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## ROSE LEBLANC; OR, THE TRIUMPH OF SINCERITY.

### CHAPTER XVII.—Concluded.

One day in the Capitol Andre remained a long time near the statue of the dying Gladiator, the sculptured tragedy which Lord Byron has so powerfully described,—

“I see before me the gladiator lie;  
He leans upon his hand—his manly brow  
Consents to death, but conquers agony;  
And his droop'd head sinks gradually low,  
And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow  
From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,  
Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now  
The arena swarms around him: he is gone,  
The ceased the inhuman shout which hail'd the  
wretch who won.”

“Consents to death, but conquers agony,” murmured Andre in a low voice, as his eyes rested with a mild and troubled expression on the type of heathen endurance, meeting death without complaint and without hope.

The paleness of his cheeks, and the tremulous agitation of his hands, betrayed an interior conflict which Alice's watchful eye discerned. She drew him away from the cold hall, from the silent marble forms, from the careless sight seers, into the sweet air, the bright sunshine, and then into the neighboring beautiful church of the Ara Celi. There, in the temple once dedicated to the false gods of pagan superstition, and now to the infant Saviour of a ransomed world, before the picture of the Virgin Mother—one of those painted by Luke the beloved physician, and which, in days of yore, smiled on St. Francis of Rome when her sorrow was at its height—returned to Andre's soul. Christian consolations triumphed over human weakness; with a sublime expression of love and joy, after raising his eyes to heaven, he turned to Alice, and whispered the words of St. Paul: “O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?”

Never was the Italian spring, that lovely bridal of the earth and sky, more perfectly beautiful than the year in which Alice and Andre watched together amidst the hills and valleys which surround Rome. With the blue cloudless sky over their heads, in gardens and groves where the almond-trees mingled their pink blossoms with the dark-colored cypresses and pale-headed ilexes, by the side of sparkling fountains on the shores of the lake of Nemi, in the wood of La Boccia and Albano, on the heights of Castel Gandolfo, amidst the ruins of Adrian's villa, or the shades of Lunghezza, that verdant oasis of the Roman Campagna, they spent enchanting hours seated on the green grass, surrounded with violets and cyclamens, sometimes with their books in their hands, their eyes wandering from the pious, the learned, or the poetic page to the visible records of bygone ages, or the scenes of nature's loveliest combinations.

“We lead a very idle life,” Andre said one day to Alice; “your only occupation here is to make me happy. At Roche Vidal, the poor people, the school children, the very birds and animals used to claim a share of your time. Now, I engross it all.”

“Oh, these are our holidays,” she answered with a smile. “Some other time...”

“Ay, some other time,” he interrupted. “Soon, very soon, others will have you all to themselves.”

The last of their excursions was to Ostia. This was just before the Holy Week. They spent a night there, and stood at the very spot where tradition says that St. Augustine and St. Monica sat together on the evening of the arrival in the little town where, three days afterwards, she was to die. They read the sublime pages of the Confessions, in which the saint relates the conversation which took place that night between him and his mother, as they gazed upon the sky and its myriads of countless stars, and raised their minds from the contemnation of material objects to the thought of the soul's immortality, and the eternal happiness of heaven. These words found an echo in the breasts of the affianced lovers.—Under the influence of the profound serene beauty of the sunset hour, and of the expressions of the most sublime piety, they remained absorbed in thoughts which were almost prayers, and set the seal to the sacrifice both tacitly felt they would soon be called upon to make of all the earthly hopes and joys which had brightened their young lives. They returned to Rome the next day, but with a different feeling from that which they had left it. They felt a presentiment that the end of their pilgrimage was at hand; they understood their brief strange happiness, the short lifetime of love, was drawing to a close. It was not a bitter thought, not a sudden pain. It had been contemplated from afar in the silent hours of prayer and the calm communion of their souls with God. Their feelings were like those of the traveller approaching the end of his journey, as the shades of evening gather around him, as the sun goes down behind the hills, and the moon,

with her subdued and holy light, in rising in the tranquil sky.

