



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. IX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 1859.

No. 23.

"THE KNOT."

A TALE OF POLAND.

(Translated from the French by Mrs. J. Sadlier.)

CHAPTER XIV.

The chamber to which Rosa was conducted was situated in the upper story of the castle, and its furniture consisted of one chair and a wretched bed on which a truss or two of straw had been recently shaken. One small, grated window looked out on the gardens and on the Vistula, whose broad basin lay still and calm in the bright moonlight. No sooner was Rosa left alone than she threw herself on her knees and fervently invoked the divine protection for herself and those she loved—asking not that the impending trials and dangers might be averted from her, but that strength might be given her to meet and support them with Christian fortitude. When she arose she found herself calm and resigned, and, throwing all her anxious care for her father and Raphael into the hands of God, she applied herself energetically to prepare her mind for the mental and bodily torture she was so soon to undergo. Far from seeking to banish the thoughts of what awaited her, from the vain fear of shaking her courage, she resolutely considered all the revolting details of that fearful punishment, and placing her trust in the Giver of all strength, she began even to feel a sort of supernatural triumph in the greatness of the torments to which she was doomed, and which might obtain for her the crown of martyrdom. It is a fact which no historian pretends to dispute that in all the revolutions and struggles of Poland, the national mind was strongly tinged with religious feeling. And this is easily accounted for, in that a nation so pre-eminently Catholic as Poland ever was, must naturally feel herself wronged by the dark and hypocritical policy which sought to turn her by one blow from the cherished faith of her fathers, and plunge her into the mire of schism, at the same time that it deprived her of her political rights. Amongst a religious people, questions of a religious nature are not confined to the learned, nor to any other class, they penetrate into all ranks, and affect, more or less, every individual, giving resistless power to the sinewy arm of the soldier, and lighting up the flame of enthusiastic devotion in the gentle heart of woman. Hence it was that Rosa, in the consciousness of right, and relying on the protecting arm of God, could bid defiance to every torture which the oppressor might inflict upon her. She had long been accustomed, too, to overcome those vain terrors which exhaust the strength of the soul ere yet the hour of danger comes, and now she looked forward, with immovable resignation, to the hour of torture, believing that God himself, for whose sake she was willing to bear it, would be near to support her in her agony. She sat down on the side of her straw couch, and with her eyes raised to heaven and her hands clasped together, she prayed once more for those beloved ones, that the anguish which they might endure on her account would be softened unto them. And thus she sank into a gentle slumber from which she did not awake till the sun shone into her miserable chamber.

Suddenly there came a deafening crash—the loud roll of the drum and the shrill music of the fifes and bugles, and Rosa was painfully recalled to the mighty power of those who held her country and herself in bondage. A few hours after sunrise her door was opened by a soldier, who placed on the shelf near her a piece of brown bread and a pitcher of water, and then silently withdrew, not without throwing a look of wonder on the fair and noble prisoner whom he had been appointed to guard. Rosa at first paid but little attention to the breakfast which had been provided for her, but after an hour or two she began to feel faint from her long fast, and approaching the shelf, she broke with some difficulty a piece of the bread, and eat it, without any repining over its hardness and coarseness. She was just endeavoring to raise to her lips the heavy pitcher of water, when the door again opened, and she beheld a tall figure, clad in the extreme of fashion, which personage stood as though transfixed to the threshold by astonishment. What was Rosa's surprise when she recognised Raphael's worthless rival, Stanislaus Dewello!

"Mademoiselle?" said he, in a voice of deep emotion, "Will you permit an old friend to offer his services in effecting your liberation from this dismal prison?"

"My lord!" replied Rosa, with frigid politeness, "I can scarcely express the painful embarrassment arising from your presence. Forgetfulness, it seems to me, was all that you could hope from us!"

"You are severe, Mademoiselle, and seem to condemn too harshly the resentment which, as a man of honor, wronged and insulted, I could not avoid showing."

