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THE CAPUCHIN OF BRUGES. IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.—(CONTINUED.)

“Hanged!” In a second his burden was laid on the camp bed, and the sergeant laid prostrate by a blow that would have almost felled an ox.

The guard now interposed; and from them he learned that the party in question had been several times seen to leave the city in defiance of Sir Hardress Waller’s orders. Twice already she had been flogged back, but she came out again, that day, at noon, and was, by the General’s orders, sentenced to execution. The soldier added that an old rebel calling himself her father, when he heard of the sentence, offered himself in her stead; but Sir Hardress ordered him to be instantly flogged back. She was to have been hanged, he continued, at sunset, but she broke loose from them, and ran towards his tent, as he had seen.

“Touch not a hair of her head, on your peril,” exclaimed Herbert, as the corporal concluded, and kissing the pallid lips of his wife, he rushed out of the tent to seek the General, just as returning consciousness revealed to Eily the name of her deliverer.

“Walter, my own dear husband. Oh! come back; don’t leave me!” were the last words he heard, as he flew towards the tent of the commander-in-chief, more like a maniac than anything else.

“By the bones of St. Pancras, he’s either mad or she is,” said a tall weaver from Lumbeth, who wore the badge of a lance corporal.

“Ay is he, and sore wrathful to boot,” replied his rear-rank man, with a grin—he was a butcher from Newgate. “But we are the sufferers, and shall, I fear, be late for supper. The gallows, however is ready to hand, thank God, and we shall make short work of it, when the captain returns.”

The name of God on the lips of such a miscreant, and on such an occasion, makes us almost shudder. But reader, these were Cromwellian times, and such were Cromwellian customs.

Herbert found Ireton and his second in command seated at the supper table—and he could not have unchained two such incarnate demons on that same evening. The object of his visit was soon explained. But it seemed only to supply subject of mirth to his superior officers.

“Pooh, pooh, man,” said the commander-in-chief, “you are, I fear, grown quite a Papist, too soft-hearted entirely. I wonder how you would act, had you been at the *battue* in Drogheda or Wexford?” and Ireton sipped his buck with a devilish leer.

“But, General, she is my wife,” gasped Herbert.

“Folly, man!” replied Waller, “no faith to be kept with heretics, you know, all these Irish are such. You will easily find another, I trust you when we sack the city one of these fine days.”

Herbert heeded not the coarse jest of the speaker, but, turning to the General, implored him to turn a serious to a matter on which the happiness of his life depended. But Ireton seemed inclined to laugh it off as an excellent joke.

Driven to desperation, the brave soldier, who never before feared or superseded any man, sank on his knees, and, with tears of agony, besought him to cancel Waller’s iniquitous sentence. He even asked him to do so in memory of the act by which, at the risk of his own life, he saved him at Naseby. And Ireton seemed almost inclined to relent, and hope began to brighten in the heart of the suppliant, when a whisper from Waller to the General blighted them for ever. He had himself in person given the order for execution, and his callous heart was too obdurate to feel compunction even for a bad act. Summoning an orderly, he gave him some instructions in an undertone; and Herbert was directed by his commander-in-chief to make his report of the progress of the trenches under his command, in the King’s Island. This was but a feint to turn his attention from the main object of his visit. His report was, however, quickly made, and, as there was no other pretext for detaining him, he arose to depart. There was something more than fiendish in the laugh of Hardress Waller, as he wished him safe home, and a good night’s rest.

That night, a heart-broken man knelt beneath the gibbet erected on the green sward, in front of King John’s castle. For him a earthly happiness was now over; and there, in presence of the pale moon that looked silently on his sorrow, that cold October night, he vowed eternal fealty to his wife in heaven, eternal hatred to her murderers. There was a strange admixture of reverence and irreligion, of love and hatred, in the feelings and sentiments, no doubt; but the camp of Cromwell was but an indifferent school for the culture of Christian ethics. Besides, his brain was, for the time, astray from sorrow and outraged feeling; he followed but the dictates of

human passion unrestrained by either reason or religion. His heart and his hopes were already buried in the grave that was soon to close over the remains of his first and only love; and, from that night out, though his life was a long and chequered one, he was never known to smile, till he became an inmate of the monastery where we found him, at the commencement of our narrative.

