



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1861.

No. 19.

TURLOGH O'BRIEN;

OR,
THE FORTUNES OF AN IRISH SOLDIER.

CHAPTER XLVI.—THE CATHEDRAL.

The moon was now high in the heavens, and her blue light fell through the tall arches of a roofless aisle. The hum and buzz of the stirring streets but faintly floated into this solemn and secluded ruin; the bat fitted in his noiseless zig-zag career; the drooping ivy nodded and beckoned from the time-worn buttresses, and thin white mists crept over the green graves. 'Thro' the grey shafts of the Gothic aisle, a little group moves slowly and mysteriously; two men in slouching hats are carrying in a cloak some heavy, helpless burthen, and stagger and stumble through the undulating graves as they proceed. See, yonder are two others; their coats are thrown aside, and a heavy slab of stone displaced has a dark, yawning orifice in the wall. See, yet again, another pair of silent figures; side by side they stand beneath the high-arched doorway, under the central tower, guarding, as it seems, the entrance to this melancholy and solemn place. Never did moonlight fall upon two more haggard and resolute faces; swords peep out from the skirts of their short mantles, and pistols gleam in their hands. The faces are fixed as death, and all is silent, not even whis- pers passing. A stranger, looking in through that stone-shafted aisle, might have fancied he beheld the spectres of the guilty dead, re-enact- ing some of the dark and fearful scenes of the life they had left, in that ghostly and desolate spot.

About the same time—scarce a stone's throw away—an earnest colloquy engaged two men in close debate, whose gist and purpose nearly enough affected those silent figures, whom we have just seen in the ruins. There then stood, at this northern side of the city, among the scattered dwellings of a broad, winding street, a lowly stunted inn, with thatched roof and pro- jecting upper story, half barn, half house.— Within was a broad, earthen-floored chamber where dozens of guests, of one kind or another, were talking, singing, eating, and drinking, with small regard either to the criticisms or the con- venience of any but their own especial knot of companions. In the rear of this were several deserted stables, the lofts of which had been con- verted into a sort of common sleeping ward, for the poor frequenters of this little inn. A few bundles of musty straw supplied the bedding, and a wallet, or saddle, furnished the luxuriously-dis- posed with bolster and pillow at once. Strewed over the floor of this dreary dormitory lay some half-dozen tired mortals; some snoring in pro- found unconsciousness, others kept awake by many an anxious thought for the coming morn- ing. Among those who slept was a stout and gloomy- looking old man, rolled in his threadbare cloak, his head supported upon a scanty bundle, tied in a handkerchief, and his deep stentorian breath- ing, testifying how soundly he slumbered. On a sudden he started up with a look of terror, and gazing into the darkness of the chamber, with a moaning shudder—

'Oh, mercy! oh, mercy! what dreams!' he muttered, at last: and rising slowly and dejectedly, for he feared to disturb his companions in wretchedness, who were likely to resent such an invasion of their repose with a violence propor- tionate to the value they set upon this, their soli- tary luxury, he crept towards the ladder, which led downwards from the loft. Close to this point, however, unfortunately for his peaceable intentions, a recent comer, unseen by our newly- awakened friend, had established himself: and upon this recumbent figure the portly walker set his foot, with a pressure which was anything but soothing. Up bounced the sleeper from his lair, with a ready oath, and a fist already clenched, to second the imprecation with a blow. A chance ray of moonlight, however, streaming through the broken roof, illuminated the forbidding face of the rough burly offender, and the assailant stayed his hand; and, after a breathless pause of a few seconds, ejaculated—

'Tisdal!

'Ay, Tisdal,' retorted he—'Tisdal, I, and thou, Deveril, or the devil has borrowed his voice.'

'Well, met, Jeremiah—well met, bow-shanks,' said the ruffian, but without his usual hilarity of tone. 'Curse this place; hadn't we better come down and have something—eh?'

'Yes, if you pay for it,' said Tisdal, with bitter vehemence; 'I have but three shillings in the world—but three—and I'm not going to squan- der them on you, miscreant!'

'Very good—as you please, honest master Tis- dal,' replied Deveril, coolly; 'as for me, I have a pocket of crowns, but egad, they're brass ones; and now that the king is gone, the prince has played your humble servant a scurvy trick and cried them all down to pennies; but, never mind, come down, I say—I want to have a word with

you; I have some work on my fingers, and want a partner; what say you to a share in a venture;—come down, I say come along.'

