

Hoops' Conquer.

THE SERMON OF ST. FRANCIS.

Up soared the lark into the air,
A shaft of song, a winged prayer,
As if a soul, released from pain,
Were flying back to Heaven again.

St. Francis heard; it was to him
An emblem of the Seraphim;
The upward motion of the fire,
The light, the heat, the heart's desire.

Around Assisi's convent gate
The birds, God's poor who cannot wait,
From moor and mere and darksome wood
Came flocking for their dole of food.

"O brother birds," St. Francis said,
"Ye come to me and ask for bread,
But not with bread alone to-day
Shall ye be fed and sent away.

"Ye shall be fed, ye happy birds,
With manna of celestial words.
Not mine, though mine they seem to be,
Not mine, though they be spoken by me.

"O, doubly are ye bound to praise
The great Creator in your lays;
He giveth you your plumes of down,
Your crimson hoods, your cloaks of brown.

He giveth you your wings to fly
And breathe a purer air on high,
And careth for you everywhere,
Who for yourselves so little care."

With flutter of swift wings and songs
Together rose the feathered throngs,
And singing scattered far apart;
Deep peace was in St. Francis' heart.

He knew not if the brotherhood
His homily had understood;
He only knew that to one ear
The meaning of his words was clear.—Longfellow.

FLORENCE O'NEILL;

OR, THE SIEGE OF LIMERICK.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE KING'S PLEDGE REDEEMED.—ST. GERMAINS.

SHE paused after a while, and leaned against the palisades, and a sense of quiet happiness to which she had long been a stranger took possession of her heart.

Absorbed in her own pleasant joyous thoughts, she heard nothing, saw nothing, regarded not the lapse of time, and knew not that the fond eyes of Queen Mary Beatrice, attended by another, to whom she was dearer far than life itself, were gazing down upon her from a window of the chateau; and she was still looking away into the future, weaving bright dreams of wedded happiness, picturing to herself how a certain chateau, at present vacant, in the valley, might be redeccrated, and of all the good she, with her wealth, might be able to do for the poor emigrants, when the words—

"Florence, my betrothed!" fell on her ear in the tones of a well-remembered voice, like a strain of music, the melody of which has never been forgotten.

The surprise was too sudden; she would have fallen, but for a strong arm outstretched to support her, and then, after awhile, he grew eloquent in praise of her constancy and truth, and forgetful of all the world beside, they talked over the days that had gone by, and conjured up fair visions of the future; of home ties and joys which death alone should break.

In the midst of her new-found happiness, Florence had not forgotten the unfortunate Mrs. Ashton and her children, and, above all other, Grace, the friend to whom she owed so very much, in whose character flourished by the grace of repentance, those same virtues inherent in the queen.

The packet, containing the story of her life, which Florence had a year since forwarded to the queen, had of itself been sufficient to introduce her to the notice of the latter.

Not very long, you may be sure, were the nuptials of Florence and Sir Reginald delayed. In the Chapel Royal of St. Germain's the ceremony which completed their betrothal was soon celebrated, taking place after the Easter festivities.

In the middle of the week following Low Sunday, there was a great gathering at St. Germain's. The fond hands of Grace, who looked on Florence as her own child, had dressed the bride's hair; had twined amongst the golden tresses the delicate orange blossom, and arranged the veil, and had decked her in as costly a robe as that which Mary of England had presented her with two years since. It was the gift of Louis of France.

Eight young ladies, chosen from the most distinguished Jacobite families resident at St. Germain's, acted as bridesmaids, and King James gave the bride away. The French king was also present, with Madame de Maintenon and many of the nobles of his court; and without doubt, those who gathered within the Chapel Royal were right in saying, there could not be found in the whole realm of France a lovelier or a more virtuous bride, or a braver knight, than Florence O'Neill and Reginald St. John.

SEVEN YEARS AFTER.

"Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us, consider and behold our reproach." This verse of the Lamentations was sung in the choir of the Chapel Royal at St. Germain's, seven years after the marriage of Florence O'Neill.

The words I have quoted touched a chord in the heart of King James, he sank back in the arms of the queen in a swoon. From that day his health rapidly declined.

Many months of weakness and infirmity brought him to the brink of the grave, the hour so dreaded by Mary Beatrice had at length arrived.

