



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XIX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 6, 1869.

No. 52.

THE MASTER OF LISFINRY.

From "Legends of the Wars in Ireland," by Robert Dwyer Joyce, M.D.

CHAPTER III.

It was broad daylight when the Orphan of Barna awoke; and there, sitting upon the path, she beheld a small, handsome man, with a gittern, or guitar, across his knee, other extraordinary-looking paraphernalia around him, and a young, pale woman beside him, who seemed to be his wife.

When the orphan had answered all, and told the circumstances of her situation, as well as the cold and terror would allow her, the young woman turned to her husband, and began to hold a short consultation with him.

"I think, Jamie Bell," said she, "we have fallen upon a good chance. Since our sweet child died, there is no one to dance to thy gittern, or jangle the blithe tambour, save myself; and I am now, as thou knowest, ill able to do it."

Jamie Bell was one of those itinerant jugglers, or gleemen, who, at that time, roved about in England from shire to shire, seeming to own no locality as their resting place. Jamie's genius, however, seemed to have been somewhat disregarded in England; so, leaving his native country with his wife, he had landed in Waterford some time previous; and now, rambling about through the English-inhabited towns along the coast, he was doing a most flourishing business.

"Yes," answered Jamie, "we cannot do better than adopt her as our own. Besides she has now no friends that we can find; and were we to take her back, and the wild Irish of that country to find her with us, truly we should stand the blame, and the deep dungeon or the gallows tree would be our guerdon for saving her. We will keep her, Lucy."

"Wouldst thou like," said Lucy, turning to the child, "wouldst thou wish, my pretty dear, to come along with us? and we will give thee brave spangled dresses, and that pretty tambour yonder to play upon."

The orphan only nestled closer to the breast of the gleeman's wife; but she answered nothing.

"The dress of our own pretty Maud—poor dear Maud!—will suit her," said Lucy; and with that she directed her husband to open a box beside him, from which she took a small, light-colored but comfortable dress, in which she quickly arrayed the young Orphan of Barna. Lucy now clipped the long, bright locks of the little orphan; so that in the strange dress, and the strange company she was in, it would be impossible to recognize her.

For three years the Orphan of Barna rambled from town to town with the gleeman and his wife, during which time she grew more beautiful day by day, and got to play upon the gittern and tambour with unwonted skill, and to do all other things pertaining to the office of a glee maiden. One day, Jamie Bell, his wife, and the orphan were showing off some of their performances before the admiring eyes of the English soldiers, in the courtyard of one of the garrisons in Waterford. The young lady of Barna was deucing to the tune of Jamie's gittern, when the wife of one of the officers, passing in, stepped to have a view of the performance. After looking at the child, the lady, who was accompanied by her husband, approached Lucy.

"I want a maiden, such as you child, to wait upon me," said she. "Wilt thou let her stay with me? or is she thy daughter? for methinks she bears no resemblance to thy countenance or that of thy husband."

Jamie, who overheard this conversation, before his wife could answer, came forward. He was, it appears, in great distress, and under some pecuniary misfortune at the time; and now a thought occurred to his mind that he could easily remedy all.

"She is not our daughter, lady," said he. "We rescued her from death at one time; and as she was an orphan, with no one to keep her, we kept her, and brought her up, as thou seest. We will give her to thee. What, lady, wilt thou give us in return for her?"

Half a dozen broad gold-pieces easily satisfied the conscience of Jamie; but not so his wife, who, with many tears and lamentations, saw the orphan, weeping bitterly also, led into the garrison by the officer and lady.