And Deveril, without adding another word descended the crazy ladder, every second rung of which was either gone or cracked. Tisdal, whose necessities overcame his abhorrence of the man, followed, and they both stood upon the rutted and broken pavement of the little court- yard—each glanced around with the quickness of suspicion, but the place was absolutely deserted and silent, except from the muffled sounds of song and laughter that arose from the kitchen of the humble inn—the two companions stood close together, and spoke in the lowest tones of cau- tion.

'I've had bad dreams,' quoth Tisdal, whose destitution made him a ready listener to any proposal for bettering his forlorn condition, 'and your venture will come to nought; besides, if it be anything of the old kind,' he whispered hur- riedly, 'I'll have nothing to do with it—I'll have no part in it—I'd rather die—I'd rather die!'

'Tut, man, spare your breath,' said Deveril, coolly; 'why there's not a man in the city worth sixpence after all the taxation, and searches, and all that; whom in the devil's name could we rob with profit; content yourself, it's nothing of the kind.'

'Deveril—Deveril,' said Tisdal, with a trou- bled and sinister air, 'my dream is coming out—it is coming out. I do believe you are the fiend himself, in shape of man, come again to tempt and undo me.'

'Eshaw, man—what ails you?' retorted Deveril, impatiently. 'I tell you it's no such thing—quite the reverse—a laudable, legal, righteous, saint-like action.'

'What is it?—out with it, then, urged Tis- dal.'

'There are two outlawed rascals,' responded Deveril, 'Ryan (Ned of the Hills, they call him) and Hogan, nicknamed Galloping Hogan. The prince has set a price upon their heads. I have smoked a pipe with them in the camp, and know them; and I think I recognised them both, not two hours since, in this town. If they are hiding here, we may, with your knowledge of the cut-throat lanes and alleys of the city, my ac- quaintance with their persons, point them both out, and so touch the gold. There's a simple, honest, straightforward plan for you, that has none of the old stand-and-deliver smack about it, that you should roll your eyes, and turn up your nose at mention of it. Eh?—what say you?'

Tisdal, after some brief parley, agreed.

'Here I am in King Jemmie's uniform, and about to touch King William's cash,' said Deveril, with a rollicking grin, and a snap of the fin- gers. 'Little Dick Slash for ever! Ah, Cap- tain, no one like Dick for getting out of a scrape—that you'll allow. I'm a deserter, do you mind, at present; and then, if this scheme fails, why I'm off again, away for Limerick, after the drum and the colors once more: for I've a kick or two left in me still: and, egad, I'll see the fun out, unless better offers.'

King William had encamped his army, not far from forty thousand strong, close by the little village of Finglass.

The city of Dublin, though filled with laggards and deserters from James' army, skulking in all its obscure hiding places, was yet secure enough. The Blue Guards garrisoned the Castle, and kept guard at all the public offices. The Pro- testant citizens forgot all their losses and trou- bles, and, to their credit be it added, even their old scores of vengeance, in the happy conscious- ness of their entire deliverance.

On the Sunday following the memorable pas- sage of the Boyne, King William, a punctilious observer of the public duties as well as of the domestic proprieties of religion, attended Divine services in St. Patrick's Cathedral. The gate of this great aisle stood open to receive the royal conqueror; curiosity, enthusiasm, and loyalty, had been combined with higher motives, to draw together an immense concourse, within this so- lemn and ancient building. Amongst the crowd who tended thither walked Sir Hugh, accompa- nied by his old friend and kinsman, Sir Thomas Neville, who had regaled him already with a hundred vehement complaints of his 'hair-brain- ed son,' his 'mad-boy,' his 'good-for-nothing, scape-grace Percy,' of whose eventful fortunes, it seemed, he so absolutely despaired, that he was well nigh resolved to transport him to Ja- maica, or anywhere out of sight or hearing.

'I tell you what,' said he, confidentially, at last; 'I have reason to believe the boy was about to make a fool of himself for life—for life, sir. Egad! I ascertained by a lucky accident the damsel's name—it was Tisdale.'