"I know not what you consider a wrong or an insult, my lord! nor do I desire to know, for I shall certainly consider as an insult offered to myself, any allusion of yours to the past. But

one thing is quite clear to me, and that is, that all private resentments and individual interests should be forgotten in the common interests of our country—of that country whom all her children are imperatively bound to serve."

"And who told you that I have abandoned the cause of my country, or how know you but I may at this very juncture be endeavoring to raise it from its cruel prostration? Yet on these points you should have been morally certain before you ventured to accuse me of treason."

"I—I accuse no one, my lord! and I am always happy to hear that any one is more deserving of esteem than I had been led to believe."

On hearing this, Stanislaus eagerly attempted to justify himself for the course he had taken, but as he proceeded he became sensible that though the passions, when they obtain the mastery, easily persuade their victim that all they urge him to do is right, and perfectly justifiable, yet it is not so easy to impose on pure and upright minds, who are the true judges of what is honorable. Moreover, as he went on endeavoring to explain what he called his recent coldness and reserve towards the great cause of which he had once been one of the boldest partisans, he began to understand how deplorably he had failed in the hour of danger and of trial. Alas! even at the hour when poor bleeding Poland lay writhing under the vengeful lash of her remorseless tyrant, had he not made common cause with the Russians? Had he not stooped to become the mean, interested sycophant of the government, and had not many a substantial favor rewarded his shameful alliance with the enemy of his country? Yes, all that was true, and yet, strangely enough, Stanislaus had fallen so very low almost without being sensible of his fall. Fierly, that accomplished spy, had skillfully probed and embittered the deep wounds of his master's proud heart. He had easily persuaded him to remain inactive when it appeared to gratify his revenge, and this neutrality, at such a trying moment had not failed to ingratiate the Russian authorities, who, ever skilful and ready to lay hold on any offered advantage, very soon bestowed on the renegade noble the most substantial marks of their approbation. They then proceeded to insinuate that he could make himself exceedingly useful in tranquillizing the country, and flattered his pride by some commissions wearing a very plausible exterior. On the other hand, that love of show and of pleasure, was fully gratified by those who well understood his flimsy character, and this went far to blind him to the consequences, leading him on headlong towards downright treachery. He entered Warsaw, then, with the Russians who were very willing to have, if possible, some Polish deserters through whom they might subsequently carry on the government with more ease, availing themselves of the secrets which these men might be able to unfold. Stanislaus had heard in rapid succession of Raphael's departure with his regiment, the expected arrest of the Count, and finally the imprisonment and condemnation of Rosa. His ever lively imagination had at once represented to him that now was the time to recover the esteem of those whom he had so completely given up. He knew nothing of the secret marriage, and believed that if he could once effect Rosa's liberation, and obtain a full pardon for the Count, he might still carry out his favorite scheme of a marriage with Rosa. Full of these romantic ideas he had presented himself before Rosa; but the unbending rectitude of that young girl—the dignity of her mien, and the irresistible influence of her noble language, soon brought him down from the ideal height on which he had placed himself, and showed him all the depravity and the degradation into which he had fallen. Overwhelmed with confusion, and stung with secret remorse, his frivolous mind sought to find an excuse in the mighty power of despairing love.

"And is it, then, you?" he exclaimed, "who reproach me with my errors? While with you, I lived irreproachable and honored, and it is only the racking sense of having lost you that has plunged me into this abyss whose horrors you so well describe! Is it then you who cast me off with disdain?"

"Nay, my lord," returned Rosa, her beautiful features wearing an expression of mingled pity and reserve, "I pity the guilty much more than I despise them; but I do not think it at all right that they should attempt to justify conduct which admits of no palliation."

