



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 1862.

No. 35

THE PROPHET OF THE RUINED ABBEY.

By the Author of "The Cross and Shamrock."

CHAPTER V.

Soon after the cry of 'Maderce aultha,' reached Terence O'Mara's ears through the exertions of his now only aid, Anglum, he resolved to retard, if not to defeat, the pursuit.

'Oh,' he exclaimed, 'why did I kindle that un-lucky fire on the left, and thus deprive myself of the co-operation of my faithful followers? It can't be helped. Darby,' he said, addressing his simpleton, 'we must make the best we can of a bad bargain.'

'That's true,' said Darby; 'it's a bad bargain, if my good father is caught.' 'Listen, Darby,' said O'Mara, 'can you make a fire?' 'Yes, yes,' answered he, 'can make fire.'

'Come, then, and help me.' Off they went to about the one-sixth of a mile up the road, where there was a quantity of turf or peat made into ricks and stacks. By the aid of the idiot, in a few minutes O'Mara had a large pile of the dry turf placed on the very centre of the road, and having set fire to it, he placed in front and around it, many 'grogavans,' or tall piles of the turf, which at a distance very much resembled men in appearance.

The clatter of horses' hoofs against the well-gravelled road was now distinctly heard, and O'Mara ran forward a second time to give some new order to Anglum, whose mind, though a very retentive one, was able to grasp but one idea at a time.

wards the dragoons, he leaped down on the road. As quick as lightning the whole troop of sixty horses turned round, and without as much as waiting for the word of command, made the best of their way back to the town.

The heath now on the mountain-side took fire, and the crackling with which that beautiful scrub burns, together with the screaming of night-birds, and the loud noise of flocks of game, resembling very much the report of musketry, created in the minds of these royal troops sensations akin to those of men flying from a city on fire, and they never looked back till they were all safely entrenched within the walls of Cloughmore Barracks. Upon the troop being in line, and the roll called, it was found that two men were wanting, whom the lieutenant reported as having fallen at the action at the mountain, where, as he stated, no fewer than 3,000 men were assembled in rebellion, commanded by experienced French and foreign officers.

This mendacious report having been received by the colonel, the 'big drum' was beaten, and the whole military force of the town, including the yeomanry, was called to arms. Picket guards were appointed at the cross-roads, a cordon of sentinels on that side of the town next the mountain, and every order given and precaution taken that the military tactics of that period demanded.

When Terence O'Mara returned home, at the hour of one o'clock at night, he found a good warm supper ready for him at the fire-side, simmering in the skillett; and, contrary to custom, he found his fair wife and eldest child at the bedside, repeating the rosary aloud, and with tears in their eyes.

'What keeps ye up so late?' said Terry, lighting a 'slishogae,' or chip pine of bog-wood, and going into his bed-room.

'Ah, it is we ought to ask you what keeps you up, and what keeps you out so late at this?' she cried, with a look that betrayed the agitation of her soul.

'Hold, woman,' answered Terry. 'I have good news to tell you. Father O'Donnell is escaped.'

'Thanks be to God!' said the pious matron. 'always thought the Lord would never allow his enemies power over that saintly man.'

'What in the world ails you, though?' he resumed. 'Something must be wrong. Has anything happened since I left—are my children well? Tell me what ails you, dear wife,' he continued, raising her up in his arms, and looking into her face.

'Well, Nelly, I thought you had some sense before now,' answered the intrepid Terry. 'Don't you know the church and the priest tell you not to believe in dreams, nor credit them, and you put your mind 'through and fro' with such phantoms?'

'I know that well,' she calmly answered, 'and I know the church and the priest both told you to keep from night-walking and secret societies, and yet you see you are not doing their bidding.'

'That may be true enough, Nelly, my dear, but see what a country we have. Over-run with cut-throats, perjurers, and tyrants, all of foreign birth or race.'

The contents of the warm skillett, and they were not to be despised, were soon made away with by the enchanted warrior and his aide-de-camp, Darby Anglum, and they retired, the one to the settle-bed, and the other to his sleeping-chamber, to rest after the campaign of the past day.

CHAPTER VI.

Now, Tuesday, the day appointed for the execution, dawned; but the victim whom the gallows claimed by British law, had escaped its fangs.—What was to be now done? This was the leading head of deliberation among the civil and military council sitting at Cloughmore this eventful morning. Shall the gallows be defrauded of its usual tribute? Shall there be preparation for an execution, and no execution take place?—Somebody ought to be hanged in order to strike salutary terror into the 'rebellious' peasantry.

Lord Barterborough was present as president of the council. So was Sir Anthony Sharper, the patron of the town, and Sheriff Juggler.—A. B. Westrop, J.P., and Colonel Clive, with Lieutenant Scarecrow, completed the number. It was not yet clear daylight, and the council had sat for several hours. Witnesses were called from among the officials of the prison, who generally swore that the present prisoner was the priest, and that the man who left yesterday was the same who entered, and nobody else.

