

DERRY.

A Tale of the Revolution.

BY CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH. CHAPTER V—Continued.

It was upon the 18th day of April that the dethroned monarch met his unlooked-for reprisal before the walls of Derry; and the next day beheld him on the road towards Dublin, there to concert further measures for the recovery of his abdicated throne. No hostile act was committed on either side during the two succeeding days, save in the silent but busy work of offensive and defensive preparation.

"How I long for the Sabbath!" exclaimed Letitia, as the evening proceeded it closed it. "We shall all assemble in the house of God, and raise the united voice of supplication."

"And set up our Ebenezer," added her mother.

"And will my dear Ellen likewise venture?" asked Bryan.

"Oh yes, brother dear; these two quiet days have refreshed me, and I feel quite strong. I long to tread the courts of the Lord's house, too; and I have a sort of fearful curiosity to pass through the street, and look upon the preparations, and to be made to feel how precious it is to have the Lord for a very present help!"

"May it be a Sabbath of peace!" said the old lady; and she looked at Bryan, whose downcast eyes spoke little of encouragement to her hope.

In fact, it had been decided to make a sortie from the walls on the morning, as the planting of a large gun very near seemed to menace a hostile attack. The design was depreciated by those alone who preferred the sanctification of the day to the pursuit of a possible advantage, and it may readily be believed that their voices were faint and few, compared with the clamors of the many who thirsted for vengeance and distinction.

The morning came, and to the cathedral all repaired who desired to commit their cause unto the Lord of Hosts; these were so numerous, that a succession of congregations filled the pile, a fresh crowd of worshippers still assembling as others departed; and amongst them the family of M'Alister sought the Lord with hearts united to fear His name.

It was awful and affecting the stillness that reigned over the dense populace on the morning of that day. Thronged as they were, the streets yet wore the character of Sabbath solemnity, and the very sentinels appeared to soften their measured tread as they cast a frequent look to the azure sky; with some, the upturned gaze bespoke devotion; in others, it seemed rather expressive of impatience; and in many, it indicated an anxious observance of the weather, as though a few gathering clouds would have marred some design. The citizens of Derry, close pent within its narrow bounds for more than four months, already bore the marks of pining imprisonment and protracted care; while deeper anguish sat on the features of those homeless wanderers, to whom the sacred season more forcibly recalled the memory of happy Sabbaths gone by, where their place knew them no more.

"It is in such a spot as this," said a weeping mother, as she passed through the churchyard, "that my daughter lies buried. Just such a tender yew tree was beginning to bud above her grave; ah, little did I think that stranger eyes should watch its growth, or stranger hands tear it from the sod, where I must never hope to lay my bones beside her!"

"She is better there," replied a young woman, the wildness of whose pallid looks contrasted with the melancholy gloom of the former speaker. "Better in a grave—any grave—than living to weep over all that was loved, and is lost, and gone—gone for ever!"

"Oh, no!" said Letitia, who overheard her; "say not that all is gone, while He remains whose love for sinners took the sting from death, and victory from the grave. Come unto Him—for the weary and the heavy-laden shall there find welcome and repose."

Arranged within the building, how sweet to the ears of Christ's little flock sounded the word of promise and of peace! Magrath had accompanied them to the door, and as he turned from it a deeper sense of their own inestimable privileges filled each heart; while compassion for him added fervor to their intercessions, and earnestly did they long to share with him the abundance of God's treasury.

The preacher took for his text an animating promise of deliverance, and though the tone of his discourse was more decidedly warlike than fully accorded with the feelings of his spiritually-minded auditors, there was much of solid comfort in the address. Returning homeward Bryan directed his grandmother's attention to some military men who were hastening towards the guard-house, after attending at the church. He told her that they were about to sally forth and attack the enemy.

"Oh, Bryan! that ought not to be on this holy day; dissuade them!" "It is impossible, Malcolm and myself, with one or two others, attempted it; but the clamor was overpowering. Colonel Murray lends them on, and Mr Walker leaves the pulpit to accompany him."

"Then mark my words. This desecrated Sabbath will stand recorded against us; and many a cry will ascend in vain for those who hallow it not."

"They are so confident of immediate success from the king, that they scarcely anticipate a contest of a week!" They must then learn what it is to put confidence in princes, rather than in the Lord.

The culverin planted by the enemy now discharged its heavy shot—the first which passed into the town—and that shot, whizzing over their heads, struck the market house.

"Messenger of woe," said the Lady, "how many of thy fellows shall bring havoc into our streets!"