The remainder of the siege was a blank chapter in his life. By nature a soldier, he got through his duties fearlessly but mechanically, without the slightest feeling of interest in any enterprise in which he had a share. To him defeat or victory was a matter of utter indifference; and it was in this mood he entered the fallen city, as the sun was sinking, on the 27th of October, 1651, and took up his quarters with Ireton, in the old Dutch-gabled house which is still standing; and adjoins the Tholsel in Mary-street. It is more than probable that his reason would have altogether succumbed beneath the terrible shock it had sustained, were it not for some new incident that now occurred to awaken it for a time to activity.

By sunrise, on the 29th, the Cromwellian garrison beat to arms. It was the signal for the assemblage of the Irish troops in the old cathedral of St. Mary’s, where in accordance with the third article of capitulation, they were to lay down their arms. It was not Fennell’s fault that they escaped the fate of the soldiers and women of Drogheda and Wexford. He had done his work of treachery well; and we cannot venture to say what his feelings were when he beheld his brave but ill-fated countrymen assembled round the altar to deposit at its rails the weapons they had so long and so gallantly wielded in the cause of one who was afterwards to despoil their children of their lawful heritage, and sanction its appropriation by the murderers of his father. Ah, no Irishman can ever forget the ingratitude of the second Charles. But Walter Herbert thought little of the ceremony gone through that morning in the old church of the O’Briens, till all was over. As the disarmed garrison marched down the long aisle of the cathedral, many of them dropped dead—it might have been of a broken heart. Among the dead were two whose faces he had not looked on for years—Terence and Donat O’Brien, his wife’s brothers. The sight awakened a new thought within him—that of his child whom he had not yet seen—and but few moments elapsed ere he was standing in front of the old corner house opposite the chapel of St. Nicholas. But it appeared was sadly changed since last he saw it. He looked up into one well-remembered window but no fragrant geraniums were now there, as of old; no lark caroled the cheering song he so often listened to, with pleasure, some nine years before; and balcony, and shutter, and curtain had disappeared. The whole house seemed in mourning. Even his knock rang through the house, as through a sepulchre—so he thought. Twice he repeated it; and, at length, an aged head peered cautiously through a dormer window, and asked who was there. His answer quickly brought down the old domestic; but a flood of tears was her only welcome, as she opened the door and admitted him. She had been the nurse of Eily and her brothers, in childhood, and partly his own, in sickness; and was now the survivor of all her old heart loved; of all, save one, a blue-eyed, curly-headed boy, who now hid behind her, evidently scared at the presence of a visitor in that desolate dwelling. A few words of greeting on the part of old Winny or Winfred, assured him that he was known and welcome; and a few words of fondness addressed to the child soon restored his confidence. He was even, ere long, seated contentedly on his father’s knee, playing with his sword-buckle—for that fair-headed, blue-eyed boy was the only child of Eily O’Brien and Walter Herbert. And as he gazed with pride on his beautiful boy, now hope and a new scene of duty sprang up within him. He felt that there was even yet something to live for. To protect that half-orphan child and his sorrowing grandsire, would from that moment be the sole duty of his life, the solace of existence; and to this he pledged himself in Eily’s little room, to which he ascended with his youthful companion, who, at his nurse’s bidding now called him father, and twined his little hands round his neck as he kissed him. The sudden roll of drums, at length, announced to him that it was time to depart, and, fondly embracing his child once more, he hurried out of the house.—He would never have left it, did he then but know that in so doing he was bidding his boy farewell for ever.

