



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XIX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1868.

No. 16.

NELLIE NETTERRILLE;
OR,
ONE OF THE TRANSPLANTED.

By the author of 'Wild Times,' 'Eind Agoese,' etc.

CHAPTER II.—(Continued)

"Faix, madam, and it was just that same that I was thinking to myself a while ago," cried Hamish eagerly. "Sure who has a better right to go with Mistress Nellie than her own foster-brother? and am not I strong enough, and more than willing enough, to fight for her—ay, and to die for her too, if any of them black-browed hypocrites should dare for to cast their evil eyes upon her or the old master?"

"Strong enough, and brave enough, undoubtedly you are," said Nellie, speaking before her mother could reply, "and true-hearted more than enough, my dear foster-brother, are you; but if only for that very reason, you must stay here to help and comfort my dear mother. Behold you, Hamish, here is in truth the hardest lot of any. We shall have but to endure the weariness of long travel; she will have to contend with the insolence of men in high places—yes, and perhaps even to dispute with them, day by day and hour by hour, for that which is her rightful due and ours. This is man's work, not woman's; and a man, moreover, quick-witted, and fearing no one. Will you not be that man, Hamish, to stand by her against the tyrant and oppressor, and to act for her whenever and wherever it may be impossible for her to act for herself?"

Hamish would have answered with a fervor equal to her own, but Mistress Netterville prevented him by saying, with a mingling of grief and impatience in her manner—

"It is in vain to talk to you, Nellie! You have all your grandfather's stiff-necked notions on this subject. Nevertheless, it would have been far more to my real contentment if he and you had yielded to my wishes, seeing that there is many a one still left among our dependents to whom, on a pinch, I could entrust the care both of cattle and of household gear, and not one (and that is Hamish) to whom willingly I would confide my child."

"Now may Heaven bless you for that very word, madam," cried Hamish eagerly and gratefully; and then, turning to Nellie, he went on, "See now, Mistress Nellie—see now—when her ladyship herself has said it—surely you would never think of going contrary to her wishes?"

"Listen to me, Hamish," said Nellie, putting her hand on his shoulder and standing still, so that her mother unconsciously moved on without her. "Ever since that weary day when the sheriff came here to inform us of our fate, I have had a strange, uncomfortable foreboding that my mother will soon find herself in even a worse plight than ours. A woman, as she will be, alone and friendless—foemen all around her—foemen, the worst and cruellest of any, with prayer on their lips and hypocrisy in their hearts, and a strong sword at their hips, ready to smite and slay, as they themselves express it, all who oppose that wicked lust for wealth and power which they so blindly mistake for the promptings of a good spirit! With us, once we have obtained our certificate from the commissioners at Loughrea, it will be far otherwise. Each step we take in our wild journey westward will, if alas! it leads us farther from our friends, set likewise a safer distance between us and our oppressors. Promise me, therefore, to ask no more to follow us, who go to peace and safety, but to abide quietly here, where alone a real danger threatens. Promise me even more than this, my foster-brother—promise to stay with her so long as ever she may need you; and should aught of evil happen to her, which may God avert, promise to let me know at once, that I may instantly return and take a daughter's proper place beside her. Promise me this, Hamish—nay—said I promise?—Hamish, you must swear it!"

"I swear it, by the Mother of heaven and her blessed Child I swear it!" said Hamish fervently; for he saw at once that there was much probability in Nellie's view of the subject, though, in his overweening anxiety for the daughter, he had hitherto overlooked the chances of danger to the mother. "But, Christ save us!" he added suddenly, as some wild notes of preparation reached his experienced ear—"Christ save us, if the old women are not going to keep for your departure as if it were a burial!"