In the manner which his failing strength permitted, with a faltering step and aching frame, Andre, always accompanied by his two devoted companions, witnessed the sacred ceremonies of the Holy Week. They did not attempt to mix with the crowd in St. Peter's on Maundy Thursday, or to brave the heat of the Sixtine Chapel; but they knelt at the foot of the steps of the Scala Santa, and leant against the wooden cross of the Coliseum on Good Friday. From a distance they caught the sounds of the wonderful Miserere, the notes of which thrill on the ear like the cry of a sinner who repents, and touch the heart like the voice of a pardoning God.

Then came the day of days in Rome, Easter-day, the glorious festival of the Christian Church. A peculiar joy fills the heart that morning, like to no other joy on earth. “Christ is risen,”—these words, the exulting cry of triumphant faith, rise from the lips of the assembled crowd. They seem to float in the air, to ring from every steeple, to re-echo from every neighboring hill. The bells of St. Peter's proclaim it with their deep sonorous peal. Immense multitudes through the great temple of Christendom; the silver trumpets fill its dome with soul ravishing melody. The hallelujahs of angels seem to mingle with the praises of men. And the Pontiff at the altar, and the worshippers in the nave, and the crowd about the portal-gates repeat with one voice,—“Christ is risen.”

At the end of High Mass, Alice, Mdlle. de Tournefort, and Andre left the church by the sacristy door, and hastened towards the colonnade, where the carriage was waiting for them; but he suddenly stopped, and entreated them to mix with the crowd assembled on the Piazza of St. Peter. They accordingly knelt down on the steps of the marble flight of stairs in front of the Basilica at the moment when the Holy Father came forward on the balcony to bless the city and the world, “urbi et orbi.” His powerful and melodious voice rang on the ears of all, and thrilled in the souls of many. It seemed to go forth far beyond the limits of the Eternal City, as if seeking through the wide world all the weary spirits, the aching bosoms, the breaking hearts of the great family which own his paternal sway;—all the mourners, the sufferers, the forsaken ones of every clime under the sun. The blessing of the Vicar of Christ, of the successor of St. Peter, rested that day on many a head bowed down to receive it. It made its way to many hearts yearning to be consoled, cheered, and sent on their way rejoicing by that fatherly benediction; but it appeared to descend with more than common meaning, with more than ordinary sweetness on the two youthful strangers, the betrothed love kneeling side by side in a touching attitude of mutual support and trembling earnestness. It was to them as the pledge of an everlasting union in heaven, the only one they hoped or thought of now.

Andre was leaning heavily on Alice at the moment the Pope withdrew. He whispered to her in so low a voice that she could hardly catch the sound, “Let us hasten to the carriage. I can scarcely stand.”

As they crossed the piazza, the men and women, and even the children, made way for the young couple, and looked compassionately at Alice, whom they called “La Santarella Francese,” the Guardian Angel of the pale stranger. With difficulty they reached the carriage, and drove alongside the Tiber, and through the Trastevere, on their way back to the Piazza di Spagna. As they crossed the bridge near the broken arches, both of them turned round, and gave a long, lingering look on the dome of Saint Peter's.

A few hours later, Alice was gazing on it once more. She had unconsciously approached a window whence she could see the whole city lying in darkness before her, save where here and there a solitary lamp burned before an image of the Madonna. Gas had not then illuminated with its modern brightness the streets of Rome; but the cupola of St. Peter's, like a dome of living fire, was lighting up the mid-night sky. She shrank back astonished and almost affrighted, for she had forgotten all about the illumination of St. Peter's. She had forgotten every thing but the grief which had fallen upon her, and God, who was giving her strength to bear it.

As the Angelus was ringing, as the day was closing—the bright, beautiful Easter-day in Rome—Andre had breathed his last, with his hand clasped in hers.

She gazed for a long time on the scenes where she had wandered, suffered, and prayed by his side; on Rome, which he had so dearly loved, and whose sacred enjoyments and silent teachings had given them a foretaste of heaven amidst the pangs of one of earth's deepest trials. With her head leaning on the breast of her faithful friend, who was supporting her with a mother's tenderness, she murmured these parting words,

with an emotion she did not attempt to control.—

“Farewell, blessed sanctuaries! Farewell, chosen home of God on earth, where I would fain have lived, and above all would fain have died! Farewell, Andre! Farewell, Rome!”

