



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XVI.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, APRIL 6, 1866.

No. 35.

LIFE IN THE CLOISTER; OR, FAITHFUL AND TRUE.

By the Author of "The World and the Cloister,"
&c., &c., &c.

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

'Mistress Lilian,' said the old gentleman, heated with temper, yet speaking with the greatest coolness, and still indulging in the same satirical vein, 'Miss Lilian, I judge three months spent in the quiet retirement of Lytham the very fittest thing for both of you. I shall spend every Sunday with you, and'

'Three months!' exclaimed both Lilian and Marion in the same breath. The latter, heaving a deep sigh, said no more; but Lilian, who inherited her father's quick, impulsive temper, added—

'Three months, father! who are you thinking of? You are jesting with us; but I am like yourself, and do not like to be laughed at, I candidly tell you. I shall die of *ennui*, if you condemn me to such odious retirement for the term you have mentioned.'

'Let it bring you both to your sense, then,' said her father, striking the table with the violence with which he struck his clenched fist upon it. 'Three whole months shall pass before you shall either of you return to Bowden; and as for London, why, you'll neither of you go there for one year at least.'

Lilian pushed her cup and plate aside. She was too indignant to speak; but she chafed inwardly at the idea of her own helplessness. As to Marion, brave Marion, proud Marion, she kept a guard upon herself, mindful of the truth of that quaint old adage which says, 'What can't be cured must be endured.'

A little later, and Mr. Craig, with a daughter on each arm, alighted from his carriage at the railway station; and, to tell the truth, those generally affectionate daughters had felt desperately disinclined to take the proffered arm.

Seats were taken in a first class carriage, and they were walking down the platform, when the two Miss Elliotts—women who were no favorites with the young ladies—espied them.

'Is it possible, Mr. Craig, that you are leaving Bowden for Lytham?' exclaimed the elder of the two. 'Why, I did not think we should lose you so soon; we understood you were going to spend part of the season in London.'

'So I had intended, madam,' replied the old gentleman; but circumstances, you see, make us often change our plans. There are some little points at variance between myself and my daughters; and when young people are out of temper I always fancy their bodily health is affected; so with a view to mend both the one and the other, I intend my daughters to ruralise for three months at Lytham.'

'Three months!' ejaculated Miss Elliot;—'why, my dear Lilian, you will not like it—you who detest the country so much. Mr. Craig, you are severe. I am afraid, with your amiable daughters, Lytham is the very *re plus ultra* of all that is quiet.'

'The very place, madam, for thought and reflection,' replied the mischievous old gentleman; 'but hark! there is the bell; we must wish you good-bye,' he added, as he held open the carriage-door, in order that his daughters might take possession of their seats. Even Marion's eyes flashed with indignation, whilst Lilian was boiling over. She flung herself into a seat, exclaiming—

'O, papa, you are very cruel! Surely it was enough to drag us from Bowden, without making all Bowden merry with the news that we were being punished like a couple of children.'

'I am glad you feel it, Lilian; it is all for your good; but another word,' he said, enjoining silence with his finger on his lips. 'Do not expose yourself before strangers.' Never did ride in a railway carriage seem more dreary to the two sisters than was this; added to which, their pride had been wounded in the tenderest point by the knowledge that their father was dealing with them as if the days of their early girlhood were to be lived over again.

At last the sight of the shipping in the old dock made known to them that they were nearing Lytham, a pretty place, which they had never visited, but which had been described to them by a dissipated, pleasure-loving family of their acquaintance, as remarkably quiet and *ennuyante*.

They were now to judge for themselves. A few moments more, and the train steamed into the neat and pretty station; and, on alighting, Mr. Craig, unusually attentive and polite to his daughters, because particularly irritated against them, again tendered his arm, and turned his steps in the direction of the beach, his daughters lost in wonder at the step he was about to take; for on former occasions, whenever the merchant prince had patronised watering-places, he had

always engaged a large and commodious house, bringing with him his carriage, and five or six servants.