"Oh, do not let them—do not let them; bid them stop if they would not break our hearts!" cried Nellie, rushing on to overtake her mother while Hamish, in obedience to her wishes, struck right across the terrace toward a distant group of women, among whom, judging by their excited looks and gestures, he knew that he should find the keepers. Long, however, ere he could reach them, a wild cry of lamentation, taken up and prolonged until every man, woman, and child within ear-shot had lent their voices to swell

the chorus, made him feel that he was too late; and turning to ascertain the cause of this sudden outburst, he saw that Lord Netterville had come forth from the castle, and was standing at the open gate. A fine, soldierly-looking man he was, counting over seventy years, yet in appearance not much more than sixty, and as he stood there, pale and bareheaded, in the presence of his people, a shout of such mingled love and sympathy, grief and execration rent the air, that some of the Cromwellian soldiers made an involuntary step forward, and hauled their muskets in expectation of an attack.

"Tell them to stop," cried the old man, throwing up his arms like one who could bear his agony no longer. "For God's sake tell them to stop! Let them wait at least," he added, half bitterly, half sorrowfully, "until, like the dead, I am out of hearing."

There was no need for Hamish to become the interpreter of his wishes. The sudden cry of a man's irrepressible anguish had reached the hearts of all who heard it, and a silence fell upon the crowd—a silence more expressive of real sympathy than their wildest lamentations could have been.

The old lord bowed, and tried to speak his thanks, but the words died upon his lips, and he turned abruptly to take leave of his daughter in law. She knelt to receive his blessing. He laid his hand upon her head, and then making an effort to command his voice, said tenderly:

"Fare thee well, my best and dearest. It is the way of these canting times to be for ever quoting Scripture, and for once I will follow fashion. May Heaven bless and keep thee, daughter, for a very Ruth has thou been to me in my old age; yes, and better than seven sons in this day of my poverty and sorrow!"

He stooped to kiss her brow and to help her to rise, and as he did so, he added in a whisper, meant only for the lady's ear—

"Forgive me, Mary, if I once more allude to that subject we have so much discussed already. Are you still in the mind to send Nellie with me? Think better of it, I entreat you. The daughter's place should ever, to my poor thinking, be beside her mother."

"I have thought," she answered, "and I have decided. If Nellie is my child, she is your grandchild as well; and the duty, which her father is no longer here to tender, it must be her pride and joy to offer you in his stead. Moreover, my good lord," she added in a still lower tone, "the matter hath another aspect. Nellie will be safer with you. This place and all it contains is even now at the mercy of a lawless soldiery, and therefore it is no place for her. Too well I feel that even I, her mother, am powerless to protect her."

Lord Netterville cast a wistful glance on the fair face of his young granddaughter, and said reluctantly:

"It may be that you are right, sweet Moll, as you are ever. Come then, if so it must be give us our good-speed, and let us hasten on our way."

He once more pressed her affectionately in his arms, then walked straight up to his horse and leaped almost without assistance to the saddle. But his face flushed scarlet, and then grew deadly pale, and as he shook his reins and settled himself down in his seat, it was evident to Hamish, who was holding his stirrup for him, that he was struggling with all his might and man to bear himself with a haughty semblance of indifference before the English soldiery. After he was seated to his satisfaction, he ventured a half glance around his people, and lifted his beaver to salute them. But the effort was almost too much; the big tears gathered in his eyes, and his hand shook so violently that he could not replace his hat, which, escaping from his feeble grasp, rolled under his horse's feet. Half a dozen children darted forward to recover it, but Hamish had already picked it up and given it to his master, who instantly put it on his head, saying in a tone of affected indifference:

"Pest on these trembling fingers which would so libel the stout heart within. This comes of wine and wassail, Hamish. Drink thou water all thy life, good youth, if thou wouldst match a sturdy heart with a steady hand, when thy seventy years and odd are on you."

"Faix, my lord, will I or will I," said Hamish, trying to fall in with the old man's humor by speaking lightly, "will I or will I, it seems only too likely that water will be the best part of my wine for some time to come—leastwise," he added in a lower voice, "leastwise till your honor comes back to your own again, and broaches us a good cask of wine to celebrate the day."

"Back again! back again!" repeated Lord Netterville, shaking his head with a mixture of grief and impatience impossible to describe. "I tell thee, Hamish, that men never come back again when they carry seventy years with them to exile. But where is my granddaughter?—Bid her come here at once, for it's ill lingering here with this weeping crowd around us, and

ponder pestilent group of fanatics making out every mother's son among them, doubtless, for future vengeance."