"Well! even at the risk of crowning my offences," resumed Stanislaus, "I must and shall explain the purpose of my visit. Without taking much trouble to think over the causes which divide us, I began to think that in the evil days on which we have fallen, those petty causes might be mutually forgotten, and our hearts drawn together. Even if I admit the faults wherewith you reproach me, I have dared to hope that I can expiate them by my entire devotion to the interests of your family, and that I may, to a certain extent, be instrumental in healing the wounds of our country. I can secure life and

fortune to your father, and, of course, your own immediate liberation. In mercy, then, do not again discourage those hopes which you see I cannot renounce; tell me, at least, that you will take an interest in the efforts which I shall make to regain your good opinion, and that one day or another —"

"You have said enough, my lord!" interrupted Rosa, with unusual vivacity, "but you yourself do not know how offensive is this discourse to me. I am married, and Raphael is my husband!"

Stanislaus stood rooted to the spot, and the words which he had been about to utter, and suddenly expired on his trembling lips. He had had but a moment of repentance—he had discovered the extent of his degradation, and had hoped to recover himself, not by a generous sacrifice, but like all enervated and debased souls, by making conditions which would have ensured for him a sufficient compensation. But now his offers could not be accepted; he had humbled himself for nothing, and his passions, painfully curbed for a brief space, now sprang up again with violence, even as dry wood shoots upward and bursts into splinters after having been restrained by even a passing pressure.

"Madame!" said he, at length, with bitter irony, "you have then no need of my services, and I regret having troubled you as I did. You are now sure of protection, which will doubtless shield you from every danger, and I wish you much joy of your security. Do not fear any further importunity from me on any subject.—Farewell, Madame!"

And away he went, once more in a frame of mind that fitted him for all and every thing, no matter how vile or base, so that he might gratify his revenge. Fierly, who awaited him without, speedily availed himself of these good dispositions, and turned them, as he did everything, to his own account. As to Rosa, so great was her joy and thankfulness to get rid of her troublesome visitor, that for a little while her miserable chamber seemed a quiet and secure retreat; now she could almost fancy that she had been restored to liberty.

"Oh, my God!" she exclaimed, "how much gratitude do I owe Thee for having saved me from the seductions of that man—for wretched, indeed, would have been my fate had I married him! It is Thy holy religion which has taught me to prefer the eternal beauties of the mind and of the soul to the poor, perishable charms of face or form. Blessed and praised for ever be Thy name, oh God!"

All that day did Rosa remain in her prison-chamber, trembling with apprehensions lest Stanislaus might again make his appearance. But the day passed away without any further molestation, and indeed without any incident save a visit from the gaoler about sun-down. Yet Rosa was not forgotten, for, at the moment when she was about to seek repose for the night, she was summoned again to appear before the military court. Having discovered, from the questions addressed to her, that her father's asylum was still unknown, she could not refrain from expressing her satisfaction.

"Madame!" said the president, in a harsh, cold tone, "for we now know you as the wife of another rebel—you had better reflect a little upon the torture which awaits you, and do not flatter yourself that our sentence is but a mere idle threat, made use of to terrify you into compliance. Once more I ask, will you prevail upon Count Bialewski to submit to the imperial authority? Remember that your submission will propitiate your judges. Moreover, you will do well to consider, that on the very first news of your punishment, your father will at once come forward, so that your obstinacy will have no other result than that of incensing us still more against you all."

"Blessed are they who suffer for righteousness sake!" replied Rosa, with invincible firmness, "those divine words are my hope and strength."

"Let the consequences of your mulish obstinacy fall, then, on your own head," cried the president, in a wrathful voice, "and on the heads of those whom you love so unwisely."

"And yet neither you nor your master shall go unpunished for your unholly persecution!" cried Rosa, with earnest solemnity; "God is the Supreme Judge of all, and he will have his day of retribution!"

"Silence, madame!" said the president, sternly, "silence becomes you—prepare to hear the final pronouncement of your sentence."

Having consulted for a few minutes with the other members of the commission, he arose and pronounced the definite sentence that the daughter of Count Bialewski, found guilty of high treason, was to be taken to the court-yard of the castle, and there receive twenty-five lashes of the knout, and then to be banished to Siberia, where she was to work in the mines.

