VOL. XIV.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 1863.

No. 2.

THE HERMIT OF THE ROCK.

A TALE OF CASHEL.

BY MRS. J. SADLIER.

CHAPTER XXII. - THE COUNTESS OF EFFING-HAM.

One of the last days of July was drawing to a close, when Harriet Markham sat with old Bryan on the steep brow of the Rock of Cashel, looking drearily out on the far-stretching landscape, where the blue mists of evening were coming up from the spacious plain and the rich holmes by the silvery Suir, and the far-off moun tain valleys. The old man had been telling her some of the old-time legends she loved so well to hear, and the charm of their wild romance was diffusing itself like the shadowy mist over the fair scene below and the solemn ruins around .-It was no uncommon thing for Harriet to find herself alone with old Bryan on the lonely Rock. at the solemn hour when night begins to weave her spell of awful silence; at that charmed hour she most loved to hear the hermit tell of " the sainted men of old," whose memory lingers round the runed fanes of Cashel, where their mortal bodies returned to dust. The monotonous tone of the old man's feeble voice had such an effect on her sensitive mind as the hum of bees, the falling of water, or the rustling of leaves; there was a ghostly sound, too, in its hollowness that was inexpressibly solemn, reminding the bearer that it, too, would soon be lost in the everlasting silence of that place of death-it, too, would speedily join the voices of the past, to be heard no more of mortal ear. It was a dead voice issuing from living lips, and that fully as much from Bryan's constant habit of self-commune, and his intimate association with the dead, as from the weight of years that was bending him earthward.

That particular evening he had been talking more even than usual, and Harriet, intent on listening, forgot the long walk she had before ber, nor heeded the gathering shades. All at once Bryan started, turned his head in the dianxiously.

What's the matter, Bryan?' said the young hear anything?"

, Why, then, I did, Miss Markham !- didn't were free!"

'I cannot say I did.'

Well, I did-I heard the gate opened and shut-very easy, like-if you wouldn't be afraid that you came here to insult me?' Miss Markham, I'd go and see if any one came

"Well, I don't think I should be afraid to remain here, said Harriet simling, but I have already staid too long, so I shall accompany you to the gate, and be so far on my way.'

Very good, Miss Harriet, and after I have taken a look around I'll go with you down the road.

They had only gone a few yards, and were still in the shadow of the Cathedral wall, when Bryan, with a sort of stifled cif, darted off in another direction, and Harriet was left alone .-Wondering at Bryan's sudden disappearance, she stood looking after him, when a voice, a start and exclamation of terror, she saw before commissioned me to do her a stately figure with hand outstretched to

it, indeed, you?' 'That is to say,' said the musical voice in you in person !--which Harriet could not be mistaken, 'that is to say, am I Lord Effingham in the flesh, or only in

is my hand?

lordship here?-when did you arrive?

About half an hour ago.? 'And you left-left them all so soon ?- why, really my lord! I am so surprised - so astonished! - do pray excuse me !-but you here of all people-when I thought you in England?'

Here old Bryan approached at full speed, talking audibly to himself about the noise he had smiled with strange meaning. heard, and wandering who it was that made it. Harriet caught his arm suddenly, and gasping. He was steering right for the spot where he had looked up in his face. My lord, did I hear Lord Effingham, and started back in amazement, ham? whereat the Earl laughed good-humoredly, and Harriet said --

'Do not fear, Bryan! it is Lord Effingham

back from England !

'Lord Effingham!' repeated Bryan, and his bald brow and thin white locks were instantly 'Lord Effingham! mercy on us! was it him opened the gate there now?'

'It was not, my friend, it was the Reverend Mr. Goodchild who accompanied me. There venture in Switzerland? he is,' pointing to the goodly figure of the par-

would you have the goodness to entertain him a few moments while I speak with your friend, Miss Markham?

Bryan looked a little surprised, but he said very politely, 'With all the pleasure in life, my lord! but he's a mighty quare ould chap that same Mr. Goodchild, or Badchild, or whatsomever he is. And away he posted to meet the chaplain.