Not so on the present occasion. Mr. Craig's temper was still at fever heat; and, when this was the case, he always took especial care to make the offender suffer. How much more readily, then, could he effect his purpose, when the offenders were, as in the present case, his own children.

It was certainly laughable enough in its way, this idea of punishing two young women as if they were naughty children; but it was no laughing matter for his victims; for, though there was seemingly nothing at issue beyond a few months' dwelling in a pretty watering-place, you see it involved a tedious separation from those in whose society they wished to mix, and to Lilian, especially, an absolute want of the pleasure and amusements she had pictured to herself as about to enjoy.

Turning the corner of the Station Road, Mr. Craig looked right and left, whilst Marion quietly admired the very beautiful beach, with the blue waters beyond, and a few sailing vessels in the distance, plying between Liverpool and Preston. Turning to the right, he bent his steps towards a row of small but extremely pretty cottages, or rather villas, made, like all the other buildings, of red brick, with pretty casement windows, the walls covered over with creeping plants. The roofs of these villas were pointed, and before the houses stretched very neat gardens, tastefully laid out, each with a miniature lawn. In the bay window of one of these cottages hung a bill, containing the announcement that there were 'Apartments to Let'; and, to the surprise and ineffable disgust of Lilian, her father opened the garden-gate in order to make his inquiries. Was this, the place in which he meant to leave them? vastly pretty, exquisitely clean, but quite unfit for the daughters of the rich Mr. Craig. Was no carriage to be sent down, not even the pony phaeton? she asked, as, all arrangements concluded, and a parlor and two sleeping-rooms engaged, Mr. Craig informed them that he should lunch with them and then return to Manchester.

'The carriage or phaeton?' he said, as if astonished at the question. 'Certainly not. It he were with them, the case would be different; but young ladies—who wished, the one to marry a poor man, who could scarcely pay the hire of a cab, and the other, who wanted to be a nun—had no need of carriages to drive in; they could walk on foot.'

A deep sigh was the only reply of Marion. As to Lilian, she was too indignant to suffer herself to speak; and, after a half-hour's walk on the beach, they returned home to lunch, during which the father and daughters scarcely exchanged a dozen words together.

'Mrs. Wilson,' he said, addressing the landlady, when about to take his departure, 'you will have the goodness to let my daughters have whatever they require, and get the bill ready for me to settle when I come here on Saturday.'

There was no choice but to accompany Mr. Craig to the Station; and, for once in their lives, they parted from their father with feelings of suppressed indignation.

Lilian returned to the cottage in company with her sister, declaring that she could not breathe in that small parlor, the ceiling of which was so low. She termed the place 'a little Holland,' with nothing to be seen, save a dingy old mill, turning its sails round whenever she went to the window; grew angry with Marion, and outraged with Benson, because they could not view things with the same jaundiced eye; called her father a *brute*, who did all he could think of to make her miserable; and, after pacing the room in a fit of uncontrollable anger, threw herself on the couch, and wept herself to sleep.

Then Marion turning to Benson—a staid, demure woman of some forty years of age, who had been her deceased mother's maid—begged her to put on her cloak and bonnet, and come with her to explore the place, adding, 'Lilian will not miss us for a good two hours, Benson; she has fallen into a deep sleep. My heart is very heavy; I shall feel better if I can but get out.'

Benson—who really loved both sisters, but Marion in particular—was soon ready; and out they went turning their steps towards the west beach. It was a lovely afternoon towards the end of June, not too warm to prevent their walk from being a pleasant one. The place looked exceedingly pretty, with its *cottages ornees* and villas, trimly-kept gardens and ornamental palisades in front; whilst beyond lay the beach, perhaps one of the finest in England, the turf with which it was covered bright as an emerald in its freshness; and a little further the promenade, the sands beneath now washed over by the tide, which was rapidly coming in.