About two months after this, while Jamie the gleeman was spreading his fame in the city of

Kilkenny, his wife took sick and died. With her last breath, she adjured Jamie to go and get back the little lady of Barna; and represented to him, as an incitement, the assistance she would be to him in his avocation. Jamie promised, although he had but a very slight notion of refunding the gold-pieces, to get back the child; but in a few days he began to feel the misery of being quite alone in the world. So, in a fit of desperation, Jamie set off for Waterford, and flourished so well as he went by the various towns, villages, and castles, that, on reaching his destination, he found his pockets so plentifully supplied, that, without many avaricious qualms, he could easily give back the money he received from the officer's lady. But it seems it was far easier to give the money than to get back the young orphan; and the sad reality was demonstrated in a most summary manner to poor Jamie on his demand for breaking up the bargain.

He was taken up as an imposter, and put in the stocks before the gate of the fortress. All day long, during every moment he could recall his mind from such harsh treatment, and the scoffs and jeers of the soldiers and passengers, Jamie sat planning how he could repay them for the indignity. He was set at liberty in the evening, and the next day concealed himself by the side of a little green below the ramarts of the castle, where the children of the officers were in the habit of playing. About noon, to his great joy, he beheld the young lady of Barna coming out with some children; and, unobserved by the others, he beckoned to her. She knew him at once, and came joyfully to him; and the sweetness of Jamie's tongue was such, that she consented to accompany him, and to leave the fortress, of which she seemed heartily tired. They were both soon beyond pursuit, and thus once more the Orphan of Barna was leading the wandering life of a glee maiden.

CHAPTER IV.

It is now time to return to the Master of Lisfinry, whom we left so sorely wounded in his bed. After the departure of the monk, he dozed away into a quiet sleep but awoke at intervals during the night; for his wounds were now becoming much more painful than during the time elapsing immediately after their infliction. Whenever he awoke, he was sensible, by some light stir or breathing, of the presence of the young girl in the room; and the feeling that he was tended and watched by such a handsome nurse made his hours of sleeping and waking sweeter till the morning. Then the bright light streamed in, and, waking fully, he looked around; but the young girl was gone, and in her place stood the master of the house, the worthy Hugh Walsh himself, with his portly and good-natured wife.

"Sir knight," said Hugh, "after the battle, my lord, the Desmond, did me the high honor of directing that you should be sent to my house, as you were too weak to be removed. I trust that you have found the humble attendance that we were able to give, pleasing, and that you will soon be strong, and able to do the deeds pertaining to a gallant knight again."

"I trust so, too," said the smiling dame. "The bed, mayhap, is rather hard for the comfort of your worship; but it is even softer than Father Gerald would allow you, after binding up your wounds."

"My worthy host and hostess," answered the knight, "I feel as delectable as man can in such a case. As for the pains that trouble me now and then, it is not the fault of the bed or of the nursing I have got, but of fortune and my wounds. But I trust I shall soon be well; and, as Master of Lisfinry, I shall not forget the kind nursing I am receiving under your roof."

Day after day the Knight of the Red Plume continued under the kind nursing of Hugh Walsh and his wife, and the lovely Margaret, and at length became strong enough to arise and move about, without, however, leaving the precincts of his room. It was now nearly a month after the taking of the town; and he was sitting in his room, thinking of some preparations, for on the morrow he was to leave his kind nurse, and proceed to the Castle of Lisfinry, from which the Earl of Desmond had but lately departed with his retainers in order to take up his abode in another castle. The town of Youghal was now in possession of a garrison left there by the earl; and everything was going on as quietly in its streets as though the crash and clamor of war had never rung along its fortifications, or echoed in its mansions. As the knight sat thus thinking the image of the sweet girl who had nursed him so well during his illness continually arose in his mind; and, in spite of himself, a feeling of fondness and tenderness (which he could not, but many would, call love) began to grow in his heart, as he thought of her unremitting and devoted attention to him,—in spite of himself; for how could he, a high-born knight, think of loving a girl, who, however beautiful, was lowly born, and, according to the precepts of those times, unfit to mate with any of his class, proud noblemen who looked often down with scorn on those

of humbler birth, however wealthy? Still, he thought he saw something noble about the young Margaret Walsh, in her features, in her bearing, and in her actions. In this mood of mind he was, when, towards sunset, the oft recurring subject of his thoughts entered the room, and sat down—her usual way of keeping him occupied in conversation—on a low chair near him.

