

## THE FORTUNES OF MAURICE O'DONNELL.

(By CONAL NOIR in the Dublin Freeman.)

## CHAPTER X.

"I thought it was only I who had been affected by the Donegal hills," said Frank relapsing into better humour. That initial is Nolan's—Captain Nolan."

"What! Nolan of the——"

"Yes, the same. Don't you see the writing is different from the Colonel's?"

"So it is," said Maurice. "I shouldn't have known it. Let see what he says."

"Yes, his opinion is worth something," said Harold in hearty affirmation. "Read it Harold."

"I can hardly read it," said Maurice, "it is so cramped. But I'll try, This is it, I think—"

"We are going to smash up Sebastopol, Frank. A tough nut to crack, as I understand. We shall find the flower of the Russian army there. Put on your war paint and come at once. There are honours to be had for the winning. For me, I intend to gain a major-generalship at the least. Sebastopol is the great naval depot of the Russian Empire, and we mean to leave it not fit to shelter a cockle boat."

"That is sufficient explanation," said Harold. "That will not be a difficult feat with our navy."

"Nolan thinks otherwise," says Maurice thoughtfully.

"He does," said Frank very seriously, "and you may depend he knows what he says. Don't you think so, Maurice?"

"I think so," said Maurice, "He is a very able officer."

"There is no doubt about that," said Harold, bending again over the map; "but if the object is merely to destroy a seaport, I can't see what the army will have to do. It is the work of the Navy I should fancy."

"So I should think so too," said Maurice, "but Nolan knows what he says."

"No one knows better in the service," said Frank with warm assent.

"He is mistaken here," said Harold.

"Possibly; but not likely. I rely immensely on his word."

"Who is Mr. Nolan?" asked Grace, attracted to the name by the universal assent given to his skill and bravery.

"He is a cavalry officer of ours," said Maurice.

"A countryman, I take it," said Grace, "At least I should think so from the name."

"You are quite right in assuming so, Miss O'Donnell," said Harold. "He is an Irishman, and one of the bravest and most skillful officers that ever held command in any army."

"Is he a Donegal man, Maurice?" asked Grace, for the moment believing that attributes like these must of necessity be possessed alone by those begotten and born of the fair northern highlands.

"He is not, then Grace," said Maurice, laughing pleasantly at the innocent and enthusiastic belief conveyed in her question. "He comes from the distant land of Carlow—hard by that flowing Barrow of which we have heard so much in our ancient Irish history. But wherever he comes from there is the real grit of a gallant soldier in him."

"He bears a fine name, at any rate," said Harold.

"And deserves it," said Frank.

"Has he seen much service, then?" said Grace, much interested by this account of the unknown officer."

"I don't know, Grace. He has not been long with us. But universal consent sets him down as a splendid fellow and a fine officer."

"He exchanged from the Austrian service, Miss O'Donnell," said Frank, "and he was by repute the finest swordsman and best horseman in the Austrian service, where all are good swordsmen and horsemen."

"Is he young?" asked Grace.

"There is no use making inquiries in that direction, Grace," said Maurice laughing. "That officer worships another god than Cupid."

Grace blushed a little, offended over the unintended rudeness of the answer, which Maurice noticing said more seriously.

"He is, Grace, still quite a young man, though he bears such a gallant name. But I think, gentlemen, we had better see to the packing of our traps. If we are to start in the morning and get an hour or two to sleep, meantime there is not a moment to lose."

"I am afraid I cannot assist you much," said Frank, pointing to his still bandaged arm.

"We shall do your portion of the work," said Maurice; and as soon as a hurried cup of tea was partaken of, the work of preparation and packing commenced.

Packing up to leave is at all times—particularly when the time previous has been happily spent—a work full of sadness.

It was so, here. To Grace, as she assisted, it was a time full of sorrow and sorrowful anticipations. The time had been spent so pleasantly; their companionship was so enjoyable; it was long before since her brother had been at Craighome; and she expected it to be prolonged for so much more extended a time that a feeling of loneliness and ill-forebodings filled her heart. Even the hurry of the work and the necessity of having her mind fixed on it could not suppress the ready tears that sprang to her eyes.

To Harold it came with a feeling of despair. The burst of exultation that filled his heart when the news of the call to active service reached him was supplanted by a pang as he thought that Craighome and its beautiful mistress should never probably meet his gaze again. Even if he knew she liked him; if his memory were dear to her; if amid the contending hosts her thoughts followed him with more than usual interest, his heart would have leaped with joy and wild delight.

But to go away like any other casual visitor and be forgotten; to think that the blue eyes and beautiful face should only remember him and nothing more—if, mayhap, even so much—sent a pain of loneliness and almost of desolation through his heart.

