



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XXIII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JULY 4, 1873.

NO. 46

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THE LIMERICK VETERAN; OR, THE FOSTER SISTERS. BY THE AUTHOR OF "FLORENCE O'NEILL." (From the Baltimore Catholic Mirror.)

CHAPTER X.—THE ESCAPE. For a short time, as the hour of her departure arrived, the courage of the Princess gave way, and burying her face on the bosom of her mother, she shed many bitter tears, with a regretful pang perhaps at the thought that she had resigned her quiet home in Silesia for the dazzling prospect of a crown. However, the die was cast; her pride was piqued at the shameless way in which she had been arrested, and forcing back her tears, the young princess allowed her mother to array her in the hood and cloak of Jeannette, who, for some hours at least, would have to personate herself. Again a sob of anguish as the beautiful head of the fair Clementina once more rested on the neck of her fond mother, and then she tore herself away and accompanied Chateaudan to the gate, he carrying a bundle composed of her jewels and some of the richest of her clothes. Believing her to be only the girl whom he admitted some hours previously, the porter allowed her to pass through unquestioned, and the next moment the Polish Princess, in the darkness of the winter night, found herself without the gates of her prison-house, and fearlessly resigned herself into the hands of strangers, for, with the exception of Wogan, whom she had never seen till he came to her father's court to solicit her hand for the Chevalier, she had never before beheld the companions of her flight. It was past the hour of midnight, the wind howled in hollow gusts, and amidst a tempest of hail and snow so severe that the sentinel on duty had sought shelter in a tavern near at hand, she Princess Clementina groped her way to the corner of the street, where Wogan awaited her coming in a state of the greatest anxiety. "Have courage, your highness," he whispered, as the half-fainting princess clung to him for support. "I hope the worst is over." At that moment the faint sound of carriage wheels advancing through the thickly falling snow struck upon her ear. The equipage contained Mrs. Misset and three gentlemen whom Wogan introduced to her as the companions and attendants of her flight. Safely ensconced in the warm carriage, her wet hood and habit removed, and a large cloak heavily lined with fur thrown over her by Mrs. Misset, and a glass of good wine from a flask produced by her husband, the princess gradually regained her former courage. In order to deceive General Heister if possible for twenty-four hours, the princess, for two days prior to her flight, had kept her bed on pretext of illness, and during the whole of the next day the maid Jeannette was to occupy it in her place, and to screen her mother from the imputation of conniving at her escape, the princess left a letter on her toilet table asking pardon for her flight, on the plea that by all laws, human and divine, she was obliged to follow her husband. The morning light having dawned, revealed

to the travelers a wild and open country, and the carriage stopped for a fresh relay of horses at a small wayside inn. To lull suspicion, Clementina was again arrayed in the serving-maid's attire, and conducted to a warm room, was seated by a large fire and refreshed with the best viands the house afforded, after which she again resumed her journey. The young girl could not, however, suppress a weary sigh as she gazed out on the bleak landscape, the leafless branches of the trees garded with the heavy snow drift, the sky of a leaden hue, the air piercingly cold. "I trust we shall distance our pursuers," said Wogan, at length breaking silence, and wishful to raise the spirits of the princess. "We have been several hours on the road, and the caution of having relays of six horses at every change was wisely adopted. Your highness' flight, too, will scarcely be ascertained for some hours in consequence of your being supposed to be ill." "True, my kind friend," said Clementina. "No one but my gentleman usher would have access to my apartment until eight this morning. Poor Chateaudan, and my dearest mother, and the intelligent girl whom you sent to personate me, I tremble, dear Mrs. Misset, to think how it will fare with them." "They will not be detained, your highness. The bird has flown which your enemies so unjustly imprisoned, and with God's help, though our escape has been fraught with danger, you will soon be safely delivered out of the hands of your persecutors." Well for Clementina Sobieski that she did not live in these days of electric telegraph. The day was far advanced when they changed horses for the third time, and they had intended after traveling some time longer to rest for the night. The state of the roads, bad at all times, was now laden with the heavy snow drift, and their progress became alarmingly impeded. In case of being overtaken by a special courier from Innspruck, Wogan had sent on O'Toole and Misset to a village called Wellishville, and stopping at the chief inn of the place, they called for supper. Benumbed with cold and fatigue, they throw aside their travelling cloaks and seated themselves by a large fire, and O'Toole had just observed to his companion that it was past midnight and the way evidently clear of danger, when, as they sat down to eat, the courier himself entered the room. Like themselves, he was weary and fatigued with the severity of the weather, and O'Toole, glancing significantly at Misset, begged the courier to share with himself and his friend the tempting and smoking viands than on the table. Nothing loth was he to accept the invitation, and his hearty meal was washed down by copious draughts of wine, followed by eau de vie. True is the saying, "that when the wine is in, the sense is out." The courier's speech grew thick and incoherent, and at last his tongue blabbed out his secret, and dealing a heavy blow on the table with his fist, he exclaimed: "I am sent here to intercept the banditti who have carried off the Princess Sobieski. See, gentlemen, here are my despatches." "What say you, Mein Herr?" exclaimed Misset, with an air of well-feigned astonishment, which almost overturned the gravity of the laughter-loving O'Toole. "Is it possible the princess has fled from Innspruck?" "What I have told you is indeed too true," replied the courier. "The English Ambassador is enraged at the carelessness with which the whole affair has been managed. General Heister, who had the custody of the princess, has negligently discharged himself of his duty. She was not missed until eight o'clock this morning. I have ridden all day and all night by a straight route in order that I and my men may intercept the party. The emperor will be much annoyed if this marriage be accomplished. It is well known how he courts the favor of the English." The two Irish gentlemen glanced at each other and then at the despatches which they so ardently longed to obtain; and again and again they filled to the brim the glass of the unfortunate courier till he became so intoxicated that they assisted the inn-keeper in carrying him to bed, having previously purloined the despatches, which they tore to pieces, and after so doing committed the pieces to the flames. They then left the house with the first gleam of daybreak, leaving the helpless courier in a state wholly unfit to travel for at least twenty-four hours. You may well imagine that Wogan and his party made themselves very merry at the success of the enterprise of O'Toole and his companion; in fact, the two had proved themselves mainly instrumental in the fartherance of the escape of the Princess. Many more mishances on the road, caused by the breaking down of their equipage, and unexpected delays arising from horses not being in readiness at places at which they were ex-