"My pretty Margaret," exclaimed the knight, "time, no matter how sweet and delightful, must have an end. We part to-morrow; but, though it will and must be a long parting, the memory of your kindness shall remain with me wherever my fate leads me."

"Sir James," said Margaret, looking up into the face of the knight with an innocent but concerned look, "the kindness,—if I may call it so,—the kindness I have shown was but befitting from me, the daughter of the Desmond's most favored servant, to a kinsman of the Desmond. But I fear me about your going in your present weak state; and there are strange rumors in the town, of hostile ships being seen sailing along the coast, and of another siege of the town by the English forces from Waterford."

"Ha!" exclaimed the knight, "they dare not. The Desmond is too strong in this territory at present; and it must be some merchant vessels the idle loons in the town have magnified into war galleys."

The night had now fallen upon the town, and Sir James of Lisfinry and Margaret were still conversing; when, all at once, they heard the boom of a cannon from the direction of the harbor. This was followed by a confused murmur and stir in the town: then came the booming of many cannons again, and the rattle of musketry; and no doubt was left upon the knight's mind, that the English had made a descent upon the town, and were determined to have it by storm. The knight had not left his room since he first entered it, and was still so weak that he found himself unable to descend the stairs unassisted; and his mind chafed within him to think that he should sit there, an idle listener to the contest, and be incapable of rendering any assistance to the garrison. Hugh Walsh himself now made his appearance, in the greatest perturbation, and said that the English had indeed returned under Capt. White, one of the most zealous leaders on the side of the queen, and had, whether by treachery or bravery he could not say, actually entered the town, and driven out the garrison. He said that the knight's only chance of safety consisted in his allowing himself to be removed with all possible speed, and concealed in a small apartment he had prepared for the purpose. The knight assisted by Hugh Walsh and his brisk young squire, was soon settled in his place of concealment, a small room at the extreme back of the merchant's storehouse, and from which a diminutive window looked out on a narrow street called the Sword-bearer's Close. Youghal was once more in the possession of the English.

After a few days, however, every thing went on quietly, with the exception of a little pillage on the part of the conquerors; but they now kept such a sharp watch at the gates and on the walls, that it was impossible for the knight to make his escape. So he was fain to content himself with his little prison, as he called it, and the society occasionally of the honest Hugh and his wife, but more frequently of the young and winning Margaret.

Day by day the thoughts of the knight dwelt more and more continually upon the loveliness and engaging manners of the young girl. The voice of reason often called back his mind from those day-dreams to the plain reality of the case; but the knight was young; and, at his age, the voice of the heart is more willingly listened to than the more matter-of-fact warnings of reason. So, by slow but sweet degrees, he fell in love, and got to think upon his beautiful young nurse with other thoughts than those with which he regarded her on his first entering the little chamber in Hugh's dwelling.

CHAPTER V.

It was now three weeks after the entrance of the English. The Sword-bearer's Close was the abode of a number of the prettiest girls in the town, and, in consequence of this delightful fact, became the resort of several of the young soldiers from the garrison. One day, while the knight and Margaret Walsh were conversing in little room, some disturbance arose outside in the Close. Margaret was taking a hasty look through the little window at what was passing, when a young corporal, who was in the crowd, turning suddenly round, caught her eye, and, thinking himself the sole and undivided object of her attention, put on a most amiable and engaging look, left the throng, and swaggered, with the air of a youthful Alexander, several times up and down before the window. Margaret immediately drew back, and saw no more of the amorous corporal for that day. But the next morning he was there again, with his steel cap, back-and-breast, and all his other accoutrements burnished up with an unwonted degree of care.

