direction pointed out by her, hoping to find an opportunity of speaking to my brother alone; but when I saw you strike into a side path, and lost sight of you in the coppice, a terror seized me of approaching; I forced my way through the bushes. You know the rest.'

'Oh, yes!' answered Victor earnestly. 'My noble friend! I know I owe my preservation to you. Oh! how can I repay you? Stefano—let me call you so, as an old friend—Stefano, we will pray together for your erring brother.'

Stefano wept. He felt that he had to do with a true Christian; for the love of enemies is one of the strongest characteristics of the followers of the Heart of Jesus. He grasped Victor's hand.

'Thanks, thanks,' he said, 'for those good words. They are a balm to my burning heart.'

Meanwhile, they approached the city, walking together in silence. When they reached the Church of San Pietro, in Montorio, they entered it together, as if inspired by one common feeling; they knelt before the Chapel where the Holy Virgin, 'della Lettera,' is venerated. Stefano prayed for his brother. Victor implored penitence and forgiveness for his enemy, and gave thanks to God for his unhoping-for deliverance. He fervently did both prayers rise to Heaven before the miraculous image of the Mother of the Church, in the place where the first Pope of Rome received the crown of martyrdom. For it is on this very spot, according to tradition, that St. Peter was crucified. Could Victor doubt that Mary, the especial Protectress of the glorious Pius, and Peter, the first Vicar of Christ, had delivered the Holy Father's soldier from the death which threatened him?

Meanwhile, Gennaro, with hell in his bosom, fled out of Rome. He raised his hand on high, uttering blasphemy on blasphemy, as if to defy Heaven itself.

'Ah!' thundered he, 'the coward has escaped me. Well, another time he shall not get off so easily. Forward! forward! on my accursed path! Forward! forward! I shall find him yet! I shall avenge myself before hell claims me!'

And his hollow laugh echoed through the field like the ghostly merriment of a lost soul.

'Then, as if he had suddenly made his determination, he hastened forward to the 'Porta Portese.' Suddenly, at a turn of the road, a woman stood before him.

'Gennaro!'

'Nunziata!'

He had recognized his sister by her voice.

'Gennaro, have you spoken with Stefano?'

'Spoken?' answered he, raging at the sound

of his brother's name. 'Away, Nunziata; all is over between us. He has snatched my revenge from me. He has threatened me with imprisonment, death, and shame.'

'Unhappy one,' answered Nunziata, 'I was not mistaken; you had your victim beside you Gennaro, Gennaro, have you stifled the voice of your conscience for ever? Does his bloody shade—you well know whose—never come to disturb your rest?'

'Away, once more,' cried the 'carbonaro' with increasing anger. 'Let me pass, Nunziata, or I will trample on your body.'

She sprang forward like a lioness at bay.

'Well,' she cried, with all a Roman's courage. 'Well, lift your guilty hand against your sister; but Gennaro, I fear you not. No! I fear you not, and you shall bear me, and bear me to the end.'

'Out of my way, woman,' thundered he, pushing her out of the path, 'and say to Stefano, to him who has balked me of my revenge, that I swear an eternal and unmitigable hate against him.'

Nunziata in the meanwhile had recovered herself.

'And to me, also,' she replied, 'for it was through me, in the first place, that you were balked of your vengeance. God knows I can neither bring you to a better mind; but your heart, brother is shut against me. Your hour is not yet come, and oh! will it ever come?'

'My hour, the hour of vengeance. Yes,' muttered he, as he suddenly broke from her.

'The hour of grace,' said she with a sigh. 'Oh! Gennaro, you once loved me so dearly. In the name of our love, take with you the remembrance of my last words. Anticipate the hour of justice be it but by a moment.'

He vouchsafed not to listen to her any further. She returned weeping to the city.

She had hardly entered the house when Stefano and Victor came in.

'I have spoken to him, but he will hear nothing. Oh, God! Oh, God! Is there a hope left for his poor soul?'

She now observed Victor.

'Pardon,' cried she falling on her knees before him, 'pardon.'

'Stand up, Signorina,' said the Zouave, shocked at the sight. 'Do not! I owe my safety to your brother!'

'But he,' she sobbed, 'he is my brother.'

'A divine miracle,' answered the Zouave gently. 'An erring brother, for whose return we shall all pray together.'

Nunziata looked at him in amazement; there was not the slightest shadow of anger on his countenance, nothing was visible there but tender compassion.