'Miss Markham! said the Earl, 'I should like to say a few words to you before we return to the Castle. Will you honor me with your attention?

'Certainly, my lord!' Harriet replied, as calmly as she could, wondering much the while what Lord Effingham could possibly wish to say to her at such a time, and in such a place. She took his offered arm, and they moved on a few paces to an open spot where the moonlight slept in hallowed sheen on the tombs and headstones and the long dank grass waving so mournfully in the gentle breeze. Bryan and the chaplam were still in sight but not within hearing. With a beating heart Harriet waited, but as if to break a silence that embarrassed her, she said:

'I hope, Lord Effingham! that it was not in search of me you came hither at such a moment ?-I should feel quite ashamed if I thought

'Feel ashamed, then !' said the Earl gayly, for much as I admire these noble ruins, it was certainly not to visit them that I left the Castle almost immediately after reaching it.2

'And-the Countess ?- what will she think ?' said Harriet more and more puzzled.

Lord Effingham smiled, and answered somewhat evasively, . I did not wait to ask ber opinion-at a future time I will. But time presses, my dear Miss Markham! and I must seize the moment so happily afforded me, to speak to you on a subject thas will perhaps surprise you.' He paused a moment, then quickly resumed-'I have proposal of marriage for you.

'For me, Lord Effingham !- A proposal of marriage for me?

'Yes, for you!-but why tremble so?-you are pale too, - is it, then, so formidable a thing rection of the gate, and appeared to listen to be asked in marriage, and for one who will, I am sure, devote his whole life to make you happy? One who knows and loves you as the heart lady, a little startled by his manner; 'did you can love but once—as I should have cone,' he at second-hand.' said in a lower tone, ' had fate so willed it that I

> 'Lord Effineham !' said Harriet, withdrawing her arm quickly, while the blush of wounded modesty rose to her cheek, 'am I to understand

> 'Assuredly not, Miss Markham! were I canable of insulting any lady, or wounding her delicacy, it would be strange, indeed, if I pitched on you, and that, too, when I come commissioned to offer you the hand and heart, rank and fortune of my best and dearest friend?

But who is that friend, my lord?' said Harriet haughtily; 'I know of no friend of your loved and lost one?' fordship's who could possibly pretend to my hand and heart,-rank and fortune have I none!

'And vet so it is,' said Lord Effingham; 'I is neither old nor ugly, stands in good repute peet no more. amongst his fellows, and, finally, has both rank familiar voice spoke near her, and turning with a and fortune to lay at your feet, which he has

' And why you, my lord ?-why not bimself?' That he will explain at the first opportunity, 'My lord-Lord Effingham, you here ?-or is but there are certain reasons which debar him, for the present, from the happiness of addressing

'If he loves me, as your lordship says, he may find it no very great happiness to address me in spirit!-compose yourself, my dear Miss Mark- person. I cannot but feel highly honored by the ham! and in proof of my corporeal identity there commission your lordship has deigned to accept in my regard-but'-there was an acerbity in But who would have thought of seeing your the young lady's tone that did not escape her noble companion, and he quickly subjoined --

"But you do not feel at all inclined to accept

the proposal? Decidedly not, my lord; poor as Harriet Markham is, she knows what is due to a lady, and cannot forget the blood that is in her veins. 'There spoke the sister of Frederick Mark-

ham,' said the Earl, as if to himself, and he

left Miss Markham when he came full against aright? Did you speak of Frederick Mark-'I did, and much cause I have to remember hun. He saved my life once, at the risk of his

own, when we met by accident amongst the Bernese Alps, near the foot of the Jungfrau. Did you never hear him speak of Lord Milford?" 'Surely I did, my lord-oh, many, many bared to the first beams of the rising moon, times. If the Earl of Effingham and the Viscount Milford of poor Fred's acquaintance are

one and the same, I believe your lordship and he finished your tour together after the little ad-

"We did, and our intimacy ripened into a

son, just becoming visible on the steep ascent; friendship as lasting as it was sincere. Poor | Apropos to the immortal . Lay' he added, | Markham, and I will bring my lady-love-Markham! All the years that have passed 'You, our fair friend, seem to have adopted with since his untimely death have not effaced his memory from my heart; and when I learned accideutally that you were his sister, I regarded you the pale moonlight, and, moreover, to 'go alone in a different light—as one, in short, who had a right to my friendship and protection.'