But this time, not contenting himself with a useless perambulation along the street, he came over, and gave a glance of his enamoured eyes through the little window into the chamber of the knight, and was rewarded for his devotedness by catching a glimpse of the lovely Margaret inside. Fortunately, the knight was sitting in a corner which was not visible to the gay corporal; but on seeing Margaret cast herself with a frightened countenance into the opposite corner, and on inquiring the cause of her trepidation, she told him of the insinuating face at the window, and warned him to be on his guard. The knight, however, in spite of the warning, started up and approached the window; but the soldier was gone. Early on the same evening, the knight was sitting alone in his narrow room, and thinking on his situation in a rather unpleasant frame of mind, when the coaxing face of the corporal appeared once more, peering in at the window. It was an ill-starred moment for both; for the Master of Lisfinry rendered irritable and over-hasty by the sickness of his wounds, and unable to bear the troublesome curiosity of the corporal any longer, seized a small iron weight that accidentally lay beside him, and, flung it with his utmost force at the forehead of the unfortunate gazer, stretched him, bleeding and senseless, upon the rough pavement outside. Some of the corporal's comrades, making their appearance at the moment, created a tremendous disturbance on his account; at which an officer, with a guard of soldiers, was ordered down from the garrison in order to investigate the matter. The result was, that Hugh Walsh's house and premises were searched, and, as a matter of course, pillaged, and the knight's place of concealment found. The door was instantly forced in; but the Knight of Lisfinry was not at all disposed to give himself peaceably into the hands of his enemies; and so the first man that entered received six or eight inches of steel beneath his corselet, and fell, mortally wounded, beside the doorway. Several now rushed in; but the foremost, after a few cuts and parries, got a slash of the knight's sword, which went sheer through the bars of his basnet, or helmet, terribly wounding him along the face, and stretching him upon the prostrate body of his comrade. The knight now retreated to the opposite corner of the room, determined to die where he stood, and still keeping a clear space around him with the sweep of his long sword.

"Yield thee, sir knight, or whatever we may call thee," said the officer of the guard, "yield thee, or we shall cut thee to pieces where thou standest, or else set fire to the house, and burn thee to cinders with the worthless rebel caitiff who concealed thee."

The latter part of this threat, namely, the burning of the premises of Hugh Walsh, with the body of the worthy burgess himself, had far more effect upon his mind than the first clause; so, giving up his sword to the officer, he was marched out of his place of concealment, and lodged quietly in the strongest dungeon of the fortress. There he had ample leisure to think over the impropriety that heroes and heroines, captives, prisoners, and all others in similar situations, are guilty of in giving way to their passions, whether of rage or sorrow, instead of sagely and peaceably musing, countermusing, and plotting their escape; and there we shall leave him for a time to ruminate over his misfortunes.

It was in the beginning of autumn. The English had held the town in their possession for somewhat more than a month, when once more the fierce war-cry of the Irish resounded along the walls; for the Seneschal of Imokilly, with all the warlike inhabitants of that and the surrounding districts appeared suddenly from the woods, and surrounded the fortifications on all sides.—This time, no herald was sent to summon the garrison to surrender. On came the Irish in long lines and thick masses, and, filling the deep ditches with their fascines of brushwood, gallantly scaled the ramparts, amidst a storm of cannon-balls and small shot. The walls were well manned; but the English, despite their bravery, were soon driven off the ramparts of the castle, and from that to the seaward gate of the town, where they rallied their numbers, and made a last and gallant stand.

It was just at this moment that the Master of Lisfinry heard the sound of a couple of heavy battle-axes breaking in his prison-door, which feat was soon accomplished; and Hugh Walsh, his shopman, and Gerald the monk, stood before him.

"Sir knight," said Hugh, "we are free once more; for the seneschal has made good his oath that he would take the town; and has burst over the walls, and driven the English to the sea-gate. Take this," continued Hugh, giving the knight a long, heavy sword. "They rally there under the protection of their guns from the harbor, and I fear me, will regain the castle again." The knight took the sword, and, rushing from the castle, put himself at the head of a body of

Irish who were beginning to refresh themselves after the battle with a little pillage. "Lisfinry, Lisfinry aboo!" yelled his new followers; for they recognized him in a moment. They soon reached the sea-gate; and there the knight indemnified himself so well for his long inactivity, that the English were in a short time cut to pieces almost to a man.