The beating to arms announced the commencement of the mock trial of two dozen individuals, whom Ireton had already virtually sentenced to death, by excluding them from the protection guaranteed to the remaining citizens, in the terms of capitulation. How readily would Herbert have saved every one of them, but his vote was only effective in one case, that of the gallant Hugh O’Neil, the city governor. The

rest were condemned by a majority, to die; and it was not without a tear he beheld that long file of brave and resolute men led forth to the scaffold. Priest and layman, soldier and citizen, were alike sacrificed, and for no crime save that of loving and defending their native land. And what Englishman, thought he, would not readily be guilty of the same offence. All passed silently from the death chamber; all, save one, a venerable old man, who, with Father Woulfe, was arrested in the lazaret-house while administering the last sacraments of the church to its plague-stricken inmates, soon to be deprived of all spiritual ministry. Herbert thought he recognised him as he stood, erect and fearless, in the council-hall, and with hand pointed towards Heaven, surmounting Ireton to meet him, ere a month at its indignant bar. He had certainly seen him before, but dressed in white serge, and not, as now, in purple. Nay, if he remembered rightly, he had been Eily’s confessor, and with the parish clergyman’s permission, had married them privately in the church of St. Saviour, having first obtained a promise, freely granted by Herbert, that the children of that union, if such there were, should be brought up in the religion of the mother. What would he not have done to preserve the life of that venerable, heavenly-looking man! The last of Ireton’s victims was one whose presence among the condemned he witnessed with astonishment. He had seen him cloistered for hours with that same Ireton; and knew him to have been promised lands and money for certain services to be rendered to the general. But treachery was met and repaid by treachery; and Fennell, the traitor, ended his days on the same scaffold with Terence O’Brien, the bishop and martyr.

The last guard was relieved on the day of execution—it was the Eve of All-Hallows—and the clock of the town hall was just chiming midnight, as Herbert, who was the officer of the night, commenced his rounds. As he passed along, in silence and alone, by the Dean’s Close, on his way to the castle barracks, he was suddenly stopped at the head of an arched passage, over which an oil lamp feebly flickered, by an individual closely wrapped up in a large, dark frieze over coat. To draw his sword was his first impulse; but a single glance at that wan face, whose gaze was sadly fixed upon him, changed his purpose in an instant. And, though armed to the teeth, he trembled in presence of that defenceless old man, and stood in silence before him.

“Don’t you know me, Walter?” said the stranger.

“Alas, too well,” was his reply. “But can I hope that you will ever forgive me?”

“My creed tells me to forgive even my enemies—but I believe you never meant to be such!”—and the old man extended his hand to Herbert.

They stood alone—with no eye upon them save that of the all-seeing One, and in His presence Walter fell on his knees, protesting his purity of intention, and asking the old man’s blessing. And Connor O’Brien, for it was he, with head uncovered, blessed the stranger for the first time, and, raising him up, clasped him to his bosom, as his son—the husband of his darling Eily, now sleeping with her mother in Killely.

Herbert was about to respond, with a fervent assurance of his undying love and devotion to her, when the old man stopped him short, and, drawing him into the recess of the bow way, asked him if he might now rely on his friendship and protection.

“Henceforth, as God is my witness,” earnestly replied Herbert, “your interest and mine are but one.”

“Good!” returned his companion. “Then when occasion presents itself, you will procure a pass for myself and a friend in whose safety I feel the deepest interest. For my own life I care not, as I have no one save you and my grandson now remaining to care for.” Then the old man, despite his resolution, sobbed aloud.—“But my friend,” he continued, after a few moments, “cannot yet be spared. We cannot afford to lose him, and it is solely on his account—though he knows nothing of my project—that I have waited here to meet you.”

After some further brief conversation, they parted with a fond embrace—the old man to his friend, and Walter to the barracks. When his watch was ended, he lay down to enjoy, for the first time during many months, a peaceful slumber of many hours.

CHAPTER III.

The 1st of November, 1651, dawned brightly on the old city of Limerick, and its now shattered fortifications—brightly on the brown heath of the Meelick mountains—brightly on the waving woods of Cratloe—brightly on the rapids at the salmon weir, and on the snowy, sails of the English transports at anchor in the pool—brightly on the gory head of Terence O’Brien, Bishop of Emly, impaled on the centre tower of the city—brightly, too, on his murderer Henry

Ireton, as he reviewed the body of troops destined for the siege of Carrigrohilly Castle; for God maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad.”