I am infinitely obliged to your lordship,' said Harriet in a voice quivering with strong emotion. 'Oh, Frederick!' she cried, clasping her hands in a sudden burst of passionate sorrow, pride oh Frederick, my dear, my only brother ! what a lonely lot mine has been since strange hands laid you in your far Indian grave! Excuse me, my lord!' and by a violent effort she recovered her composure, 'I owe you an apology for this childish outburst of feeling, but the sudden revival of old and very sad memories, long buried in my heart, overcame me quite for the moment. May I beg to know if your lordship has anything more to say, as I am anxious to return to the Castle as speedily as possible?

'Are you, then, afraid to remain a few moments with me, even though we be not alone?

'And if we were alone,' said Harriet Markham, drawing berself up with the lofty dignity of virtuous womanhood, her eyes flashing with the proud spirit of her race as she fixed them on Lord Effingham, ' and if we were alone, why should I be afraid? The man lives not on earth whose presence Harriet Markham would fearand you, Lord Effingham, least of all !

'I thank you,' said the Earl, calmly; 'I rejoice to know that I am honored by your good opinion.

'Nevertheless,' said Harriet again, 'there is something due to appearances -no one can afford to despise them-a woman least of all. And then,' she added in a playful tone, 'being a daughter of Eve, I have a natural desire to see the fair brow that is to wear the Effingham coronet through life.' She was moving hastily away in pursuit of Bryan and the chaplain, who were only a few yards distant,-disputing, as usual, to judge by the high pitch of their voices -when Lord Effingham laid his hand gently on her arm, and said in a low, earnest voice-

'You have not told me what I shall say to my friend?

'Say to him, my lord, that the orphan daughter of Sir Everard Markham is not to be wood

'But you will see him soon, and hear him plead his own cause.'

Even then he would plead in vain.

'You cannot possibly know that, till you have seen and heard him.

'I do know it, my lord, and if you have that friendship for me as Captain Markham's sister, which you do me the honor to profess, you will best prove it by telling your friend that I cannot receive his addresses.'

'And as a friend, may I venture to ask why you are so determined? Is your hears, like that of Sarah Curran, buried in the grave of some lady though he were old Philemon Goodchild in tion. With a sort of half-conscious look she

. I know not, my lord, of any right you have assumption of dignity; 'I have given such an- he had not yet seen, brought out a playful sketch ed to her face, crimsoning up, cheek, and brow, cannot now tell you who it is; suffice it to say he swer as I deemed fitting, your friend must ex-

> 'Miss Markham!' said the Earl, after a moment's silence, 'I hope you are not displeased with me for having undertaken this embassy .--Standing here amongst the graves of the dead, with you fair moon shining down like the eye of heaven upon us, I solemnly assure you that your peace of mind, your honor, your happiness, are as dear to me as if I were—your brother—more I cannot say.

'I believe you, my lord?' said Harriet, with a radiant smile, then, as they hastened to rejoin the chaplam, she added in a lower and more subdued tone, " And now for the Lady Jane that was-Lady Effingham that is ! - I hope she is not over-much fatigued to see me?"

'I hope so,' was the reply, and no more passed

on the subject. After settling, to Bryan's satisfaction at least, the dispute going on between him and the chaplam-which proved to be on the alleged banishing of the toads and serpents from the Irish soil by St. Patrick -the Earl offered his arm to Miss Markham, and the little party left the Rock to Bryan and the dead. As they descended the steep path, the radiant beauty of the moonlit sky attracted their attention, and Lord Effingham said, pointing to the fine Aurora Borealis that was shooting its splendors athwart the northern sky-

' Does not that remind you, Miss Markham, of Scott's vivid description of just such a scene?