'Signor, you are an angel.'

Very far from it, Signorina Nunziata, replied Victor smiling; 'and don't call me Signor, but simply Victor, for I want to be a brother to you and Stefano. My duty will soon call me from Rome, but I hope soon to return, and to be received as a child of the house. Spill it not be so, dear Stefano.'

Stefano warmly pressed his hand. Victor had found fast friends in this foreign land.

He kept perfect silence with regard to the circumstances which had nearly proved fatal to him, making them known to none but Joseph and Martin, who determined to keep a strict watch over his safety.

On the following day Victor received a letter from his mother who told him that she had observed a wonderful change in his father's demeanor. He who had formerly listened with visible coldness to any tidings from his son, had suddenly evinced great eagerness for his last letter. He had desired her to write immediately to Victor, and ask for a speedy reply and recommend him strongly to keep clear of Maso if he should meet with him. 'For the fellow is brewing mischief for my child.'

Delighted with the good news, Victor lost no time in setting his parent's anxiety at rest, and seeing no necessity to make known to them the danger which he had but now escaped, he simply assured them that Maso had done nothing to injure him, for that his plans had come to naught.

How came the elder Morren to be possessed by so sudden a desire to hear of Victor? And how came he thus to suspect the evil designs of the 'carbonaro' who had spoken to him of his intended departure, and who assuredly would not have informed him of the object of his journey to Rome?

CHAPTER VIII.—THE SPIRIT OF GOOD AND THE SPIRIT OF EVIL.

The feudal castle of Schrambeek, with which we made the reader acquainted in the beginning of our story, is a visible monument of the Middle Ages. A heavy square building, defended at each corner by a strong tower, is connected by a wing in front with a fifth gigantic tower, which seems to keep continual watch to bar all access to the interior of the castle.

The castle is defended on three sides by a

deep moat, and surrounded on the fourth by a half-circle of buildings surmounted by turrets.

The deep splay of the windows and the narrow loopholes, testily, even to an exterior view, the resistance which those thick walls could have opposed to any hostile attack.

The castle had striven for many a century against the assaults of the elements, and now bears many and grievous tokens of the wounds which it has received from the destructive hand of time. The weather cocks are rusted on the turrets, the gates broken, the walls split by the incessant dropping of water, and weeds sown by many a wind have taken root on the battle meads.

A part of the old castle lies already in ruins, and time is surely, but slowly, doing its work on the rest.

Yet how striking is the half-fallen castle in its picturesque decay!

How impressive is the sight of this long-enduring witness of the life of our forefathers.

O, how often in my youth, when I used to come to spend some time in Schrambeek I dreamed away hour after hour—gazing upon those grey walls, and calling to life once more the old warriors who once dwelt there! How eagerly did I turn over every book that fell in my way, how closely did I question every villager in Schrambeek to discover everything that was to be known about the old place! and he books told me the history of the castle, which, however, has nothing to do with the purport of my tale. And the villagers told me the traditions of their forefathers, and here and there one of the simplest among them would whisper that the castle was haunted; but where is the ruin of which the like may not be said?

A few days before the events related in our last chapter, the elder Morren, with his friend Ernest Van Dormael, were taking a walk over the hills in the north-west of Schrambeek. Ernest came on the previous evening to visit Morren at his country-house, or rather, with the finished design to lay a snare for the philosopher which might draw him deeper down into the gulf of unbelief.

Yet having been unable to see Mynheer Morren alone, he had no opportunity of carrying out his plan.

He had, therefore, proposed a walk to the castle on pretext of visiting the ruins, but in reality to secure a private interview with his host.

Their way lay by the 'Troonskapel.'

Teresa was there, praying fervently.

'Ah, Teresa,' said Morren, who knew her well and often gave her alms, for he was a kind-hearted man. 'Ah, Teresa, there you are always at your prayers. It seems to me that you never do anything else but pray.'

Teresa stood up and leaned upon her crutch.

'Ah! what should an old cripple like me have better to do?' she asked.

'And, without giving him time to answer—'

'Do you know,' continued she, 'for whom I was praying?'

'How should I know?'

'Well, I am going to tell you. I was praying for our children at Rome; for your Victor, Mynheer, for Joseph and Martin.'

'Bah! as for Martin,' answered Morren, 'he has not much to thank you for. Did you not send him away yourself?'