'How!—Tisdale!' ejaculated Sir Hugh.—'Can it be little Phebe—Phebe Tisdal? You amaze me.'

'By my troth, 'twas even so—Phebe Tisdale,

at your service,' responded his companion; but I have knocked that scheme on the head. I did not let him know I was in the secret, however, for my boy has a spice of his father in him—egad, sir, spirit, a devil of a spirit, sir—so I make interest, and had the hopeful jackanapes sent off upon public business—a good joke! 'faith—public business, sir, to London. Ha, ha!'

'So we shan't see poor Percy,' said Sir Hugh.

'No, no—egad—not this bout,' said Sir Thomas, wiping his eyes after his explosion of merriment; 'not this bout, sir; he's safer here—for it would not quite do to have my son marry a milkmaid. I wrote a short letter—a pretty complete extinguisher upon the whole affair—to the girl, and I mean to be after him myself to London. He can't be too closely looked after—no, no.'

When these old kinsfolk had reached the Go- thic pile, and found themselves at last among its rude and solemn arches—a part of the expectant multitude who thronged its aisle, whose echoes were now pealing with the rich and plaintive har- monies of the organ—they took their places in silence in the front of the crowd, who had al- ready formed themselves so as to leave a clear passage along the centre to the choir, down which the king was to walk.

Sir Hugh, who had never yet beheld the re- nowned personage, who had played so great a part in the world's history, was naturally in- tensely anxious to behold him; and at last this eager wish was gratified.

A prolonged shouting from without, amid which the tramp of charges could scarcely be heard, announced the arrival of the king, accom- panied by several of his chief officers and a guard; and a few minutes, having dismounted, the royal party entered at the western gate, and so proceeded up the centre of the great aisle.— The slow pace at which they moved, afforded abundant time to Sir Hugh to scan the figure of him whose fame had for so long filled all Europe, and the sounds and sight of whose last victory were still, as it were, before and around them. A kind of hum—a low, stirring sound—with re- verence for the place alone restrained from swelling into a wild buzz of rapture, rose on every side, from the dense and enthusiastic crowd, as William advanced, with slow and somewhat feeble step, along the aisle—a frail, slight figure, arrayed in a riding suit of crimson velvet, heavily laden, with the ponderous ad- juncts of the high jack-boots and clumsy spurs, worn in those days; his apparent feebleness con- trasting with exciting effect, with all that was known of the daring and resolution which animated that fragile frame in the field of battle.— He wore, of course, the full peruke of the day, in hue, dark brown, overshadowing a counte- nance very perceptibly scarred with the small- pox; the face was lank, its general character austere and immovable, with an expression about the mouth that resembled the peevishness of ha- bitual pain; the nose was very high, the eye- brows marked, and the eyes dark, prominent and bright. The piercing fire of this latter feature redeemed the whole face, and contrasted vividly with its rigid stillness. He carried a cane in his hand, and leaned upon it with a pressure, which showed that his apparent weakness was also real; and as he moved onward, that deep, hollow cough, which never forsook him, was more than once audible.

Not far from the entrance opening from the aisle into the choir, in the transept, was placed a coffin, covered with a crimson velvet pall. It was that of Schonberg, whose remains, it was then intended, should finally rest in Westminster Abbey, but which were afterwards buried instead within the walls where they then lay. As the King reached this spot, one of his officers whis- pered a word in his ear, and William stopped somewhat abruptly, paced a step or so towards the coffin, and looked upon it steadfastly, and, as it seemed, sadly; then shook his head slowly, and said aloud—

'Few like him left—few like him left.' And then, after a brief pause, he added: 'Good Schonberg; we trust he rests in God.'

The service was now concluded, and Sir Hugh having taken leave of his companion, and waiting until the crowd had in some measure dis- persed, paced the great aisle of the rude old building from end to end; and, as will often hap- pen in such cases, while thus occupying the in- terval, he fell unconsciously into meditation.— The king, officers, guards, and all were now de- parted, the eager crowds gradually broke into detachments and dispersed, and Sir Hugh re- mained, except for one other solitary pedestrian, wholly alone in the deserted building. His com- panion was a man apparently of some three score years, with a stooping carriage, and a slight limp as he walked; he had long grizzled hair, which had once been red, a smoky brown complexion, projecting underjaw, and a keen, fiery dark eye;

he was plainly dressed in a sober and somewhat threadbare garb of snuff-colored cloth, and one of his hands carried a walking-stick, on which he leaned with considerable emphasis.