pected, at times threatened a fatal issue to the journey; but, save when these accidents occurred, Clementina bore up and charmed her companions by her cheerful, affable disposition. At length, worn out with privation and fatigue they one day reached the confines of the Venetian territories, free from the machinations of the English, and arriving in safety at Bologna the disappointment awaited her of finding James absent on a secret expedition to Madrid. "I will follow him thither immediately," said the poor harassed Princess, "I cannot bear the suspense of awaiting his stay in this strange city, every hour seems like an age." However, the fair Sobieski was open to conviction, and the remonstrances of her friends and, above all, their opinion, that by leaving Bologna she might rush anew into the trouble from which she had but just escaped, and fall into the hands of the agents of George the First, who were on the alert in every quarter, made her determine to remain in privacy till the return of her future husband. The marriage was performed by proxy in the Chevalier's absence, but completed with the customary solemnities immediately on his return. CHAPTER XI.—UNDER THE SAME ROOF TREE. The home of the Marshal St. John and his wife, our old friend the Lady Florence, was not at all unlike that of the saintly Sir Thomas More, the great Chancellor of England. Both the Marshal and his wife were rich. "The poor you have always with you," the Gospel truth uttered by the lips of our Lord Himself was recognized by each of them. St. Germain's abounded with poor people, for it was, in 1690, the chief rendezvous of the Jacobite party, and was still the abiding place of the children, now grown up to manhood, of those who had suffered under the reign of the Dutch monarch. It was in fine the dwelling place of those who, in years yet to come, would again raise the watchword throughout England and Scotland which the Hanoverian dynasty termed rebellion. Like another Sir Thomas More, the Marshal suffered the grey walls of his chateau in the valley to shelter not unfrequently many who sprang not of his race, and of his own abundance the sick and the needy were bounteously assisted. Beneath his roof grew up with his grandson the orphan children Margaret and Isabel. They were regarded as the adopted daughters of the Marshal and his lady. One of these children bids fair to become a beautiful woman, for Margaret's skin is fair as a lily; her features regular and classical in their outline; her eyes, large, dark, and lustrous, are veiled by long silken lashes; her form tall and slender. Young as she is, she has already learned to assume an air of domineering importance over the fair, timid little girl who, as yet, can boast no charms beyond her soft blue eyes and golden hair. Her features, unlike those of her foster-sister, are irregular; her mouth too large to be pretty; her form angular and awkward; yet without there is a pleasing expression in her plain face, and she may develop later into a passable fair woman, when time shall have rounded mayhap the at present ungainly form, and increasing age give the features an air of due proportion; they are far too large at present to be in keeping with the childish face. She is shy and quiet, with a strong childish love in her little heart for the only friends she has ever known, the good Marshal and his wife. A beautiful boy, nearly of the same age as the little girls, is their companion. He appears a perfect little Hercules beside these children; soft curls of rich brown hair fall over his shoulders; his hazel eyes are full of intelligence, and he seems to affect more the society of Margaret than that of the timid little girl, who has meekly submitted to be cast aside as it were when the imperious Margaret willed it should be so. Margaret, too, is clever beyond her years. She seems intuitively to take in the instruction she receives without difficulty to herself. Isabel is rather less intelligent, but what she lacks in talent she will make up for in perseverance. She plods patiently over the same task assigned to Margaret, and looks wistfully at her companion's gambols, but she will not lay her book aside, or think of joining them till she too has accomplished her task. Such a child as this will make a patient heroine should her path be strewn with thorns rather than flowers. The honest nurse, formerly the Widow Regan, still holds that post in the Marshal's household. Both children had drawn their nurture from the same breast, but the foster mother yielded up her heart to little Isabel, the first poor wail that had been put under her care. "Mark those children," said the Lady St. John to her daughter-in-law, as she looked forth from the open windows of a pleasant morning-room on that lady's little son and the two orphans. Margaret, the first in every sport the bolder boy suggested, Isabel timidly