Mrs. Netterville heard this impatient cry for her only child, and flung her arms for one last, passionate embrace round Nellie's neck! Then, firm and unflinching to the end, she led her to Hamish, who lifted her as reverently as if she had been an empress (as indeed she was in his thoughts) to the pillow behind her grandfather.

Lord Netterville barely waited until she was comfortably settled, ere he stooped to kiss once more his daughter-in-law's uplifted brow, after which, waving his hands towards the weeping people, he dug his spurs deep into his horse's sides and rode swiftly forward.

Then, as if moved by one common impulse, every man, woman, and child in presence there fell down upon their knees, mingling prayers and blessings and howls and imprecations, as only an Irish or an Italian crowd can do; and yet, obedient to the last to the wishes of their departing chief, it was not until he was well-nigh out of sight that they broke out into that wild, wailing keen, with which they were wont to accompany their loved ones to the grave. But the wind was less considerate, and as it unluckily set that way, it bore one or two of the long, sad notes to him, in whose honor they were chanted. As they fell upon the old exile's ears, the stoical calmness which he had hitherto maintained forsook him utterly, the reins fell from his hands, he bowed his head till his white locks mingled with his horse's mane, and, "lifting up his voice," he wept as sadly and unrestrainedly as a woman.

CHAPTER III.

Set is the sun of the Netterville's glory!
Down in the dust its bright banners are trailing!
Hoarse in our anguish we whisper the story;
And men as they listen, like women are wailing.

Woe! woe to us—woe! we shall see him no more;
Our tears like the rains of November are flowing;
Woe! woe to us—woe! for the chief we deplore
Alone to his exile of sorrow is going.

Alone?—not alone! for our dastardly foemen—
As cruel as bise in the day of the power—
Have lifted their hands against maidens and women;
Uprooted the tree, and them trampled the flower.

And so they have sent her to weep by strange waters—
The joy of our hearts and the light of our eyes—
The latest and fairest of Netterville's daughters;
In whom the last link of their destiny lies.

Sad will be, mother, thy waking to-morrow!
Waking to weep o'er thy dove-colored nest;
Widowed and childless—two-fold is thy sorrow,
And two-edged the sword that is lodged in thy breast.

Well may ye mourn her—when we too deplore her—
The vassals and serfs of thy conquering race;
If blood could but do it, our blood should restore her—
Restore her to thee and thy loving embrace.

Yet not for her only, or thee, are we weeping;
We weep for our country, fast bound in that chain
Which in blood from her wrong heart the foeman is
stealing,
Till it looks as if reddened and rusted by rain.

Oh! when shall a leader to true hearts be given,
To fall on the stranger and force him to flee?
And when the shackles that bind her be riven?
And Erin stand up in her strength and be free!

So sang Hamish, the son of the last of the long line of minstrels who, with harp and voice, had recorded the triumphs of the house of Netterville, or mourned over the death or sorrow of its chieftains! For, in spite of the law by which it was strictly forbidden, the English of the Pale had persisted in the national custom of keeping a bard or minstrel—whose office was always or almost always, hereditary—attached to their households; and in its palmy days of power the family of Netterville was far too jealous of its own importance not to have been always provided with a similar appendage. Its last recognized minstrel had fallen, however, in the same battle which had deprived Nellie of her father; and Hamish being then too young to take up his father's office, the harp had ever since, literally as well as figuratively, hung mute and unstrung in the halls of Netterville. But grief and indignation over its utter ruin had unlocked at last the tide of poetry and song, ever ready to flow over in the Celtic breast, and Hamish felt himself changed into a bard upon the spot. Forgetting the presence of the English soldiers, or more probably exulting in the knowledge that they did not understand the language in which he gave expression to his feelings, he stepped out into the midst of the people, pouring forth his lamentations, stanza after stanza, with all the readiness and fire of a born improvisatore; and when at last he paused, more for want of breath than want of matter, the keepers took up the tale, and told in their wild, wailing chant, of the goodness and greatness, the glory and honor of their departed chieftain and his heirress, precisely as they would have done had the twain over whom they were lamenting been that very day deposited in their graves.—Up to this moment Mrs. Netterville had pre-