As Sir Hugh, for about the twentieth time, passed this singular and somewhat repulsive look- ing person, the stranger on a sudden accosted him with the salutation—

'Good day, sir.'

The knight returned the greeting, and the stranger, thus encouraged, proceeded:—

'A glorious sermon, sir—a moving discourse,' he observed with much fervency. 'Doctor King is, indeed, sir, a precious instrument—precious, truly, as that other most honorable vessel, which hath been cracked and broken, alas! like a vile potsherd, only a few days since, by the rebels' shot—I mean that man of God—that minister of peace—that holy preacher of fire and sword—that most Christian dragoon and doctor of divinity—Governor Walker, who saved Derry by his holy zeal, undergoing in his own proper person the double duties of parson and bombardier—from the pulpit to the bastion, sir, and back again—preaching and battering by turns, exhorting sinners to earn paradise by blowing sinners to perdition, and in a word, going about everywhere doing good; alas, sir, that was an unlucky shot which rid the world of him; what a bishop he would have made.'

Sir Hugh looked once or twice at the speaker, but though his tone, as well as his rhapsodical language, was, as it seemed, that of irony and sarcasm, yet his countenance and gestures betra- yed no indication of the kind; nevertheless there was something in the whole apostrophe sufficiently sinister to arm the reserve of the old knight, who contented himself with simply bow- ing in reply.

'Well, sir,' continued the old man, raising one hand slightly, and turning up the whites of his eyes, 'he's gone to heaven, in a buff jerkin and jack-boots, for he died as he lived, in harness; he's disposed of—so much the worse, sir, for us, Protestant boys—so much the worse, though, after all, we must not despair—there's as good fish in the sea as ever was caught. I doubt if even he, that holy man of Bible and bullet, Walker himself, could have delivered a more seasonable discourse—a more edifying and sus- taining harangue than that we have heard to-day. Doctor King, sir, has earned a bishopric; nay, he has earned even a higher promotion, may he get it! though methought indeed he sometimes soared a flight above the king himself, when, for instance, he likened his late Majesty, James, to Lucifer, as you may remember, for as it seemed to me the king frowned and looked dissatisfied; between ourselves, I fear me William of Nassau is not so good a Protestant by half as you and I were disposed to esteem him.'

'It would seem to me, sir,' replied the knight, a little tartly, 'that you are making yourself pleasant at the expense of _____'

'Nay, nay, say not so,' interrupted he of the snuff-colored suit, 'what! I make myself pleasant, and at my years! pleasant about the solemn Walker! pleasant about a two hours' sermon! pleasant—pleasant!—odds my life, sir, time has been when I should have pinked a man through the ribs for so much as hinting I could be pleas- ant on such subject.'

'You'll excuse me, then, sir, if I confess my- self at a loss to comprehend you,' said Sir Hugh. 'If you be serious, your discourse is, to say the least of it, somewhat extravagant, and by no means to my liking; I shall, therefore, with your leave _____'

'Wish me good morning,' suggested his com- panion, in an altered tone; and for the first time standing erect and firmly before him. 'You're right, Sir Hugh Willoughby, though we part not company quite so soon as you would have us, you are right in holding my words to be the language of derision and contempt; but, see you, I am not here to bandy arguments and instances—hold we each our own opinions—you yours to your comfort, I mine at my peril, I have watched an opportunity to speak one word with you unob- served.'

'Speak it then,' said the old man, not a little surprised.

'Colonel Turlogh O'Brien,' continued the stranger, lowering his voice, 'lies badly wound- ed in this town; the lethargy of fever is upon him now; but two days since I promised him that if he reached the city in safety, I would in- form you, Sir Hugh Willoughby, of his condition—and, if you desired it, lead you to his lodging, that with your own eyes you might see that he lives. You need not be told that secrecy is needful in a case like this; if, then, you desire to assure yourself of his safety, you may accom- pany me.'

'I do indeed desire it—earnestly desire it,' answered Sir Hugh, eagerly. 'I would, how- ever, fain know, if it may be so, to whom I speak.'