The children of his old age now stand around his bed, before the king receives the rites of the Church; he wishes to counsel them and bid them farewell.

The prince first drew nigh, and embraced him with passionate earnestness, James spoke to him in these words:

"I am now leaving the world which has been to me a sea of storms and tempests, it being the will of Almighty God to wean me from it by many and great afflictions. Serve Him with all your strength and never put the crown of England in competition with your eternal salvation. There is no slavery like sin, no liberty like His service. If He in His providence shall see fit to place you on the throne of your royal ancestors, govern your people with justice and clemency. Remember, kings are not made for themselves but for the good of their people. Set before their eyes in your own actions a pattern of all manner of virtues, consider them as your own children. You are the child of vows and prayers, behave yourself accordingly. Honor your mother that your days may be long; and be always a kind brother to your dear sister that you may reap the blessings of concord and unity." The prince gave way to a passionate burst of grief. The little Princess Louisa was then brought, bathed in tears, to her dying father's bedside. She was one of the loveliest of children, and young as she was, the intelligent child understood the sorrow that impended over her.

"Adieu, my dear child," said the king after he had embraced and blessed her, "Adieu. Serve your Creator in the days of your youth, consider virtue as the brightest ornament of your sex. Follow closely in the steps of that great pattern of virtue your mother, who has been no less than myself overwhelmed with calamity, but Time, the mother of truth, will, I hope, at last, make her virtues shine as bright as the sun."

Then the dying king exhorted his servants to lead holy and Christian lives, and after he had received the last Sacraments, he told the Curé that he wished to be buried privately in his parish church, with no other inscription on his tomb than these words, "Here lies James, King of Great Britain."

He died in perfect charity with all the world, and especially named his son-in-law, the Prince of Orange, and the Princess Anne of Denmark, his daughter.

All this while the poor queen had sunk down on the ground by his bedside. The king said all he could to comfort her, pointing out it was the will of God she should bear this as all other trials.

The following day Louis of France arrived, alighting at the iron gates, lest the noise of the coach driving into the court should disturb the king. James received him as composedly as if nothing was the matter. The sight of the queen's grief was the only thing that disturbed the calmness with which he was passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death, he bade those who were near him lead her to her chamber, and then requested that the prayers for a soul departing should be read. The queen, worn out by grief and watching, went softly round by the backstairs and knelt in a closet, behind the alcove of the bed, where she could hear every word and sigh uttered by the dear object of a love which for twenty-seven years had been the absorbing principle of her existence. Many days, however, passed and the king yet lingered, having fallen into a sort of lethargy, giving little consciousness of life, except when prayers were read to him, when, by the expression of his countenance and motion of his lips, it was plain that he prayed also.

The sands of life were ebbing fast when King Louis next entered the chamber of the dying James; for when the former enquired after his health he neither saw nor heard him, and on being roused from his dreamy stupor and told the King of France was there, he opened his eyes with a painful effort, saying, "Where is he?"

"Sir, I am here," said Louis; "I am come to see how you do."

"I am going," said James, "to pay that debt which must be paid by kings as well as their meanest subjects. I give your Majesty my dying thanks for all your kindness to me and my afflicted family, and do not doubt of its continuance, having always found you good and generous." He then expressed his thanks for the king's kindness during his sickness.

"That is, indeed, a small matter," said Louis; "but I have something to acquaint you with of more importance."

As the king spoke thus the attendants began to retire.

"Let nobody withdraw," said Louis. "I am come, sire, to tell you, that whenever it shall please God to call you out of this world, I will take your family under my protection, and will recognise your son, the Prince of Wales, as the heir of your three realms."

As the king spoke these words all present threw themselves at his feet. He was the sole hope of the sorrowful court at St. Germain's.

Louis mingled his tears with those which were shed by all around him.

James feebly strove to raise his arms to embrace his royal friend, and strove to speak, but nothing could be heard beyond these words,

"I thank God I die with a perfect resignation, and forgive all the world, particularly the Emperor and the Prince of Orange, and I beg as a last favor that no funeral pomp may be used at my obsequies."

"That is the only favor I cannot grant," replied Louis.

"I entreat you, sire," said the dying king, "rather to employ any money you may feel disposed to expend for that purpose for the relief of my destitute followers. I recommend them to your compassionate care; and I beg you, sire, no longer to remain in this melancholy place."