Rosa heard this cruel decree with unmoved composure, and being brought back to her prison

she passed the remainder of the night in prayer. Towards morning she fell into a slumber so that when the soldiers came to seek her they found her asleep, with her head resting on the side of her bed. On being awakened she quickly arose, and having recommended herself once more to the Divine protection, she quietly followed the soldiers, who appeared surprised by such heroic courage in a young and high born lady. The court-yard was filled with soldiers, and the gates had been thrown open so that any who wished might enter. But the invitation was useless, for scarcely one individual could bear to look upon such a dismal sight, and least of all the poor heart-wrung Poles. Rosa ascended with a firm step a sort of large trestle which had been hastily thrown up in the court. She was then tied to a stake driven down into the ground, and the executioner having torn off the garments which covered her shoulders, prepared to strike at the first signal. The victim, deadly pale, but still composed, folded her arms on her bosom, as tho' to conceal as much of her nakedness as she could from the rude soldiers, and fixed her liquid eyes on the blue heaven above, and awaited the first blow—her long fair tresses unintentionally loosened by the executioner fell over her shoulders and covered them as with a thick veil. Not a word was heard around, for even the hardened spectators were struck with reverence and astonishment by the saintly resignation and shrinking modesty of that young girl. Nay, tears were seen to roll over the bronzed and weather-beaten faces of many a one amongst the fierce soldiers of the Czar.

"Have you nothing to say?" demanded the officer who presided at the execution of the sentence.

"Nothing, except to invoke a blessing on the head of that father for whom I willingly suffer."

A low, subdued murmur of admiration ran from rank to rank of the soldiers and the people.—Several voices were heard crying—"pardon!"—"pardon!" But the officer raised his sword, turning away his head as he did so: the drums were heard for a moment, but the next all was silence save the hissing sounds of the whip as it lashed and tore the naked shoulders of the heroic daughter of Bialewski. Though even at the tenth stroke her strength was seen to fail, and her head to sink languidly on her bosom, yet on and on went the fatal lash till the twenty-five had been given. The bleeding and now senseless body was then unbound from the post and taken back to the straw couch in the prison. A surgeon was brought, who, having washed and dressed the deep wounds inflicted by the whip, assured the spectators that the lady would live. After a little time the poor sufferer opened her eyes, and when consciousness returned she was never once heard to murmur, though the pain of her many wounds must have been excruciating.

About a month after, her strength being well restored, she was one morning summoned by the gaoler, (who had been her only nurse during her illness) to join some other prisoners who were, he supposed, setting out for Siberia. She was then conducted to a large hall on the first floor where she was found assembled about twenty convicts, all of the very first families of Poland.—But, oh! what mingled feelings of happiness and sorrow were hers when amongst them she recognized the noble form of her father, who received her in his arms, and tears streamed copiously from the eyes of both. The commissioners had not erred in their diabolical calculation: the terrible news of Rosa's punishment had flown like wild-fire through the city, and reached the Count in his obscure retreat. Overwhelmed with anguish, the heart-stricken father could no longer remain absent from his daughter for the sake of preserving a life which was now useless if he could not devote it to that heroic child. He hoped that by submitting himself, they would be banished together, and as they might be bound by the same chain, he could still protect his cherished darling even in exile and captivity. Thus it was that they met again at this sad moment, and yet so great was their joy that they could only express it by their tears.

"Oh my father!" said Rosa at length, as they ascended the vehicle which was to convey them from Warsaw and across the entire kingdom of Poland, "oh! my father! were Raphael but with us, we could forget all our sufferings."

(To be continued.)

REV. DR. CAHILL

ON SECRET SOCIETIES.

To the Working Classes and the Small Cottiers of Ireland.

(From the Dublin Catholic Telegraph.)

Fellow Countrymen—As the Government of this country are generally well informed on the organization, the plans, and the very names of the leaders of secret societies in Ireland, it cannot be doubted that the proclamation issued in the end of last week by the Lord Lieutenant has been called forth by the stringent necessity of the case.