'The monk gazed long on the lovely scene, Then into the night he looked ferth, And red and bright the streamers light Were dancing in the glowing north.
So had be seen in fair Castile,
The youth in glittering equadrons start;

Sudden the flying jennet wheel And hurl the unexpected dart. He knew by the streamers that shot so bright, That spirits were riding the northern light.

regard to Cashel, the advice of the Scottish poet as regards Melrose, namely, to visit it by the while' to 'view St. Patrick's ruin'd pile'-

'And,' said Harriet promptly, as she gracefully pointed to the solemn monuments of the long-past ages that rose in lonely beauty on either hand, and may not I, too, with justifiable

- home returning, soothly awear, Was never scene so sad and fair?

Ah! would that some Irish poet, great as he, might one day do for St. Patrick's of royal Cashel what Scott did for St. David's of fair Melrose!

'Pity it was,' said Lord Effingham, 'that Moore did not attempt some such thing-though, if he had, Cashel might gain little in prestige, for Moore was not the antiquarian that Scott is, and to do anything like justice to these magnificent ruins, a wealth of antiquarian lore were indispensably necessary. But tell me, Miss Markham, since when have you cultivated these solitary habits?

'Ever since I have been-in the vicinity of the Rock of Cashel!

A smile shone for a moment on Lord Effingham's face-he had noticed the slight pause in Harriet's answer, and gave it a meaning which might have escaped a less keen observer.

It is well you did not say, since you came to Effingham Castle.'

'And why, my lord?' Harriet asked in some alarm, and raising her eyes to his for a moment, she found the Earl regarding ber with a searching look that brought the blood to her cheek

she knew not why. 'You ask me why,' his lordship said with a pleasant smile, 'because it would speak but ill of the social qualities of the inmates of the Castle were you driven to seek entertainment

"Where the owlet hoots on the dead man's grave." What say you, Mr. Goodchild. Tms question concerns you amongst others.7

chaplain, 'but really I-I did not catch the pur-

port of your lordship's remark." The purport being caught, the worthy gentlemy reverend brother lately arrived in the parish, resembles Absalom of old in the quality and ence? quantity of his bair, would willingly have assisted in making the Castle agreeable to Miss Markmatter of his preaching, and by the time the lat- half serious. ter were ended, our little party had reached the , "I cannot say with Sir Nicholas, the royal heart began to beat fast and faster-a strange of Marston Moor, tremor was creeping over her-she longed to see the new lady of the mansion, and would have given much to have had an opportunity of quesremain on the tender-hooks of curiosity, without heart and hand I am now free to offer?" led up to the lofty vestibule of the hall, he ston- | hed them--ned an instant, looked in Harriet's face and Ashamed of even this admission, Harriet

The color came and went on her cheek, and English Countess. tears filled her eyes though she dared not let one studiously cast down to coyceal them.

some undefinable emotion.

said: 'Have the goodness to remain here, Miss he whispered-

"Oh, my ford!" said Harriet, without raising her eyes, 'that would scarce bent our relative conditions. If you will do me the honor of coaducting me to where Lady Effinghom is, I shall

be too highly favored.' 'I see you are very anxious to make her acquaintance, and Lord Effingham still smiling, 'I must, therefore, procure you that pleasure at the earliest possible moment.'

It appeared very strange to Harriet, and embarrassed her more than a little that the Earl still lingered, regarding her changing features with the keen scrutiny of one who would read her heart. A burning blush kindled on her cheek, and her eyes involuntarily sought the ground. She felt the piercing glance that was on her, and she was vexed she knew not why, yet neither did she know what she ought to say, and so she remained silent. At last Lord Effingham spoke, and his voice was not so firm as

'Miss Markham, you desire to be presented to Lady Effingham, do you not? Favor me with your hand, and I will lead you to her.'

The hand was given, though with a look of wondering surprise, and the Earl, leading her up to one of the large Venetian mirrors that occupied the panel of the wainscotting, bowed with mock ceremony, and said-pointing to her own graceful figure on its brilliant surface- There is the Countess of Effingham that is to be-with Miss Markham's gracious permission. There is, or shall be no other.'