'My opinion is,' resumed the sheriff, 'that we had better execute this present prisoner, as we have advertised an execution. It does not appear to me in evidence that this is not the priest who was sentenced to death. At any rate, there appears to be a doubt, and as there is a doubt, we ought to make sure of our man, and have the execution for the public good. What think you, gentlemen?' he said, looking around, for the approbation of his associates.

'I second your motion, sheriff,' said Sir Anthony Sharper.

'I likewise,' chimed in A. B. Westrop. 'We ought to make an example, and whether or not this is the person we—the law, I mean—condemned, matters not much if he is guilty, or not loyal to the crown.'

'Hear, hear,' followed this speech of the Cromwellian.

'You, Mr. Sheriff, and Sir Anthony, ought to be the best evidences in this puzzling affair. You both live in this very town. Surely you must have known the priest O'Donnell, and you ought to be able to say whether the prisoner is the identical individual,' said my Lord Barterborough.

'As for me,' said the sheriff, 'I knew him by sight, that's all; but I go according to evidence of the turnkeys, who swore positively that this is he. I know nothing as a private individual.—My capacity as sheriff raises me above private rights or feelings.'

His lordship smiled and looked towards the colonel, who never opened his lips during the examination of the worthy witnesses. There was really great danger of the captain at this juncture, who, on attempting to prove himself what he was, had a pistol of one of the guards presented at his breast, with a threat if he 'spoke one word,' that he should die instantly. Colonel Clive at length broke silence, and said, that notwithstanding the apparently consistent testimony of the jailers, he had a strong doubt as to the identity of the present prisoner with the one lately convicted, and 'I am sorry to differ with his honor the sheriff,' he said, 'in his construction of that portion of British common law regarding "the doubt," which should be always interpreted in favor of a prisoner, instead of against him. Indeed, there is hardly a doubt in the case, as it is almost self-evident that the present gentleman is not the same whom I saw in the dock at the late assizes. It is better that a thousand guilty men should escape, than that one innocent man should suffer death unjustly.'

'That is, provided the innocent man was not as deserving of a gallows as the guilty,' rejoined Sir Anthony seriously, shaking his head and looking towards the prisoner. The whole council en-

joyed a laugh of very limited duration at the expense of the knight of the red nose, and the colonel having ordered the prisoner back to his cell, the council turned its attention to other important deliberations.

Mrs. O'Donnell and the remainder of the family who made the visit to the prison the day before, were next introduced into the council-hall, but, being asked to give their evidence they refused, excusing themselves on the grounds of their relationship with the party accused as well as the escaped prisoner. They were consequently locked up in jail for contempt of court, as well as for being aiders and abettors in the escape of the priest.

Colonel Clive was opposed to this rigor also, but the remaining members of the council, including Lord Barterborough, being adverse to him, he had to succumb. The question of a substitute for the escaped priest was still on the board, and Sir Anthony moved again that, as this foreign gentleman bore such a likeness to the priest, he should suffer in his stead.

'Why, Sir Anthony,' said the colonel, somewhat warmly, 'that is now decided. 'Twas course you recommend would be barbarous as well as unjust. Besides, it would be dangerous. We are now at war with France, our natural enemy, and if this gentleman, holding such a high commission in the celebrated Chasseurs de Vincennes, were to be sacrificed in cold blood in obedience to a low instinct of vengeance, or to strike a salutary terror,' as it is called, you cannot foresee the consequences to the whole nation—nay, the whole empire; besides the injustice of your course.'

'I do not care about consequences, let them take care of themselves,' said Sir Anthony. 'All I ask is vengeance on rebels, conspirators, and Papists. And as for justice—'

'But, Sir Anthony, I do care for consequences, and if that gentleman is to be hanged, he must be hanged in spite of my troop. That I beg you to remember.'

'Well, colonel,' said the knight, 'I yield the point; but if you are at a loss for something to hang, I have a useless old butler about the height and a little above the age of priest O'Donnell, and he is a Papist besides, though a simple and harmless one. You may hang him, gentlemen, if you please, to produce the desired effect.'

'Good God! what did you say, Sir Anthony? Have I misunderstood you? Do you propose the murder of an old and faithful servant to prop up a falsehood, to give currency to a delusion? Monstrous proposition!'

'I am a loyal subject, Mr. Colonel,' answered Sir Knight, 'and I will do anything to serve my king.'

'Very well,' said Sir Anthony, 'but your king, I doubt, would reject such a service as you would offer. I am convinced, however, his majesty would accept the sacrifice of your own life, that the losing of your head in battle for the king would be a very meritorious act, but I should consider that the hanging of your faithful butler would not be regarded by his majesty as anything like a compensation for the honor that would accrue to him by the loss of your own life in the service of your king.'

'My life is at his service any day that his Majesty's crown may need its sacrifice,' said the chivalrous knight.

'I am very glad to hear you are ready, Sir Anthony, for we are just going to dislodge those rebels who are, if report be true, entrenched on the brow of Knockmoldown, and I will expect to see you there at the head of the militia of the barony.'