Then, after a few moments' silence, she raised her eyes to heaven, and uttered St. Francis of Assisi's favorite ejaculation,—

“Deus meus et omnia!” “My God and my all!”

A few days afterwards, Alice was hearing Mass in the subterranean chapel of the church of St. Lawrence, out of the walls, and then went and knelt at a new-made grave in the cemetery of that ancient basilica, on which she had engraved the words of Holy Scripture,—

“I shall go to him... but he will not return to me.”

She went back to her own home and made no considerable change in her mode of life. It was still more solitary perhaps than heretofore. The late Baron's establishment was gradually reduced, and old servants pensioned off. One of the wings of the castle was converted into a hospital, where the aged and infirm persons of the neighborhood were freely admitted. Mdlle. de Morlaix, with one of the Sisters of Charity, to whom she had committed the care of the hospital, was wont to seek out these objects of her tender compassion in the neighboring villages and conduct them herself to the home she had provided for them. Mdlle. de Tournefort and some of her uncle's old friends, good and pious people all, remonstrated sometimes with her on the extent to which she carried almsgiving, and expressed fears that she would only end by injuring her fortune and her future prospects.

“My future prospects are very simple,” she would answer with a smile; and there was an expression in her face which by its very sweetness checked further questioning.

Two years elapsed, and the neighbors began to wonder what was to be the end of all Mdlle. de Morlaix's alterations in the old castle, and whether every portion of it was gradually to be dedicated to the same purpose as the left wing. Her lawyer and the Superiores of the Sisters of Charity had frequent interviews with her; and deeds were drawn up, and plans for building examined over and over again. At last business came to an end; and one evening Alice de Morlaix walked out upon the terrace where she had so often supported her grandfather's faltering steps, and where, a few days after his death, she had parted with Andre. She gazed on those ancestral possessions once so fondly loved, and nixed, for the last time, her eyes upon them, as she had done on her view of Rome from the Pincian Hill on the day of her departure from the Eternal City. But there was not the same struggle in her heart as on that mournful day;—and gratitude rather than resignation was now her prevailing feeling. The world, its wealth, its pleasures were nothing to her, and no absorbing human affection stood between her soul and God. Two years of solitude and prayer had done their work. She cared for nothing but to follow our Lord's advice to the young man whom when He had looked upon He loved—“To sell all, and give to the poor, and then to follow Him.” Her mind was made up. There was no need for further delay. The sacrifice had been made long ago. The seed had been sown in tears; now the harvest was reaped in joy. The last look was given at the glorious landscape and the old towers of La Roche Vidal, and not a tear dimmed the eye which rested upon them with affection, but not with regret. Once more, as she had done in Rome, the young girl said, “Deus meus et omnia!” and then turned away for ever from the home of her youth, and walked towards the travelling carriage which was waiting at the gate of the garden where Andre, the day he arrived at the Chateau, had seen her surrounded by a troop of joyous children. There were waiting for her: Mdlle. de Tournefort, who was going to spend the rest of her days in her former little home near Lyons, which she had left out of kindness for her niece, but had always longed to return to; a few old servants, whose tears were flowing fast; the Sisters of the hospital; and the Cure of the village, who had come to give a parting blessing to the daughter of his earliest friend, to the maiden he had instructed in childhood, and whose earliest steps in life he had guided. Alice knelt to receive the fervent benediction; then tenderly embracing the Sisters, the sobbing women, and the children who were clinging to her dress, and waving her hand to the men, who were passing their rough ones over their eyes, she cried out, “God bless you!” sprang into the coach, and went on her way rejoicing.