There was an air of quietude and peace over the place, which, though she was brought to it so reluctantly, fascinated Marion even against her will. Under other circumstances, this would

have been the very spot she would have liked; for, inasmuch as Lilian loved the crowded streets and busy thoroughfares of a thronged city, so did Marion love the quiet scenes of the country. She seated herself on a bench, and sat for some time, enjoying the scene, admiring the light sailing vessels, skimming, as it were, the surface of the waters; whilst ever and anon a sea-gull dipped its white wings in the crested waves, and then soared high above them; and as she sat musing over yesterday's quarrel with her father, and her sudden removal to this place, she began to reproach herself severely for the irritation she had felt, acknowledging to herself the truth that, quiet as were her habits and pursuits, Lytham would have been a pleasant place to her, but for the circumstances under which she had become a resident there.

She, however, dreaded what she knew both herself and Benson would have to encounter from the temper of Lilian, and expected to find her still asleep, or, if not, chafing, fretting, and pacing up and down the room, as she had done before she left her.

She was then somewhat surprised to see Lilian, beautiful Lilian, sitting at the table writing—writing, with a smile on her lip, and seemingly in the best of spirits.

'Well, my dear, have you seen anything to amuse yourself in this deserted little Holland?' she said, as her sister entered the room.

'O Lilian, Lilian, how fond you are of crowded streets! Look now; can you see no superior beauty in the fair prospect before you, with the setting sun tipping with its golden light the surface of the deep. How can you prefer the noisy, dusty streets to the calm quiet of this place!—you, with all your intellect;—it *does* surprise me, Lilian.'

'Be surprised, my life,' replied her sister; 'it is quite right and proper, and not at all astonishing, that you, whose every wish is to become a nun, should admire the country; but give to me, I have always told you, the bustle and tumult, and the active life, of a crowded city, with all its pleasures and amusements, Marion,—give me its concert-rooms and theatres in the week, and on the Sunday its spacious churches and their beautiful ceremonies. O Marion, I would like to pass all my life in Paris or in London.'

The younger sister looked wonderfully at her, and sighed, saying—

'Mercy on me, Lilian, what a medley of things you have put together. Oh, do reflect; and ask yourself, if, with your taste for all that is gay and expensive, you will be a happy wife should you wed Herbert Leslie?'

'Yes, I should,' was the reply. 'Look here,' and she held up the sheet of paper on which she had been writing; 'this note goes to Brixton by the evening post.'

'Dear Lilian,' said Marion, passing her arm around her sister's waist, 'remember papa has forbidden correspondence with Herbert; be prudent; wait, Lilian; for heaven's sake, wait.—Our very residence here, in this to you distasteful place, should warn you of what he is capable should you grievously offend him. Wait and watch, Lilian; do you wait till Herbert has time to secure his own prospects in life; and I will wait, aye, wait if needs be for years, and yet patiently work out my wish at last.'

'This letter goes to-night, Marion,' said the self-willed girl. 'Look you now, my father should not visit my failings with such severity. I read his character in my own hasty temperament, my obstinacy, if you please to give it so harsh a name; but to relieve you of your fears, I will just own to you that this letter is not written to Herbert, as my father has chosen to forbid my correspondence; oh no, it is only to his favorite sister, Kate; that will answer my purpose just as well. I have simply told her that papa has quarrelled with both of us, and also the reason why we are punished by being sent here, forsooth.'

'Lilian, dearest, I feel very unhappy. Mark my words, evil will come of that letter.'

'I am quite ready to meet the evil, darling.—Now let me finish it,' she said; and tell Benson to be ready to go with me to the post, for I will not entrust her with it, lest she should be tormented with any scruples about my father, and dare send it on to him instead; he may have put our very maid as a spy on our actions, Marion. How inconceivably humbled I felt at his leaving us without money, and even telling the mistress of this house to get what we required, and make out her bill to him.'