At this stage of the proceedings a messenger was introduced by an orderly, who stated that on his way from the market of Dungarvan, about half-way up the mountain road, he fell in with the bodies of the two soldiers killed in the encounter last night, and they were now at the 'gate waiting to be released by your honors paying me for the fire of the two dead jettlemans.' Upon being informed by the sheriff that it was no more than his duty, as a loyal subject of the king, to do that piece of service for nothing, the cunning little red-headed carman, named Skith Flanagan, answered 'that as far lyilly he didn't think that he had less use of it than his neighbors; but he knew he had but very little money, and he didn't think their honors or the king would ask him to work for nothing.'

Colonel Clive handed the carman a guinea, win, with a most profound bow, was about to depart, when, on the suggestion of Lord Barterborough, it was agreed to ask him a few questions about the number and strength of the rebels.

'Your name is Flanagan?' 'Yes, your honor.' 'You came down the mountain road, did you not, on four o'clock from market?' 'Yes, your honor, the mountain road exactly.' 'At what hour did you come by that part of the road which is called Cloughmagour?' 'Well, your honor, I can't tell the hour, as I

neither saw moon, stars, nor sun, and I'm too poor to carry a watch.'

'You can't say, then, but that it was late at night?'

'Yes, your honor, very late at night. So it was, your honor.'

'Did you see any men there in arms, or were you interrupted by any sentinels or guards at that part of the road?'

'Did I see?' repeated Skith, as it were in ridicule of the colonel's simplicity. 'How could I see when it was as dark as pitch? I could not see me hand if I stretched it out from me. Indeed I have neither cat's eyes nor owl's eyes, thank God, but neat Christian ones, and I can't see impossibilities.'

'Mind what sort of answers you give here, my good fellow,' said his lordship. 'You must tell the truth, and the whole truth.'

'Tell the truth! I'm sure 'tis the truth I'm telling, and nothing else. You are the last who doubted Skith Flanagan's word in all me life, so you are.'

'On your oath did you meet any armed men on the mountain, or could there be such men there without your knowledge?'

'Without my knowledge! Faix, there could be millions of men there without my knowledge. What knowledge could I have of um at the hour of midnight or second cock-crow, as I'm sure it was when I came that road.'

'As you saw nothing, then perhaps you heard something such as the report of shots of small arms, blowing of horns or bugles, or rebellious shouts for liberty or other treasonable exclamations?'

'Axlumashuns! In troth there was plenty of that, and I heard some shots too, and loud shrieking "Banan leans," bitters, and plover, and woodcocks, and grouse, and many other wild animals who were roasting in the burning heath. There is no doubt but I heard dreadful cries, shrieks, and all such things. You could see pins on the road by the light—so you could.'

'That is something to the point,' said Lieutenant Scarecrow, who trembled in his boot for fear of the invalidation of his false report.

'But the knave contradicts himself,' remarked the colonel. 'He said a few minutes ago that he could not see his hand by the darkness, now he says the whole mountain was in a blaze, and that you could see pins on the road.'

'Yes, your honor, but that was only while the fire blazed; but when it was out it was twice darker than before the fire was lit. When the fire was lit I was far south of the Knock; but with my slow horse and heavy load, when I reached the place your honor mentioned it was as black as old Nick.'

Skith was now dismissed; and after a resolution was passed that if no better substitute for Father O'Donnell's head could be found, the head of one of the dead soldiers should be affixed to the court-house bell-tower, to awe the peasantry, the council, after having sat for over four hours, was now dissolved. Before quitting the council-chamber, however, the colonel, after the departure of the under-officials, invited the party to his quarters, where he told them something in the shape of a 'dejeuner a la fourchette,' awaited them after the fatigues of a sleepless and anxious night. The invitation was accepted by all save my Lord Barterborough, who pleaded as his excuse for declining the feast, that his son and heir, Lord Edward, was preparing this morning to set out on his Continental tour, to perfect his education by travel. On this excuse his apology was accepted by the colonel, who, after escorting the lord to the carriage that stood at the gate, returned to conduct the rest of the party to his well-provided breakfast-table. Through an experienced physiognomist could not but read in the naturally-calm face of the colonel something like a cloud of disappointment at not having his board honored by the presence of the lord, for whose chief and special pleasure he intended this compliment, yet it required but very ordinary powers of observation to perceive the effect which his absence had on the rest of his guests. In fact, the faces of Sir Anthony, Sheriff Juggler and A. B. Westrop, J.P., were all miles, and nothing contributed so much to this general ill-humor as the absence of my lord.

When thirst and hunger were appeased, and the appetite no longer sustained its urgent calls for generous wine and all-sustaining beef, the knight, with a tumbler full of glowing Burgundy in his right hand, proposed,—

'Here's a health to the king; God bless him! and may we, his loyal subjects, in this day's expedition, prove to his majesty how ready we are to sacrifice our lives for the stability of his throne. Here's success to this day's expedition!'

'Hip, hip, hurrah!' followed 'three times three.'

The proper honors were paid to loyal toasts, by each of this gallant company, who, now well pleased with the entertainment of the colonel, and proud of their loyalty, went out from their