It was late when they had finished their work and when they retired into the drawing-room to take a glass of wine after the fatiguing work and previous to retiring to rest.

The moon, which had risen late, was beginning to dispel the darkness of the night and to pour its silver light over the health-clad hills and spreading uplands that lay before them.

"What a lovely night," said Maurice, as they stood at the window, "and what a sky of stars. Look."

"It is beautiful, magnificent," said Harold. "One could spend one's life in such scenes of loveliness as this. I feel sorry in parting from such quiet peacefulness. It was a very pleasant time."

"So I felt it too," said Grace. "I shall be very lonely to-morrow night when you all go. And very sad."

"I think my presentiment came true, after all, Miss O'Donnell," said Harold, as he looked up at the blue sky studded with countless stars, across the face of which the silver moon was making its peaceful way; and he thought of the last sunset he had seen, and the last in the same place he was to see.

"I am sorry for it," said Grace; and the tones in which she said it were so sincere and so warm that Harold felt as if they sent a new and encouraging sense through his heart.

"But if I am doomed never to see the sun set on the hills of Donegal again," said he with an attempt at cheerfulness, "there is still one happiness left."

"What is that?"

"I may yet see the sun rise thereon. What do you say if we are in the saddle betimes in the morning, and have a ride over the hills."

"Certainly," said Grace. "I shall see that the horses are ready."

"It will be the last time, remember."

"Oh! I trust not," said Grace. "You will come back again with Maurice when the war is over."

"It would be a wise man that could promise that, Miss O'Donnell," said Harold gaily—with a gaiety which he was far from feeling. "War allows nothing for promises, for gentle ties or remembrances. It shears them all rudely away."

"I wish there were no wars," said Grace. "I wonder do those who begin these wars ever think of the woful hearts they are creating over the nation, and the network of cruel sorrow they are weaving."

"Probably not, Grace," said Maurice, turning away from the window; "but as we shall not get much more rest until we reach Portsmouth, I vote for bed. Frank has had some hours rest already."

This proposal was agreed to, and the little party separated.

"Don't forget the sunrise, Miss O'Donnell," said Harold quietly as they separated.

"I shall have you called in time and the horses saddled," said Grace. "Good rest and pleasant dreams."

Maurice had laid his head on the pillow and was about falling to sleep, with thoughts of the Inniskillings at Portsmouth in his head, and the sound of the reveille in his dreaming ears, when a gentle tap came to the door and Grace quietly entered.

"I came, Maurice, to sit with you and talk a little before you go away. We shall have no other opportunity of being together. I feel dreadfully cast down at your going away."

"I am glad you came in, Grace, my pet," said Maurice affectionately. "It's so pleasant to have an hour's quiet talk together. It is like the old times, isn't it, Grace?"

"A pity they ever went away, Maurice," said Grace, as her tears flowed a-fresh; "and a pity you ever went away, too. What a pleasant life we could have had together at Craighome."

"I don't know, Grace. Men are not suited, I believe, for this dreaming quiet life. At any rate the past is passed and there is no use fretting over it. But I certainly never thought Craighome so beautiful as this time."

"You will come back as soon as the war is over—will you not, Maurice?" said Grace plaintively, putting her hand on his forehead much as she used to do when they were children.

"If I live, Grace."

"If you live! Maurice," said Grace, with a slight shriek. The words brought to her mind very strongly what she had forgotten to think of—the inevitable danger of war.

"Why, Grace, you goose," said Maurice pleasantly, "you don't think that war—particularly war with a great country like Russia—can be carried on with snowballs. Don't you see that it will be a struggle for European supremacy that must be carried on, no matter at what loss of life or treasure, until one or the other are beaten to their knees?"

"I only know, Maurice," said Grace, "that it is a pity your life should be endangered in their quarrels. What have you—you the last of the O'Donnells—to do with their wars?"

"The force of circumstances alone Grace."

"If it were for Ireland?" said Grace.

"I wish to—the Lord God on high it were," said Maurice, in a burst of vehement enthusiasm, as he lifted himself on his elbow. "I wish it were. I wish the day were come when our swords were flashing in the light of Irish sun for Irish freedom."

"And until that time comes, Maurice," said Grace quietly, "would it not be better for you to take care of yourself and not risk your life?"

"How, Grace?"

"By—by resigning your commission," said Grace hesitatingly. "God forgive you, Grace, for putting such a thought in my head. It would be but a poor way for anyone to qualify himself to serve Ireland in the hour of her need by showing cowardice when other need was to the fore. No, no, Grace, I shall take my chance with Harold and Frank and the others. You would not have me show less courage than they, would you?"

"But they are warring for their country, Maurice, you are not."

(To be continued.)

The Jesuits driven from France have established themselves in considerable numbers in Turkey.