" My lord," said Harriet, the crimson blush on her cheeks giving place to a ghastly paleness, as she turned with a start and fixed her eyes on the now earnest face that was regarding her with a look of ineffable affection, 'my lord! - what am I -to understand-from this? --

'That as I owe my life to Frederick Markham, so shall I owe my happiness to his sisterif she deigns to bless me with her hand.

"Then -you-were not married in England?" 'Certainly not. Lady Jane taking umbrage at my long delay in going to claim her hand, 'I-I beg your lordship's pardon,' began the thought proper to revenge herself by making herself the lawful property of a certain Captain of the Guards who had been dancing attendance on her handsome ladyship for full three weeks, man began earnestly to protest that he, on his and I, finding the family overwhelmed with grief part, had at all times done his utmost to enter- and indignation, retired in apparent discontent, tain Miss Markham, and if he had not more en with what real satisfaction-with what an extertained her the fault was hers, not his; 'nay, | quisite sense of relief-even you cannot undermore,' said he, with a touch of solemu humor stand until you have fathomed the depths of my little expected from him, 'nay, more, my lord, heart. Say, Harriet, have I rightly interpreted the emotion that you labored so hard to conceal? good Mr. Featherstone - a very proper and well Have you guessed the secret that for months has favored young gentleman, who, moreover, much been the charm and the torment of my exist-

By this time Harriet found herself the occupant of a fauteuil, though of how she got there ham, but truly his efforts, however landable, she had no very clear idea; the whole was so seemed as entirely thrown away on the young like a dream that she could not realize her posistead of Master Chester Featherstone." A had turned to Lord Effingham, and listend in careless inquiry from the Earl as to the qualifi- mute wonder; his last question seemed to restore to put such a question,' said Harriet with a quiet cations of this new inmate of the rectory, whom her to full consciousness—the warm blood rushof his personale from Harriet, from the chap-but she did not immediately reply, and Lord lain some critical observations on the manner and Effingham spoke again in a tone hall sportive,

Castle. As they approached the door, Harriet's standard-bearer, in the ballad, after the woful day

"I came to thee a landless man."

tioning Mr. Goodchild as to what manner of it otherwise than it is, to say now I come to person she was, but the presence of the Earl thee a wifeless man'-will you went the rejected forbade any such attempt, and she was forced to ecoronet?" and he smiled- will you accept the

even a hint of what was passing in her mind. It : "The coronet I value little"-said Harriet, might have been that Lord Ethingham felt the covering her eyes with the only hand at her disthe tremor of the hand that rested so timidly and posal-she paused a moment, then burriedly addlightly on his arm, for just as they reached the ed in a lower tone- The heart and hand I vaupper one of the broad white marble steps that Inc-more than Lindy Jane could ever have va-

smiled. Oh, how that smile humbled the sensi- would have made a hasty retreat, but retreat tive girl, yet she could not tell wby, even to was just then impossible, and during the next herself. She would have withdrawn her hand five tomates she heard words, burning words, as they entered the hall, but Lord Effingham never to be torgotten-words that were stamped held it fast, and, with that strange smile on his im golden letters on the tablet of her heart to face, led her on, almost mechanically on her ishine there while life remained. Short as the part, across the tessolated floor, and up the time was, it sufficed to lay bare to the eager grand staucase, to a small apartment opening on eyes that watched her varying features the innerthe drawning-room. No one was yet visible, most depth of Harriet Markham's heart, and to and Harriet felt more and more overcome by draw from her lips the timid confession that her life would have been a blank—a dreary waste, Secret in its source as dreams, voiceless as the past. had Lord Effingham brought back with him his

Then you approve of my taste?' said the escape from under the burning lids that were | Earl as they rose to rejoin the company in the drawing-room; and he glanced at the brightly-'I think we may find her ladyship here,' said smiling image in the mirror. 'I thought you the Earl in a careless tone, and he opened the would, he added with a look that covered Hardoor. No one was there, but voices were heard riet's face with blushes. Then bending down in the adjacent apartment, and Lord Effingham bis stately head, as he drew her arm within his,

Contraction of the available of the