Ere the sun set, the vanguard of that body had left the Cratloe hills far behind them, on their march westward; and Herbert was second in command of the first division. He was well mounted, and with him rode two peasants thoroughly acquainted with the country, and destined to serve him as guides. Of late his soldiers remarked that he had grown unusually silent and morose, and few of them cared to intrude on him uninvited. Thus it happened that, during the march, he rode considerably in advance, tho’ always within sight of his detachment, with no other companion than the two guides.

With one of them he seemed well acquainted, and the soldiers remarked that he conversed freely with him on the road. The other seemed to speak but seldom, and then only to his brother guide. Thus, however, was no matter of surprise, as it was supposed he spoke in Irish, a language almost utterly unknown to the English commander. And such, in reality, was the fact. Whether he understood English or not, he spoke in his native tongue to O’Brien, who, as the reader may have guessed, was Herbert’s other guide on the evening in question. As they approached Ennis, the old man seemed much excited, alleging, as his reason, that he feared being recognized; but it was not difficult to perceive that his anxiety was more for his companion than himself. They succeeded, however, in reaching their destination, and encamped near Killebera, to await the arrival of the main body from Kilmish. Under pretext of exploring the wild coast of Killee and Farabee, Herbert left the camp at sunrise, attended solely by the individuals who had been his companions on the march from Limerick. He returned alone, however, in the evening; and rumor went abroad that he had been deserted by his guides amid the wild recesses of the coast. This new piece of treachery on the part of the Irish, after being warmly denounced round the Cromwellian camp-fires that night, was forwarded next morning to Limerick, to be faithfully chronicled, with many other facts of like authenticity, in ‘Ludlow’s Memoirs.’ Herbert was too much rejoiced at the escape of his father-in-law and the friend in whom he seemed so deeply interested, to give himself any concern about the camp fire gossip, or Ludlow’s version of the matter.

The next week found him again in Limerick. Sudden news of the alarming illness of the General had reached the camp, and the expedition to the west was, for the time, abandoned. Herbert found his new post a trying one—to keep watch and ward with Hardress Waller, one of his wife’s murderers, beside the dying bed of another. Waller was Ireton’s confidant, the ready instrument of all his infamy; and Herbert was selected by the General to attend him, as the only surviving officer attached to his own regiment since it was first raised in Nottingham, the native county of both. To escape from his post was impossible. Nothing short of suicide could free him from it; and the thought of his little son, if no higher motive, prevented him from putting an end to his existence. Night after night was he doomed to sit by the bed-side of the dying man, and listen to the wild ravings of remorse and blasphemy that, almost every moment, escaped his plague-stained lips. He would start up betimes, and, with the frantic look of a maniac, call for his sword to ward off the fiends that seemed to mock his tortures; and then he would sink back exhausted, still wildly raving of Charles Stuart and Terence O’Brien, the ‘Lord’s’ apostle, as he now called them whom he had murdered. Nay, he would clutch Herbert’s hand, and, with tears, implore his forgiveness.—But Hardress Waller stood there too, and a look from him would again rouse the murder fiend within him. All feeling of compunction would then pass away; and grim despair again lay hold of him. Oh! it was a fearful sight—that death-bed of despairing remorse. It never left Herbert’s memory, and was the commencement of that change that ultimately converted the Puritan soldier into a Christian monk.

Ireton died in his house in Mary street, on the 26th of November, 1651, still ‘raging and raving,’ says the chronicler of the unfortunate prelate, whose unjust condemnation he imagined hurried on his death. Herbert was of the party appointed to guard the remains to England, and, before setting out, hastened to his father-in-law’s house to bring his child with him. But, alas! he found it empty, and not the slightest trace of Winny or the boy. Nor could any one tell him what had become of either. With a bursting heart, he set out with the funeral cortege to Cork, and thence to Bristol, resolved never more to draw sword in Cromwell’s cause. Arrived in London, he delivered up his charge, and at once quitted the kingdom, without waiting for the lying-in-state at Somerset House, or final interment in Westminster Abbey, of Ireton’s plague-