served to a marvellous degree that statue-like calmness of outward bearing which had, and even at times belied, the workings of a heart full of generous emotions; but the wild wailing of the keepers broke down the artificial restraint she had put upon her conduct, and, unable to listen quietly to what seemed to her ears a positive prophecy of death to her beloved ones, she hastily re-entered the house and retreated to her own apartment. This was a small dark chamber, which in happier times had been set apart as a quiet retreat for prayer and household purposes, but which now was the only one the mistress of the mansion could call her own—the soldiers having that very morning taken possession of all the others, devoting some of them to their own particular accommodation and locking up the others. It was, in fact, as a very singular and especial favor, and as some return for the kindness she had shown in nursing one of their number who had been taken suddenly ill on the night of their arrival, that the use even of this small chamber had been allowed her; for it was not the custom of Cromwell's army to deal too gently by the vanquished, and many of the "transplanted," as high born and well-educated as she was, had been compelled, in similar circumstances, to retire to the outer offices of their own abode, while the rough soldiery who displaced them installed themselves in the luxurious apartments of the interior.

Hidden from all curious eyes in this dark retreat, Mrs. Netterville yielded at last to the cry of her weak human heart, and flinging herself, face downward, on the floor, gave way to a passion of grief, which was all the more terrible that it was absolutely fearless. One or two of the few remaining women of the household, knowing how fearfully her soul, in spite of all outward show of calmness, must be wrung, tapped occasionally at the door; but either she did not hear or did not choose to answer, and they dared not enter without permission.

At last one of them went to Hamish, feeling instinctively that if any one could venture to intrude unbidden, it would be the foster brother of Nellie, and said:

"The mistress, God help her! is just drowned with the sorrow, and won't even answer when we call. Hamish, a-bouchal, couldn't you manage to go in just by accident like, and say something or other to give a turn to her thoughts?"

"Give a turn to her thoughts?" said Hamish earnestly; "give a turn to her thoughts, do you say? My certie, but you take it easy! Hasn't the woman lost husband and child, to say nothing of the old lord who was all as one to her as her own father? and isn't she going, moreover, to be turned out of house and home, and sent adrift upon the wide world? and you talk of giving a turn to her thoughts, as if it was the toothache she was troubled with or a wasp that had stung her?"

"As you please, Mr. Hooty-tooty," said the girl angrily; "I only thought that, as you were a bit of a pet like, on account of our young mistress, you might have ventured on the liberty. Not having set up in that line myself, I cannot, of course, attempt to meddle in the matter."

But though Hamish had spoken roughly, his heart was very sore for all that, over the sorrows of his lonely mistress.

He waited until Cathleen had vanished in a huff and then, going quietly to the study-door, knocked softly for admission.

But Mrs. Netterville gave no sign, and after knocking two or three times in vain, he opened the door gently and looked in. The room was naturally a gloomy one, being panelled in black oak; but Hamish felt as if it never could have looked before so gloomy as it did that moment. Half study, half oratory as it was, Mrs. Netterville had spent here many a long hour of lonely and impassioned prayer, while her husband and her father-in-law were fighting the battles of their royal and most ungrateful master. A tall crucifix, carved like the rest of the furniture, in black oak, stood therefore on a sort of *prie-dieu* at the farther end of the room, and near it was a table arranged in desk-fashion, at which she had been in the habit of transacting the business of her household.

Room and *prie-dieu*, crucifix and table, Hamish had them all by heart already.

Here in his baby days he had been used to come, when he and his little foster-sister were wearied with their own play, to sit at the feet of Mrs. Netterville and listen to the tales which she invented for their amusement. Here, as time went on, separating Nellie outwardly from his society, yet leaving her as near to him in heart as ever, he had been wont to bring his morning offerings of fish from the running stream, or bunches of purple heather from the rocks.—Here he had come for news of the war, and of the master, on that very day which brought tidings of his death; and here, too, even while he tried to comfort Nellie, who had flung her self down in her childish misery just on the spot where her mother lay prostrate now, he had

wondered, and, young as he was, had in part at least comprehended, the marvellous self-forgetfulness of Mrs. Netterville, who, in the midst of her own bereavement, had yet found heart and voice to comfort her aged father-in-law and her child as if the blow which had struck them down had not fallen with three-fold force on her own head. In the darkness of the room and the confusion of his own thoughts, he did not, however, at first perceive Mrs. Netterville in her lowly posture, and glanced instinctively toward the *prie-dieu*, where he had so often before seen her take refuge in the hour of trial.