'An Irish gentleman, sir,' answered the stran- ger, coolly, and withal sternly; 'my name is and

can be no concern of yours. I have undertaken a message, which I have delivered; I make an offer which you may accept or refuse, as suits you best; in either case you will preserve, of course, an honorable secrecy.'

'Of course,' echoed Sir Hugh, haughtily;—and then added—'I am ready to go with you.'

CHAPTER XLVII.—MARY'S ABBEY.

The momentary change of gait and tone, to which we have just alluded, in the odd-looking stranger, was enough to assure Sir Hugh that his companion was supporting an assumed char- acter, and maintaining a disguise. He was, however, constitutionally fearless; and, indeed, it needed, perhaps, more courage on the part of his companion, obnoxious as, perhaps, he was to the powers now in the ascendancy, to trust his safety thus in the hands of a Whig gentleman, who had small reason to regard the friends of King James's cause with favor or affection.

At an easy pace they pursued their way, which led them to Essex Bridge (then but a few years open, and long since rebuilt from the foundations), and having crossed the river, they plunged into a series of narrow lanes and streets, many of them resembling those of a crowded village rather than that of a metropolis—some of the houses that composed them little better than hovels, some thatched, and others tiled, and all thrown together with a marvellous content of symmetry, and, as it seemed, of convenience, too. The whole population, brute and human, appeared to have turned out, and to be lounging and loitering in the streets; men and women, pigs and children, dogs and poultry. A crowded listlessness pervaded the highways and alleys, such as may still be seen in many of the older quarters, of our provincial towns, even to this day. Sir Hugh and his companion made their way through all this, and reached at last a mass of low, roofless buildings, which looked like ruinous stables. At the end of this row—the dreary effect of which was enhanced by their utter silence and desertion of the place—there stood a dingy, shattered wall, which showed here the traces of having once been battle- mented. In a low broad archway in this, was swinging a rotten door of oak, studded with rusty pins of iron. Quickening his pace, and throwing a hurried glance behind him, the unknown hastily pushed this open, and led Sir Hugh into a neglected grave-yard, overgrown with rank grass and nettles, from among which were peeping hundreds of old head-stones, of all heights and hues. The tall windows of an old and ruined church looked mournfully forth upon this deserted burial-ground, from the further ex- tremity of the enclosure; a pile of confused rub- bish and ruins at the right; and upon the other side, a mass of quaint old buildings, which seem- ed to have suffered almost as much from time as the rest had from violence. With the exception of a portion of one of these melancholy- looking tenements, the whole range appeared to have been given up to decay and utter desertion. Stone-shafted windows and dark door-ways, through which the breeze sighed and moaned desolately enough, looked sadly out upon the waving grass and grey head-stones of the little church yard. From one tall chimney only among the group, a thin curl of smoke was ris- ing.

'You know this place?' inquired his con- ductor.

'Mary's Abbey; is it not?' rejoined Sir Hugh.

'It is so,' answered he; 'and once more I have to remind you, sir, that you have engaged to observe a strict and honorable secrecy. I am now introducing you to the haunts of men, some of whom are, like myself—proscribed and desperate; and all of whom have, at least, strong reasons for concealing, in impenetrable mystery, their present abode, which, destitute of every other recommendation, presents, at least, the one advantage of security.'

Sir Hugh repeated his assurances of secrecy, and they both ascended a flight of some dozen stone steps, which slanted along the front of the building in question, and terminated before a small door, which was at once opened to the stranger's summons, by a huge, ill-looking fellow whom Sir Hugh had some indistinct remem- brance of having seen before. The door being closed again, Sir Hugh found himself, with his new companion, in a low, long room, grudgingly lighted by a single narrow shot-hole rather than a window, and even that half stopped with old clothes and other muffers. There was scarcely a fragment of furniture in the chamber; a fire glowed under the yawning chimney, and afforded the chief illumination of which the room could boast; a loft overhead, whose boarding had once formed the ceiling, was now rotted and shattered; and through its gaping apertures, and fissures of the broken roof, the obstructed light of day was drearily peeping. The tall, ungainly, mooring figure who had acted as janitor, was now smoking by the fire—it was Hogan.