Two more pictures have to be presented to the reader of this little tale before the volume is closed, and its simple incidents come to an end. One is that of the farm of Les Ormeaux, near the beautiful village of Jurancon, at baymaking time. The day is bright and hot; a transparent

golden haze hangs over the Vale of Pau; the stillness is such that scarcely a leaf is stirring, even on the topmost branches of the tall elm trees, under the shade of which is sitting Rose, the loveliest and the happiest of farmer's wives in the Hautes or the basses Pyrenees. She had just brought the haymakers their dinner, and is now playing with her child, a rosy boy of one year old, who rolls from his mother's knee into the heaps of sweet-smelling hay with shrieks of delight. It is a charming scene of rural life.—The waters of the Gave are peacefully flowing with a low murmuring sound on one side of the beautiful meadow, and a rising bank, crowned with a variety of fruit-trees, rises in the back ground. Henri Lacaze is superintending the loading of a waggon of hay at the opposite extremity of the field, and directing the labors of his men; but his eyes often wander towards the spot where his wife is sitting with her baby in her arms. Every object in sight harmonizes with the glowing landscape, which itself combines the brilliant coloring of Italy with the grandeur and the verdure of Alpine scenery. The wild flowers, warmed by the sunshine and trodden under the feet of the mowers, emit the most balmy odours, and smell like the heaps of crushed rose-leaves in the garden of Santa Maria Novella at Florence. And the Rose of Jurancon, the happy wife of the most loving husband, the mother of the laughing boy whose arms are stretched out towards his father, and whose little bare feet dance with impatience on her knees, because she detains him in her fond embrace; every feature in her face, every glance of her bright eyes is beaming with joy, even as the sunshine is sparkling in the blue waters of the Gave.

And now a woman in deep mourning appears at the gate which leads from the field to the high road, and advances towards the spot where the farmer's wife is sitting. The moment she throws up her veil, Rose recognizes her, and they are soon foiled in each others arms. “O my sweet angel, is it you? Is it really you? Henri, Henri, what are you about? What's the matter with you, that you do not come running here directly?” The farmer slowly approached, but no sooner did he see Mdlle. de Morlaix than he respectfully took of his hat, and his sun-burnt countenance exhibited almost as much satisfaction as his wife's. Alice sat down between them on a heap of new-mown hay. The baby hid his face on his mother's shoulder, glancing now and then with a half-shy, half-amused look at the stranger. Rose kept repeating from the fullness of her heart, “My sweet angel, what happiness it is to see you again!” At first Alice remained silent, then she held out her arms to the little boy, who, after a moments hesitation, went to her and held up his rosy mouth to be kissed.—Soon he began to play with a little cross she wore, and showed it to his parents with signs of delight.

“Ah, Mademoiselle,” said Henri, “we have never ceased to think of you.”

“Ah, that is true,” chimed in Rose; “and to pray for you also. We have so longed to see you and hear about you. Oh, if you could only be as happy as we are. If we could give you half our happiness—a large half too—would we not, Henri?”

“True, wife, and not grudge it either,” farmer Lacaze said; but looking at Alice, in a hesitating manner he added, “I am not sure, however, that our sort of happiness would exactly suit Mademoiselle.”

Rose and Alice both looked at Henri; the former with a puzzled expression of countenance; the latter in a way that made him feel he had guessed rightly. No, it was so earthly joy, however pure, that could fill the void of her deep heart.

“Dear Rose,” she said, “I have come here on purpose to see you, to witness your happiness, to make acquaintance with this little child, and to... bid you farewell.”

A cloud obscured at once Rose's joyous face. “Why, why farewell?” she said. “Where are you going, my sweet angel?”

She turned towards her husband, as if asking him to explain Alice's meaning. “I have been to Betharam,” the latter said, “to return thanks for God's mercies to us all since the day we three knelt there together at the foot of the cross. The crowning mercy of my life has been the call to a religious life...”

“I thought so,” said Henri.

“You are going to be a nun,” Rose ejaculated. “A Sister of Charity,” Alice answered.

“Ah, you were always fond of the poor, and the sick and little children. It came as natural to you as to me to love animals.”

Alice smiled, and Henri said, “Well, Almighty God has made angels and women; but I have a sort of notion that He sometimes throws the two into one.”