But she was not there, and a thrill of terror ran through his frame when he at last discovered her, face downward, on the floor, her widow's coil flung far away, and her long locks, streaked—by the hand of grief, not time—abundantly with gray, streaming round her in a disorder which struck Hamish all the more forcibly, that it was in such direct contrast to the natural habits of order and propriety she had brought with her from her English home. There she lay—not weeping—such misery as hers knows nothing of the relief of tears—not weeping, but crushed and powerless, as if her very body had proved unequal to the weight of sorrow put upon it, and had fallen beneath the burthen. She seemed, indeed, not in a swoon, but stunned and stupefied, and quite unconscious that she was not alone. Hamish trembled for her intellect, but young as he was, he was used to sorrow, and understood both the danger and the remedy.

His lady must be roused at any cost, even at that, the very thought of which made him tremble, the recalling her to a full knowledge of her misery. He advanced farther into the room, moving softly in his great reverence for her dissolution, as we move, almost unconsciously to ourselves, in the presence of the dead, and occupied himself for a few minutes in arranging the loose papers on her desk, and the flowers which Nellie had placed upon the *prie-dieu* only a day or two before. They were faded now—faded as the poor child's fortunes—but instead of throwing them away, he poured fresh water into the vase which held them, as if that could have restored their beauty. Yet he sighed heavily as he did so, for the thought would flash across his mind that, whether he sought to give back life to a withered flower, or joy to the heart of a bereaved mother, in either case his task was hopeless. Mrs. Netterville took no notice of his proceedings, though as he began to get used to the situation, he purposely made rather more bustle than was needed, in hopes of arousing her. At last, in despair of succeeding by milder methods, he let fall a heavy inkstand, smashing it into a thousand pieces, and scattering the ink in all directions, an event that in happier times would certainly not have passed unperceived.—But now, she lay within a few inches of the rocky stream, as headless as though she were dead, in earnest; and, hopeless of recalling her to consciousness by anything short of a personal appeal, he knelt down beside her and tapped her sharply on the shoulder, half wondering at his own temerity as he did so. She shuddered as if, light as the touch had been, it yet had hurt her, and muttered impatiently, and like one half asleep:

"Not now, Hamish! not now!—leave me for the present, I entreat you!"

"And why not now?" Hamish answered, almost roughly. "Do you think you only have a cause for grieving? Tell me, my mistress, if we, humble as we are, and not to be thought of in comparison with your ladyship's honor, if we have not lost—are losing nothing? Ah! if you could but hear the weeping and wailing that is going on among the creatures downstairs, you would never do us such a wrong as to suppose that your heart is the only one sore and bleeding to-day!"

"Sore and bleeding! Yes, yes! I doubt it not," moaned the lady sadly. "Sore and bleeding; but not widowed—not childless—they have still husbands and children—they have not lost us I have lost!"

"They have lost—not, may be, quite so much, but yet enough, and more than enough, to set them wailing," answered Hamish firmly—"they have lost a master, who was more like a father than a master, and a young mistress, who was all as one as a daughter to every one of them; and moreover," he added mournfully—"and moreover, instead of the kind hand and generous heart that has reigned over them till now, they are going to be handed over, (as if they were so many stocks or stones encumbering the land,) whether they like it or whether they don't, to the tender mercies of those very men who thought it neither sin nor shame to make the child a shield against the soldier's sword, when they fought knee-deep in blood at the siege of Tredagh!"

"Why do you say these things, Hamish?" she almost shrieked, in her anguish. "Is it my fault? Could I help it? or why do you reproach me with it?"

"Your fault! No, indeed, it is not. More's the pity; for if you could have helped it, to a