standing by his side, seeming to be with them but not of them. She always lingered near the boy, as if in a manner craving his help. "That child Margaret reminds me always of some little elf," said the younger lady. "Clever and beautiful undoubtedly, but she will require careful training, young as she is. Nothing gives her greater pleasure than to throw Isabel into the shade." "Nurse entertains almost a positive aversion for the child," remarked Lady St. John. "I tell her it is very wrong, for Margaret is so young as to be scarcely responsible. I wish my dear old friend, Grace Wilmot, were not too old to be plagued with a wayward child, I would put Mistress Margaret under her charge at once." "Grace, dearest madam," said the old lady, who happened to be within-hearing, "is not that far gone but that she can instruct Miss Margaret how she should demean herself.—Nurse told me but yesterday that she is fast becoming a most mischievous little sprite in daring, far exceeding Madame's son, and so vain and haughty withal that there is no bearing the place with her. As to Miss Isabel, young as Margaret is, she makes her ever the butt of her childish sarcasm." "You will oblige me, then, dear Grace, if you will resume the post of preceptress a few hours daily, which you have never held since my dearest Beatrice died. I will tell both the children that they are to yield you an implicit obedience." On the evening of the day on which Grace, with her seventy years over her head, agreed again to resume duties so long abandoned, she communicated the wishes of Lady Florence to the nurse. The features of Grace, erst the handmaiden of the court beauty of Queens Mary Stuart and Mary Beatrice, then her companion and her friend and confidant, had undergone but little change from the hand of time. It is strange, but nevertheless true, that oftentimes the features of a really plain person wear better than those cast in a softer mould. Rugged and hard of lineament in youth and middle age, they had rather softened as years passed on, whilst her always fine eyes had lost nothing of their brightness. Her figure was erect as a dart; her hair, white as silver, was laid in smooth bands under her coat. She was, as when I first presented her to you, a silent, reserved woman, commanding the respect, if not the love, of all who came within the range of her influence. Severe she was to herself, but kind and lenient to others, and she was the trusted friend of the Marshal and his wife, as well as of the wife of their son. It was a pleasant summer evening. Through the leafy woods you could discern the towers of the palace of St. Germain's. It was now untenanted, for the beloved friend and mistress of Lady Florence had passed to her eternal rest. The hedges team with wild flowers, which send up a balmy fragrance on the air, and the nightingale is warbling its most plaintive note. "It is time the children should be put to bed," said nurse, when Grace had made known the wish of the Lady St. John. "I can hear their voices in the garden but cannot see them. I will ring the bell for the maid to bring them up. But I was after saying, Mrs. Wilmot, I wonder if that child Margaret does come of good stock? My good man Denis found her in a lonesome hut in a Scottish glen. A dying woman had the wee thing in her arms. There was a bit of paper, 'his true, saying she was the child of one Mr. Lindsey, but that is all that is known about the proud little miss, who gives herself such airs over me, her own foster-mother, that while I cannot do with her at all. She were but a few weeks old when she was picked up, as a body may say. The woman who had charge of her was a poor starvin body, and the place very lonesome. 'Twas my boy Denis who saved the child's life; he wrapped it up in his cloak, carried it to the Marshal, and asked him to let him bring it to me to give it suck. He is a jewel, Mrs. Wilmot; one of the best boys that ever lived; a fancy a great fellow like he is walking to the Marshal's lodgings with a wee bit baby in his arms, after watching all night by a dyin woman, and asking love to rear the child as his own, and thin he brings it me and puts it alongside dear Miss Isabel for the breast; it was on that morning that my dear boy made me the happy woman by askin me to take him for my husband; and sure it was disappointed my poor boy was when the Marshal said he would adopt the child and bring it up as his own, and"— At that moment both the nurse and Grace started, for they fancied they heard a movement behind them. "Bless me, what was that noise? I'm sure I thought something moved," said nurse, who was rather given to be superstitious, "and sure everything looks quite ghostly now. The moon has risen; I must ring again: Annette is late with those children."