This made both Rose and Alice laugh, and they did not speak much more of the future that day. But Rose showed Alice her pretty home, her garden full of bees and flowers, and her

child's cradle and her home-spun linen, and told her Henri was the best of husbands. And Alice made her several presents, and said a few words of affectionate advice which the farmer's wife never forgot; and then there was a parting, and the links were broken between Mdlle. de Morlaix and the world.

A few months elapsed, and then in the chapel of the Rue de Bac, at Paris, Alice was enrolled in the army of devoted combatants, now sixteen thousand strong, which, since the days of St. Vincent of Paul, has fought the good fight in every part of the world, which ministers to sufferers in every climate and every nation, and sends forth its detachments at a moment's notice wherever war, disease, or poverty calls them to the bedside of the dying soldier, to the wards of the fever hospital, to the haunts of misery or the abodes of despair; whose ranks are daily thinned by hardships and penitence, and recruited in every land and every class of society; which commands love and reverence wherever its legions go forth in the name of God and St. Vincent, to conquer the world by loving deeds and heroic actions, by their lives, and by their deaths.

If Sister Genevieve, as Mdlle. de Morlaix was now called, possessed a peculiar gift for consoling those suffering under bereavement, if she knew how to encourage those who had suffered from brightened human hopes, and by a few unpretending words how to initiate them into the joy reserved for all who, having been mourners once have found the only lasting happiness which can exist on earth, it was doubtless that peculiar trials had made her acquainted with grief, and given her a more than common sympathy with sorrows of a similar kind. She knew how to bind up the wounds of the heart with as skillful a tenderness as her sisters daily evince in the ambulance or the hospital; and many a one whom she visited in her daily rounds of mercy thought, like Henri Lacaze, that it was difficult to say whether Sister Genevieve was most like a woman or an angel.

THE END.

## BANQUET TO THE HON. CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY, MONAGHAN.

(From the Ulster Observer.)

On Wednesday evening last a banquet was given to the Hon. Charles Gavan Duffy, in the Western Arms Hotel, Monaghan, by the Lord Bishop of the diocese, the Right Rev. Dr. Donnelly, a large number of the clergy, and of his old associates and well-wishers. The room in which the dinner was served was neatly decorated with evergreens; and the fine band of Mr. Dornan, Belfast, was engaged to enliven the proceedings by the playing of instrumental music. The gaiety and harmony which pervaded the entire company were most agreeable to behold.—Mr. Duffy on arriving in Monaghan was met by a crowd of priests, and of the town and country people. When he alighted from the railway carriage he was most warmly greeted by the assembled priests, and conducted by them to the residence of his Lordship, the Right Rev. Dr. Donnelly.

In the dining hall, at the appointed hour, we found a very large assemblage of the respected clergy and laity of the North. J. C. M'Phillips, Esq., E. Donnelly, Esq., Surgeon Rush, and James Kelly, Esq., acted as stewards.

Before dinner was partaken of, the Lord Bishop said grace, and after the cloth was removed, the Chair was taken by Peter M'Phillips, Esq., merchant, Monaghan. Rev. T. B. M'Elroy, Adm., Monaghan, occupied the vice-chair.

The Chairman proposed the first toast, “The health of the Queen and the Royal Family,” and, in doing so, claimed the indulgence of the company for his inability to perform the task in the manner he would wish. The toast was duly honored, all present standing, and the band playing, “God Save the Queen.”

The chairman next gave “The Hierarchy of Ireland,” coupling with it the name of the Right Rev. Dr. Donnelly (loud cheers).

Song—“I saw from the beacu,” by the Rev. Father M'Callough.

His Lordship, the Right Rev. Dr. Donnelly, on rising to respond was received with loud cheering, he said—“Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen, I thank you most heartily for the distinguished compliment you have paid the hierarchy and clergy of Ireland. That attachment is of old date, and I think the clergy have always merited it (cheers). I hope they shall never forget it (loud cheers). The love of the Catholic people of Ireland for their clergy has been their highest honor and pride, and their consolation in the darkest years of their history (applause.) That union seems the main basis on which must rest any effort to be used towards the political amelioration of this country (cheers). Some may think of other agencies, but I fear the agency that is not founded on this attachment will be only an agency towards ruin and destruction (applause). I do not appear here so much