'Do you think,' answered Teresa, 'that I have not the heart of a mother? Ah, Mynheer, poor people love their children as well, and some times better than the rich. Do you think that the thought of my absent child never troubles me, that I have no anxious fears about the lot which perhaps awaits him?'

'English woman,' interrupted Ernest scornfully, 'whom have you to thank but yourself. Have I not just heard you sent him on this expedition yourself? Why did you not keep him at home; then you might have spared yourself the trouble of all the fruitless prayers that you are saying here.'

Teresa looked at the scoffer with a piercing eye.

'Are you a Christian?' asked she. 'Your words do not sound as if you were.'

'Very possibly not,' answered Ernest contemptuously.

'Then you will not understand me. Still I will tell you why I did not keep my boy at home; because,' continued she slowly, 'I am not a mother only but a Christian also. Moreover, I was a Christian before I was a mother, and because the Father of all Christians, as threatened, should I at such a time of danger shrink from my duty and keep the child of my love at home? If I did, could not God as a punishment for my faithless selfishness send my son even from my side? Can He not, as the reward of duty fulfilled, preserve him even in the midst of the enemy's bullets?'

Mynheer Morren was astonished; he had never heard the beggar so eloquent.

A mocking smile played on Ernest's lip.

'God! God!' said he, 'that is the word by which you explain everything. But where is God? Have you ever seen him?'

'As if we were to believe nothing but what we have seen! I have never seen you before, Mynheer,' said Teresa laughing, 'and so you have never been. To see God,' she continued, 'is impossible to our eyes, yet everything around tells me that He is.'

'Come, come,' muttered Ernest, driven off the field by the beggar woman's biting remarks. 'What is the use of talking to this stupid old woman. There is no God, and that is the end of the matter.'

'No; that is not the end of the matter,' Teresa cried after him. 'Be well assured, Mynheer, an hour will come when you will desire with all your heart to believe in God. Will He then give you grace to do so. I fear not.'

Ernest bit his lip with rage. This was the second time that the inevitable hour of death had been brought before him as an hour of confusion and despair to the proud free-thinker.

He seemed not to be yet at the end of the misfortunes which beset his stay at Schrambeek, for at that moment a messenger came to summon Mynheer Morren upon pressing business.

The free-thinker's plan was set aside, but he determined to continue his walk round the castle, in the hope that he might find an opportunity later in the day of carrying it out.

He was now close to the castle, and as the gate stood open and he knew that it was unoccupied, he entered it without ceremony.

He went through several rooms, until at last he found a winding stair in one of the cases, still uninjured, which brought him to a second floor.

Having looked around him for some time, he was about to descend by another stair, when he found himself in complete darkness. The ground broke suddenly under his feet, he rolled down, remained for a moment hanging over a vault, which broke under the weight of his body and he fell on the soft ground at the bottom of a dark pit.

He was only a little stunned, and soon recovered his consciousness, but his position was anything but pleasant.

He caught a glimpse of a faint light, high, very high, above his head; he felt the walls of his dungeon round and round—there was no stair, no door, nothing which offered him a means of escape.

Had he found his grave here already? Had his awful hour which had been just now foretold to him already come?

The miserable wretch entirely lost his presence of mind; he never reflected that Mynheer Morren was sure before long to come in search of him, and saw nothing before him but impending death.

The cold sweat stood on his face, and he paced round and round his dungeon, howling like a wild beast.

Suddenly he thought he heard a slight noise at the top of the wall. He listened.

'Who is there, within?' cried a voice through the crevice of the wall.

'Oh, save me! save me!' cried the wretched man, recovering a gleam of hope at the sound of a human voice.

'Who are you?'

'A stranger visiting the castle, who has fallen into this hole.'

Teresa, for it was her voice, as she passed by had heard the howling of the prisoner.

She smiled as a thought crossed her mind.

'Ah!' cried she, 'this is the hour I told of—the hour of God's vengeance.'

'Oh, no!' he screamed; 'don't say that. Help me out, cost what it may. I will reward you. I will give you much gold.'

'Bah!' said Teresa, 'what do I want with gold?'

'Much gold,' he repeated again.

'Do you believe now,' said the beggar, 'that there is a God?'

'Help, help,' cried he from within.

'I will not help you, and nobody will help you, for everybody in the village believes that this tower is haunted; nobody will dare to come near you.'