CHAPTER VI.

It was evening. The knight accompanied Gerald the monk as he went about along the streets and ramparts, applying remedies to the wounded, and shriving those that were upon the point of death. As they crossed down a narrow street, they beheld a dying man before them, with his head resting on a small tambour, and a broken gittern in fragments beside him.

"Sir monk," said the prostrate man, "I fear me I am about to die. Wilt thou hear what I have to say, and shrive me for my misdeeds? Quick quick, for my moments are numbered," he continued as a gush of dark blood burst forth from his wounded breast.

The monk bent down and heard his confession, and was about to move away in the direction of another group of the wounded and dying, when the man, by a sudden effort, raised himself into a sitting posture, and desired him to remain.

"Take this," he said, putting a small gold locket into the monk's hand; "this I found around the neck of a young child that I discovered, ten years ago, in the forest of Slabh Gua."

"How?" exclaimed the monk greatly agitated, his mind reverting in a moment to his lost niece. "How came she in the forest? and by what name did she call herself?"

"She called herself Margaret of Barna," answered Jamie Bell; for it was he. "We brought her up, I trust, kindly, as we would our own child. My wife died; and, about two years after, I fell into a lingering sickness myself, and was unable to support the child any longer. I came to Youghal in order to take ship for my own bonnie Lincoln, and met a kind merchant standing with his wife at their door. I begged them, for the sake of Him who died for us all, to keep the little girl till I could come back and take her with me to England; and they, although they thought she was my daughter, in the kindness of their hearts took her in, and promised to give her a home. Hugh Walsh, I mind it well, was the kind merchant's name. I came back for the bonnie child; and, woe is me! I shall never see her blithe face again."

The gleeman was sinking gradually during his story; and, at the last words, his head fell suddenly back upon his beloved tambour, his legs were drawn up, and jerked out with a quick spasm; and the monk, bending low to help him in his extremity, found that he was dead.

"Sir James of Lisfinry," exclaimed the delighted monk, turning to the knight, who, the while, was standing at a little distance, "I can tell thee blithe news that, from what I have many times noticed during thy illness, thou art far more concerned in than, perchance, thou wottest. My wanderings are ended. I have found the lost child of my poor brother of Barna!"

"How," exclaimed the knight, a wild and delightful suspicion flitting through his mind,— "how hast thou found her? and how am I concerned in her discovery, more than befits a knight and a distant kinsman?"

"Margaret, Margaret thy kind and pretty nurse," said the monk, "is not the adopted daughter of the good merchant, Hugh,—she is my niece, the young lady of Barna!"

The monk now quickly explained all to the knight, and continued, "Thou lovest her, sir knight; and I could see from her bearing towards thee that she loves thee, too, well and truly. She is an orphan, but the daughter of a brave knight, and will have her father's district of Barna. Yet methinks she can nowhere find a braver protector or a fonder husband than the young Knight of Lisfinry."

It were long to tell the wise saws, maxims, and congratulations of Hugh Walsh and his portly wife, when the monk and knight proceeded to their house, and explained all. It may be pathetic and amusing, but at the same time it is now needless, to dilate upon the love meeting of Margaret the Orphan of Barna with her Knight of the Red Plume, and to tell the blithe rejoicings and brave pageants on their marriage-day. Suffice it to say that they loved well and lived happily, as I pray, O sweet reader! thou mayest live, till thou findest blissful rest in the common home of all human pilgrims.—End.

WHY I LEFT THE VOLUNTEERS.

"Then I'll resign," said I. "Very well," said he, "you can do as you please."

And now, having repeated two sentences which have been running in my mind ever since they were uttered; I will try to tell how it was that I came to make so decided a remark. It is