

Moets' Conquy.

LITTLE CHILDREN.

BY WILFRID MENNELL.

Little children half angelic!

To our older eyes ye seem
Like a keepsake or a relic
Of our childhood's vanished dream,
When, like you, we sat and babbled
By the softly flowing stream.

Little children! your to-morrow
Seems e'en brighter than your now;
Buried are the seeds of sorrow
That will one day round you grow,
Robbing from the cheek its color,
Streaking with deep lines the brow.

Little children, soft and shining!
Guardian angels o'er you bend,
May they, ne'er their charge resigning,
Guide you to the journey's end,
There to hand you safely over
To His charge whose flock they tend.

Little children round us clinging!
Never yet hath subtle doubt
Come, amid Faith's gentle singing,
With a whisper or a shout,
Till you closed your ears in anguish,
Truth and falsehood shutting out.

Little children! strong temptation,
Making war against your faith,
Hath not taken yet its station
On your daily, hourly path,
There to dog your steps for ever,
Till kind Jesus sends you death.

Little children! white and glistening,
Nothing of their glory gone,
Are the robes which, at your christening,
All unconscious we put on:
Where are ours? We dare not answer—
Though they once as brightly shone.

Little children, come and kiss me,
Ere upon my way I go;
If at last in Heaven you miss me—
Christ avert it! you will know
That I failed to learn the lesson
It is yours to teach and show.

FLORENCE O'NEILL;

OR, THE SIEGE OF LIMERICK.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONDEMNED CELL.

SOME time after the Prince of Orange arrived here, when it was expected that, according to his own declaration, and the King's letter to the Convention, an exact search and enquiry was to have been made into the birth of the Prince of Wales, there was a scheme of the whole matter drawn up, and of the proofs that were then and are still ready to be produced, to prove his royal highness' legitimacy; but no public examination being ever had, and the violence of the times, as well as interest of the present government, not permitting any private person to move in it, these papers have ever since lain by.

"But it being now thought advisable by some to have them printed, as they were at first designed, addressed to the Lords and Commons, entreating them to enquire into that weighty affair, and to call forward, examine, and protect, for who else dares to appear, the many witnesses to the several particulars therein affixed to be legally proved, I was ordered to carry these papers to the king, my master, for his inspection, that this leave and approbation might go along with the desire of his good subjects here, and they being taken with me, with some other papers of accounts in a small trunk, amongst linen and other private things of my own, and not in the packet, by this means fell into the hands of our present governors.

"They waived the producing of them as evidence at my trial, yet I have just reason to believe my greatest crimes were contained therein."

Having read this document, Florence concealed it in her bosom, wisely resolving to consign it to the care of Mrs. Ashton, whilst she continued a resident at the court.

On her arrival at the house she speedily changed her dress, and told her that, sad as the interview had been, she felt gratified that she had seen her husband; also that she was to take what steps she pleased with regard to her children, for the expenses of whose education she would make herself chargeable, and requested her when she had any communication to make, to convey it to her through the means of her uncle.

Amidst many tears and the warmest expression of thanks, Florence then left the house in a coach which Mrs. Ashton had provided for her use. It was just three o'clock when she re-entered her uncle's chamber.

She was pale, tearful, dispirited; how could it be otherwise?

The only circumstance in the whole sad affair that cheered her up was the knowledge that she had been able to do an act of charity, and thereby to soothe poor Ashton's last hours.

It was impossible, however, to deceive her uncle. He handed

her a glass of wine. She thankfully accepted it, but her hand shook as she held the glass, and then setting it down untasted, she burst into tears.

"Florence, my child, what is the matter?" said the old man, much alarmed. "You are faint and ill; you have waited too long for your food, I will order refreshments immediately. I have longed so to see you back. I have been wishing I could get you here to live with me, without the chance of giving offence in high quarters; it cannot be done, however."

"Oh, that I could! Oh, that I could!" said Florence, passionately, wringing her hands.

"But what has happened to distress you so since you left me this morning?" enquired her uncle.

Oh, uncle, Ashton is to be executed at Tyburn the day after to-morrow, and I knew nothing of it till I called on his wretched wife."