From a very long experience, indeed, I have never known a *similar* proclamation founded on false information. The Viceregal authorities may occasionally make a mistake in the extent of the confederacy, or individuals; but beyond dispute their knowledge of its originators, members, abettors, and silent friends, is most accurate.—You may rely on this statement with implicit confidence: and be perfectly satisfied and convinced that the Chief Secretary at the Castle can produce, at the moment I write these words, the names of every individual who has administered an unlawful oath; as well as the names, the residence, the parents, the character of every wretched dupe who has defied God's Gospel as he put his trembling hand to the blasphemous pledge. The moment when the unfortunate new member pronounces the words of the confederate oath, in that moment he places his life at the mercy of a traitorous companion or a perjured spy, he ties the hangman's rope on his own neck, he pronounces his own sentence of death, and prepares himself, ill-fated wretch, to die on an ignominious scaffold.

If you wish to learn whence have the Government derived their knowledge; and whence have I assumed the tone of confidence with which I speak. I reply:—"The Government have their information from your own associate; from the very man who administered the oath; from the villain who perjured you into blasphemy; who received a bribe for your death, and who makes a traffic on your flesh and blood. The Government has this accurate information within twenty-four hours of your sanguinary oath; and I have this knowledge graven on my heart from my intimate acquaintance with the unfortunate history of the atrocious system of secret societies. The delegate who enters a new district, enrolls new members, and administers his fatal oath, is the chief murderer, the principal assassin, of the entire confederation; he meets the unsuspecting country boy; he drinks with him, he bribes him, he swears him, he betrays him, he hangs him.—Believe me well; I know the case which I depict, I have witnessed the scenes which I describe, and I saw with indescribable pity the victim whom I present to you as an example and a warning. In the year (I think) 1827, not less a number than one hundred and thirty-three wretched creatures were transported from the Queen's county for Whitefoot confederacy; and in later times a similar fate has overtaken several dupes in different parts of Ireland, while others still more unfortunate have been hanged from the counties of Tipperary, Clare, Limerick, &c.—And in reference to those victims from Leinster and Munster, never forget that the companions who (as they say) gave the oath, or charged the deadly pistol, were the men who informed the Government, received the blood-money, and hanged their confederates! Most of you must have heard of the remarkable informer of whom Sir Robert Peel spoke in the House of Commons in the year 1836. As nearly as I can remember his words on that occasion, they are as follows:—"When I was Chief Secretary of Ireland, a murder was committed between Carrick-on-Suir and Clonmel. A Mr. — had a deadly revenge towards a Mr. — and he employed four men at two guineas each! to murder him. There was a road on each side of the river Suir from Carrick to Clonmel; and placing two men on each road, the escape of victim was impossible. He was, therefore, foully murdered; and the country was so shocked by this heinous crime, that the Government offered a reward of £500 for the discovery of each of the murderers. And can it be believed," said Sir Robert, "the miscreant who bribed the four murderers was the very man who came and gave the information which led to their execution: and again," exclaimed Sir Robert, "with these hands I paid in my office in Dublin Castle, the sum of £2000 to that monster in human shape."

I have taken pains thus to convince you that the government will be always informed of the organization of secret societies from the most reliable source of accurate knowledge—namely, the confession of the leaders themselves! and I have also supplied you with the result of my long experience—namely, "that as sure as any of you take the accursed oath, join the association, or be an accomplice in compassing the death of any human being, so sure will you spend your life in the chains of penal servitude, or expiate your offence on the scaffold. I and the body to which I belong, are your sincere friends: we cherish, defend, and love you; and listen with obedience to our lord, our paternal advice. When misrule oppresses you, when trial afflicts you, when poverty galls you, are we not your advocates, your fellow sufferers, your companions? Have we ever flinched from your sides when scorn, persecution, or sickness overpowered you? Have we not stood with you on the precipice of famine and expatriation in this world, and have we not been ever found your firm friends, under every phase of trial and persecution, battling for your rights and your liberties? And where can our