To expostulate was useless. Marion went up to her little bedroom, how little to that at Bowden, with its elegant appointments; her sister's conversation had again lighted up the smouldering embers which yet smothered in her own breast; she even looked out disdainfully at the pretty landscape; regarded her father in the light of a tyrant; remembered that she had seen handsome and spacious houses on the west beach, whilst he had located them in this small cottage; that he had never left them before

without an abundant supply of money, never deprived them of the use of an equipage. And though Marion knew that all these things could be well dispensed with, and that she especially should not desire them, if she wished to imbibe the true spirit of the state she aimed at; yet she regarded the loss of them as a proof of despotic tyranny on the part of her father, saying to herself—

'He was young once upon a time. I wonder how he would have borne it had his father forbade his marriage with my mother; or how he would have liked it, had he wished to devote himself to the Church, and had his desires thwarted! Parental tyranny, domestic misrule,' added the rebellious daughter; 'no music here, no books, I declare; only two or three I caught up in the hurry of departure. How shall we wide away our time?'

My lady readers don't be too severe on these rebellious young damsels. Their characters are not very estimable in the days of their prosperity; but they will be refined in the crucible of adversity, and come through the fiery ordeal like purified gold.

Day after day wore on very monotonously, till the Saturday on which, agreeably to his promise Mr. Craig arrived. Lilian had not yet had an answer to her letter, consequently she was still in the old mood, and felt somewhat like a restive young horse, unwilling and yet obliged to submit to the superior power which governs him.—Marion, too, was out of spirits. She had written to the sisters at Canley; it had not been answered. It was very unkind of them to neglect her, so she began to lose her temper as well as Lilian; so that when their despotic lord arrived, the two ladies made but little show of concealing what they felt. Mr. Craig arrived at the station with many other Manchester gentlemen, by the four o'clock train. Their wives and daughters were waiting for them on the platform; and before he alighted from the carriage, he regarded with a feeling of fatherly pride his two beautiful daughters. He noticed, however, from the expression of their countenances, that the novel punishment with which he had visited them had taken effect; for the stately Lilian looked wonderfully as if she repressed her tears only by a marvellous effort, as well as his usually gay, bright-eyed Marion.

'All right,' he muttered to himself; 'the way to serve girls who, with wealth and good looks, are intent on such a future as they carve out for themselves.'

The evening passed away very drearily. Mr. Craig had dropped the tone of badinage he had assumed when he took them from Manchester, but did not fail to annoy them; and he hoped his communication would have that effect, by informing them that the Misses Elliott would visit Lytham the following week, adding—

'Lytham is the best place in England for delicate people. I have advised them to come; and they have promised me that they will call and see you as soon as they arrive.'

'I do not want to see that spiteful, censorious Miss Elliott,' thundered out Lilian. 'You know how much I dislike her, papa. I am very sorry she is coming here at all; and to see us in this place too—so small, so confined, after our spacious rooms at Bowden; it is a wonder that Marion and myself are not both ill.'

Mr. Craig vouchsafed no reply, except that he had asked the Misses Elliott as a personal favor to visit his daughters, and should insist that they were properly received. The following day was Sunday. They attended Mass in the pretty little chapel of the place, were duly edified by the piety of the congregation, and returned home at a still early hour in the morning, found the day insupportably long upon their hands.

In the afternoon, however, Mr. Craig, himself a great walker, suggested a ramble to the Star Hills, as they are called; and then dragged the young ladies far on the way to Blackpool, till, thoroughly worn out, Lilian declared she should drop down from fatigue, unless she returned home at once.

The long, in fact too long walk was however not unprofitable; it made them both so drowsy that the weary day was shortened by each of them falling asleep during more than two hours of the evening. Mr. Craig was very foolish, to say the least, or he would have known, as a good priest once quaintly expressed it, 'that idleness was the Evil One's work shop.' He was merciless in the species of tyranny he unwisely indulged in; and when Lilian, always the spokeswoman, requested that her musical instruments should be sent down, with a parcel of her favorite authors, he replied in the negative, saying—

'I wish to accustom you both to do without all and each of the comforts by which you have been surrounded. You will have nothing here beyond absolute necessities. Herbert can furnish you with nothing more. I wish to see how you can bear the change.'