The free-thinker began to howl again.

Teresa could hardly help laughing.

'Do you believe now that there is a God?'

'Save me, save me!' cried he, out of the pit.

'I will not save you unless you acknowledge that there is a God. Very good, you will not. Farewell, then, I go and leave you alone with his avenging arm.'

'Wretched woman,' muttered the free-thinker.

'Well, yes,' screamed he, 'there is a God.'

'Very good. Now I will get some one to help you. Wait a moment.'

And she ran into the garden beside the castle.

'Farrer Nellis,' said she, 'there is a rat in the well; a poor wretch in the 'Spectre's Tower.' Come and help him out.'

'In the Spectre's Tower?' said Nellis in a fright. 'I am not going there.'

'Nonsense,' said Teresa, 'with your superstition. You're no child now, and I assure you it is a living man that has fallen in. Would you leave him to die, for fear of spectres which only exist in your own fancy?'

With great difficulty she persuaded the good man to follow her.

They soon reached the dungeon which had received so unexpected a guest.

Teresa, better acquainted than Nellis with the different parts of the castle, carefully made an opening in the vault beside the staircase by which the free thinker had descended.

It seemed as if a wraith had been removed from his breast; he breathed more freely.

The beggar threw him a rope.

'Listen this well round your waist,' said she. 'Now, Nellis, draw it up, but carefully, for the vault is ruinous. One, two, three. Very good. Here he is.'

Van Dormael was saved; but bring once saved he was furious against his deliverer. Had not that peasant woman won a most shameful victory over him, the proud free-thinker, and forced him to do homage to God, though only with his lips.

He flung her a few gold pieces.

The beggar rejected them with contempt.

'Keep your gold, Mynheer,' said she, scornfully, 'but henceforth carry not your blasphemies so far, for you see the fear of death can make you change your tone. Nellis, be so good as to bring Mynheer to harbor, for my company may not be agreeable to him.'

And she hobbled on with her crutch.

The free thinker had not found his stay at Schrambeek very pleasant, and was glad to find himself on the same day in Morren's company on the way to the railroad.

He had determined now to carry out his plan.

'My dear friend,' he began, as soon as they were out of the village, 'I have hitherto had no opportunity of making known to you the principal object of my journey.'

Morren said with some surprise:

'The principal object of your journey? Had you another than a visit of pleasure, Ernest?'

'Assuredly,' he replied, 'I came to prove my friendship and regard for you. You know, my good friend, that a number of your most intimate friends are members of the powerful society of Freemasons. Well, it is known that you have given your son permission to enter the Pope's service. Allow me to tell you, my friend, that his has done you harm in the estimation of your old companions. You are suspected of being no longer firm in your principles.'

'But, Ernest, do they not see that it is the very strength of my principles which has obliged me to leave Victor free to follow his own?'

'Well and good,' replied Van Dormael, 'if you had only allowed him liberty, but they will have it that you sympathize in his undertaking. This weakness (so I will call it) bears amongst your friends the name of cowardice, and they cannot forgive you for appearing to take part in the defence of the Papacy.'

'Far from it,' interrupted Morren, 'and it is false, Ernest, to say that I have approved Victor's resolve. I have simply left him to exercise his free choice.'

'Be it so,' answered his companion, 'and I am personally convinced that you have in no respect altered your opinions, but our friends think otherwise. I will deal openly with you. Some members of the society, who do not view you with a very friendly eye, because you refuse to join us, have represented the matter in the darkest colors. They have described you as wavering in your convictions and on the way back to the bigotry of your youth, and have brought Victor's case forward in confirmation of their conviction.'

'But all this is nothing to the purpose, as I have told you before,' answered Morren sharply.

'No, my friend; I know it,' answered Van Dormael. 'I said so myself at the 'Lodge,' but what can one do? They think otherwise. Let us come to the point, however. This is what I have to propose to you: Your honor and interest require that you should give a public contradiction to this slander. I have come, therefore, to advise and beseech you to join the society of Freemasons. You will thus show that you are the same bold, undaunted thinker as ever; you will shut the mouth of slander, and regain the confidence of your old friends.'

'Ernest,' answered Morren calmly, 'I thank you for your advice, for I am sure it is prompted by friendship, but I cannot follow it. You know what I have often said to you; being an 'undaunted thinker,' as you call me, I cannot place my reason under the bondage of Free-