Just then, however, the prattle of little voices was heard, and Edward St. John and Isabel bounded into the nursery. "Where is Miss Margaret?" exclaimed nurse. "I have been a long while looking for the young lady," said the bonne; "she is very mischievous and naughty; I thought she might have got to the nursery before me." "Strange; where can she be?" said nurse. "However, do you hear the children say their prayers, and prepare them for bed, and I will go and seek after her." Neither Grace nor nurse were mistaken when they thought they heard a movement near them. Had they turned round a moment sooner, they would have seen a little white face, shaded by curls of jet black hair, peering in upon them through the half-opened nursery door. The child stood as one spell-bound. She had run away from the other children and escaped to the nursery first; and hearing her own name mentioned, with a curiosity from which older persons are often not exempt, she paused to listen. Her features grew rigid as the words of her foster-mother fell on her ear, and she clasped her tiny hands upon her heart as if she would still its wild throbbing. From that night young Margaret's new life began. She was already old in proud and passionate feeling when the painful revelation so mortifying to the child's self-love was concluded. She stole away to her bed-room quite alone, took off her clothes herself with a marvellous rapidity, pushed back the mass of rich hair which fell over burning temples, and by the light of the moon made her way to the small white-curtained bed destined for her use and placed opposite to that of Isabel. She feigned to be asleep when, after a long and fruitless search, nurse came to examine the bed-room, though with little or no hope that she should find her there. "You are very naughty, Miss Margaret," said nurse, on discovering her in bed. "You give me no end of trouble, and I shall complain of you to Lady St. John. To undress yourself sure, and go to bed without saying your prayers, and all your nice clothes laying on the ground, too." But nurse met with no reply, and drawing down the bed-clothes a little lower, found the little girl asleep as she believed. "A strange child—a strange child," she went away muttering to herself. "One would almost think 'the good people' had brought a little elf of their own to the hut in which my boy Denis found her." The pale moonbeams cast a sickly light athwart the chamber, the little Isabel had been placed in bed and had long since fallen asleep, nurse and Grace had descended to the lower apartments, and a dead silence reigned in the upper stories of the large old building. Time crept on, the old clock in the turret struck the hour of eleven, and one by one of the various sleeping apartments were closed as the household retired for the night. But there was one who kept silent and dreary watch, over whose young head scarce ten summers had passed away, one who, in the hours that intervened between night and morning, had merged at once, in thought, and feeling, and passion, from childhood to womanhood, who had bridged over the flowery season of childhood and early youth. But the chasm had left a frightful void in her young heart, and when twenty summers shall have made a woman of Margaret Lindsey, she will neither think nor feel with greater intensity than on this terrible night; her proud and haughty nature will not be one iota colder and haughtier than at present. Like a wren spectre sits the child by the lattice casement, looking out on the still landscape lighted up by the silvery moonbeams, the tiny hand is placed on the burning brow, and ever and again she speaks half aloud. "Found in a hut! Was not that what she said? Yes, I remember it well; and that Denis, her husband and the Marshal's servant, was going to bring me up as his child. His child, indeed! Why, I am a gentleman's child." And here the small hand was clenched so that the nails penetrated within the tender palm. "Found in a hut!—My mother must have been very poor, then. And she, that ugly Isabel, she is the daughter of the Marshal's friend, for they all say that. And why was I born poor and saved from death by a serving-man any more than she?" and as she spoke she darted an angry glance at the sleeping occupant of the bed beside her. "They tell me I am a proud and haughty child, and it is good to be humbled, and so Madame Wilmot is to be put over me, and—oh, I wish I was a woman; I would!" At that moment the little girl's colloquy was cut short by the appearance of a large bat, which flapped its huge wings against the case-