stricken corpse. Though pledged never again to serve in the ranks of the monsters whose atrocities in Ireland made him so often blush for his native country, he could not yet entirely wear himself away from his old profession. After a few months passed in idleness and *exerata* on the continent, during which he vainly tried to forget the loss of his wife and child, he entered the Earl of Bristol’s regiment as a volunteer, and faithfully maintained the cause of King Charles till his restoration. It was when forming part of his body-guard at Lord Tara’s residence in Bruges, where the exiled monarch occasionally resided, that he first met with the Capuchin’s Father, and was by them received into the Catholic Church. With the King he returned to England, but only to have all his sad recollections awakened by meeting once more with his old enemies, Waller and Ireton.

Ireton’s name astonished reader will exclaim, ‘Why, surely, we buried him years ago, and are not expected, we presume, to believe in ghosts, in this enlightened 19th century of ours.’

And yet we must repeat what we have written. On his return to London, Walter Herbert again stood, face to face, with Waller and Ireton—the former with a smile of hypocritical adulation, welcoming the return of him whose father he had aided in murdering—the latter, a hideous spectacle, first dangling on a gallows at Tyburn; and then grimly staring the by-passers—if those sightless sockets could be said to stare—from the highest spike on Westminster Hall. It was a shocking sight to Herbert—that ghastly skeleton, and that ghastly head, and recalled to his memory, with sadness and horror, another but far different head which, ten years before, he saw set up, pallid and blood-stained, on the castle-tower of Ymerick. God is indeed very just, thought he, as he passed on, with a shudder.

On his return to England, Herbert found himself friendless. All his relatives had died, or perished on the battle field, during the civil wars, and of his child there was still no trace. All he could learn was that he had been sent to his grandfather, then resident on the Continent; but where the grandfather resided, there was no means of ascertaining. Tired of England, and the cruelties and perfidies he daily saw endorsed by the sign manual of one who, he imagined, should have learned toleration and honor in the school of affliction—in hopes also of meeting with his child—he quitted his native land for ever, and joined the ranks of the Duke of Lorraine, the old ally and friend of his former commander, the Earl of Bristol. With him and Sir George Hamilton he fought the battles of Spain for eight years; and his last achievement in her service was one of the brightest on record. With a few resolute companions, he held his ground, for two entire days, in the shattered citadel of Cambray, though the battery to which they returned shot for shot was under the personal inspection of Louis XIV., and the renowned hunchback Luxembourg. The bursting of a shell hid him senseless, and when, after a long and painful illness, he was again restored to health, he resolved, to thanksgiving, to devote the remainder of his days to the exclusive service of God, in the convent where he first learned to know him.

During the recital of the foregoing narrative, which, for brevity sake, we have given consecutively, and in our own words, Brother Francis was frequently interrupted by his youthful auditor, as new light was thrown by him on events in his family history which, till then, he had never heard satisfactorily cleared up. He had already learned from his mother, that his grandfather had been an English officer, supposed to have fallen in Cromwell’s wars, though a vague report reached the family that he was seen in Spain after Cromwell’s death. Of his grandmoother, he only heard that she died young, and that her father resided for a considerable time in Brussels, with his grandson, whom, at his death, he bequeathed to the care of the Guardian of St. Antoine’s at Louvain, who was his brother-in-law, and who had brought the boy, when a mere child, from Ireland. He further learned that, after the completion of his studies, and contrary to the wish of his uncle, who intended him for the ecclesiastical state, his father embraced the profession of arms, and, shortly after his marriage, embarked with the French troops sent by King Louis to Ireland. He felt at the siege of Limerick, and his widow died of a broken heart, soon after the intelligence of her husband’s death reached her. He was himself then but a boy, and was placed by his mother’s relatives at the Benedictine college of Duai, whence he passed in due time, like his father, to the ranks, and was then serving, as we have already seen, in the Duke of Vendome’s army.

“But you did not say who the other person was that accompanied you on the march from Limerick to Carrigrohilly, or what became of him or his companion?” resumed the young soldier when he had concluded.

“That remains to this day a mystery to