"But I did, my child, and I hid it from you purposely. But, my love, did you not tell me you would be prudent, and yet you went straight from me to poor Ashton's house, the last place you should have gone to, and you attached to the court."

Fearing the effect it might have on her uncle, Florence did not tell him of the visit she had paid to Ashton himself. Moreover, a case of harm happening to her, she judged it best that he should be able, if questioned, to declare, with a safe conscience, that he did not know what her movements had been during her absence from his house.

At length she rewarded his care and solicitude by brightening up a little, ate her dinner with composure, took wine with him, and sang him one or two favorite songs, and when she took leave of him late in the evening he was gratified at seeing her as cheerful, apparently, as when she came to visit him in the morning.

CHAPTER XX.

THE QUEEN'S ESCAPE.

ON entering the presence of the queen, Florence experienced a strange undefinable apprehension that her footsteps had been dogged and her visit to the prison consequently detected; there was a constraint about the latter, such as she had not yet observed, perhaps the idea was born out of her own fear, but the impression on her mind was, that the queen was exerting herself to repress some exercise of power or manifestation of anger.

Nevertheless, Mary, whom indisposition confined to her room, dismissed all her ladies but Florence, and on this evening was more particular than ever in her inquiry as to the Count of St. Germain's, asking questions which Florence found it very difficult to answer truthfully, and fail to discover matters which it was not well should be known at the English Court.

After she had retired to her chamber for the night, she for some time sat revolving in her mind the horror of poor Ashton's situation, and the grief of his wife, and along with it, an intense feeling of disgust and aversion took possession of her soul for William and Mary.

Casting herself on her knees, she prayed long and earnestly for Ashton, then for herself, that the merciful God would open some avenue by which she might be restored to her friends, for one very dear to her, to whom she was betrothed, and for the family of the king at St. Germain's, and feeling more calm and collected, she then retired to rest.

But the excitement of the day, and the scene at the prison, had not by any means paved the way for a quiet, peaceful slumber. Ashton was present throughout all the visions of the night, and the scene of his trial enacted over again. Ashton, as she had that day seen him, subdued and sorrowful, but nevertheless full of a holy resignation; then the scene changed, and it was still Ashton, but now he is going to pay the unjust penalty of the law; the terrible gibbet is before her, the gallows is being erected, she hears the noise of the hammers as the workmen adjust the dreadful apparatus, and she starts up in her bed, a wild moan for mercy for him on her lips. Her face was bathed in a cold perspiration, and she looked fearfully around her spacious chamber, almost trembling lest she should be confronted by some spectral vision of the pale face which had haunted her ever since she had seen him in the prison.

But no, the pale moonbeams light up the room, and though there is nothing extraordinary to be seen, still another sense, that of hearing is painfully on the alert, for she distinguishes a noise resembling that which she had heard in her fearful dream.

She sat up in her bed, and bent forwards in the attitude of one who listens intently; and, at the same moment, a small Blenheim spaniel, which always slept on the hearth rug, leaped on the bed, howling piteously.

"Ah, gracious heaven," she said to herself, "I am right; that noise is the crackling of wood, and the sagacious little animal warns me of danger."

The next moment, Florence had leaped from her bed, the air was already hot, the oaken floor on which she stood felt warm, and had, doubtless, alarmed the instinct of the dog.

She hastily threw on a dressing-gown, put her feet in her slippers, snatched up some valuable trinkets which lay on the table, and rushed from the room, closely followed by her dog.

Her chamber was on the same side of the palace as the queen's apartments: she had no thought but to save her life. A thrilling shriek burst from her lips, for she was aware now she was in the gallery, that the next suite of apartments was in flames, and with the speed of an affrighted fawn, she fled to the queen's room, giving the alarm as she hurried onwards.

Mary was buried in heavy sleep when Florence entered. Overcome by weariness, the queen had thrown herself on her couch intending to summon her maids later, and had fallen asleep.

This was no time for idle ceremony, the devouring element was within a few paces of the queen's chamber.

"Awake, madam, awake, the palace is on fire," shrieked the