'And for how long?' she said. 'Never for three months! Remember, that were I Herbert's wife to-morrow, were Marion a nun this day, our hands and minds would not be thus unoccupied.'

'In three months from the day I brought you here you will return to Bowden; and if you really find the time pass so very slowly, hire a piano; that, and that alone, is the only indulgence I shall afford to either of you,' said Mr. Craig, coldly touching the foreheads of his daughters with his lips, as he bade them good-bye.

CHAPTER III.—TREATS OF UNWELCOME VISITORS, AND A WARM RECEPTION.

Sure enough, early in the week came to Lytham the two stiff, demure ladies, whose rigid rews had always been the terror of Mrs. Craig-Severe in their notions of right to a positive fault, making no allowance for the failings of others, unforgiving when offended, censorious and rigidly exact in their own conduct, they won but little love in the coterie in which they moved.

As to religion, it was represented in their own persons, in a very sour and forbidding aspect, depriving it of all that renders it sweet and pleasant, investing it with the dark coloring lent by their own morose bigotry.

With these ladies it was a sin to indulge in innocent recreation, to enter a place of amusement, to read a work of imagination. It was simply wonderful how such persons could have ever submitted themselves to the benign influences of the Catholic faith; and they had certainly brought into the Church the puritanical tendencies imbedded in their early years from a certain Mrs. Donald, their maternal grandmother, and the wife of a Scottish Presbyterian, with whom their youth had been spent.

Such were the ladies whose society was in a manner forced upon Lilian and her sister. They had taken apartments in one of the largest houses on the beach, and drove up in their own carriage to the gate of the unassuming but pretty cottage in which the sisters lodged.

'Here are those odious Miss Elliotts,' exclaimed Lilian, starting from the couch. 'I shall leave you to receive them, Marion,' she said, rushing from the room. 'I feel as if I could not be civil to those women.'

But Lilian did not effect her escape so cleverly as she thought, for the voluminous skirt of her muslin dress was still visible as her light form turned the corner of the little staircase facing the hall-door; and the impropriety of a young lady rushing with such vulgar haste from the room, because she beheld visitors coming, was duly descanted by the elder of the two young ladies.

'Why, Marion,' said Miss Elliot, 'we were so surprised that papa should have brought you here. He was so pleased to hear that we were coming, and begged us to see you very often, so that we consider a positive duty to look after you both; we shall see you every day without fail, calling each morning to give you a drive in our carriage, and then shall either spend the afternoon and evening with you, or expect you to be with us.'

Marion bowed assent, and tried—deceitfully! Marion—tried to look pleased, when she felt as if she should burst into tears.

At last Lilian entered the room, and the two repellent natures—the one cold and stately, the other stiff and forbidding—came in contact with each other.

'I thank you,' she replied, as Miss Elliot reiterated her offers of acting as a chaperone; 'but I doubt if you will find my company agreeable; you know how I dislike the country; I prefer music and a few books to driving about these deserted lanes and roads.'

'Strange, such a decidedly unpoetical turn of mind, my dear Lilian. However, you have a very pretty place here,' she said, glancing with affected admiration round the small parlor, and mentally contrasting it with Lilian's spacious boudoir at Bowden. 'Papa is always so kindly solicitous, my dear, about everything connected with you, nothing is too good; Martha has often made that observation; have you not, Martha?' she added, glancing towards her sister.

'Oh, no doubt, no doubt,' replied Lilian, with somewhat of asperity, 'papa always acts for the best, however things may turn out.'

Then, starting from her seat, with such sudden impetuosity that the staid and quiet Martha's nerves were terribly shaken, she rushed to the bell-rope, rang it with a haste only warrantable if one of the ladies had fallen into fainting fit, and bade Benson put wine and cake on the table, to the immense surprise of the visitors, and the uncontrollable mirth of Marion.

'My dear Lilian, how you do surprise me!—Bless me, why such hurry?' exclaimed Miss Elliott. 'One would have thought your very life depended on the haste with which you could ring that bell. Do you not know, my love, that such impetuosity is neither in accordance with