Basil had remained at home indisposed; and Bryan, softly ascending to his little apartment, was struck at hearing the old man's voice, with tones of solemn earnestness, addressing another in the Irish language. He paused as the name of "Sionnigheara Iosa Críod" (the Saviour Jesus Christ) met his ear, and ascertained that the words were those of Scripture. Softly entering, he beheld Magrath, his face buried in his hands, in an attitude of fixed attention; while Basil, with looks of unexpressed animation, was setting before him the pure gospel in the irresistible garb of his own tongue.

Bryan withdrew unperceived, to communicate the glad tidings below stairs; and "Blessed Bedell!" burst from the lips of the old lady, while her heart overflowed with thankful delight.

But far other work was going on without the walls, and after a fierce combat the party came back victorious, bearing the dead bodies of an officer and several privates, who, a few hours previously, had left the town in confident expectation of a triumphant return. They were hastily interred; and while the military exulted in the comparative insignificance of their loss, a dark foreboding overcast the minds of many, with a sad experimental certainty that havoc was indeed begun.

The single piece of ordnance planted on the opposite side of the water had inflicted little damage on the town; but now, at less than half that distance, four others commenced their dreadful greeting from a different quarter, and their balls continually rebounding from the tiles, crashing the window-panes, and rattling through the streets, killed some, inflicted wounds on many, and struck terror into all. On the second day after this, some mortar pieces being added, the besiegers threw bombs from them; which, by their noisy explosion, increased the panic tenfold among those altogether unaccustomed to the horrors of a siege.

"Now, your honor," said Magrath, as with Bryan he bent his course towards the house in the evening of that day, "I'm altogether not agreeable to going home tonight."

"Oh, sir! but it's the ladies that will be frightened to purpose now. And, the sowl! what comfort can we give 'em?"

"The very sight of us will bring comfort to them, Magrath; for I have marked this day, while carnage has been in our streets, that those who go forth are followed by lamentations as though they went to certain death, and their return welcomed with cries of joy. But in our home, I trust, we shall find that the Lord Himself is giving strength according to their day."

"Is it today, sir?" asked the other, a little puzzled.

Bryan explained to him the promise, but it seemed not to make much impression on his mind. Bryan's heart was indeed oppressed with a grievous weight; not for that the instruments of destruction had now and again crossed his own path—for himself he had no fear; but faith was sorely tried in regard to those so dear, and the consolations which his lips spontaneously uttered, scarcely soothed his own bosom at the moment.

But the word of the Lord is sure, and gratefully did he acknowledge it; for they found the little party calm beyond all human expectation; and such a holy character of resigned submission sat on every countenance, as rendered it far more touching than the wildest distress could have done. "And isn't the life frightened out of ye, then?" was Magrath's first inquiry, after the silent welcome of thankful love had been bestowed on Bryan. "We've been sadly frightened, indeed," answered Ellen; "but we prayed, and the Lord sent peace."

Magrath, yet unweakenably, muttered something about the Catholic church. "Out upon ye for an obstinate papist! ejected from the haven! we enough of the Catholic church outside? What else is it knocking the houses about our ears this blessed night but your rebelly church, ye spalpeen? Isn't the bombs pretty heads to tell?"

"Macha, then," said Magrath, "it's myself that'll go look after my bows, and he left the house."

"How obstinate!" observed Malcolm. "Have patience, sir," said Basil, "your query was a startling one, and may be blessed to his soul. Let him digest it."

The Lady reproved Shane for his ill-timed and railing accusation; but the old man continued to exclaim against his nephew, who, as he said, ought to have been converted in half the time.

The word of promise was then laid open, and amid the din of discord, the prayer and the hymn arose. Malcolm gave out a psalm from the paraphrase of his church, the 23rd, dearly prized by the persecuted covenanters; and with deep intonation he dwelt upon the lines:

"Yes, though I walk in death's dark vale, Yet will I fear none ill; For thou art with me, and thy rod And staff me comfort still."

When Letitia retired with her mother to their little sleeping apartment, she stooped to look through the window, which nearly touched the ground. "How beautiful, mamma, is this night! The moon shines sweetly, and Lough Foyle dances like quicksilver below. Is it not strange that, under such a sky, men should prepare to dye those peaceful waters with blood? With the words that we have heard tonight, warm on my memory, methinks I could go forth to yonder camp, and proclaim, to the foes who seek our lives, 'Peace on earth; good will towards men.'"

"My child, it is the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, that disarms all bitter and resentful feelings. Come, Letitia; let us pray for them; for they know not what they do."

They knelt in prayer, and peacefully composed themselves to rest, conversing for a while on the glorious privilege of God's children, so exquisitely set forth in the psalm, which Letitia again recited.

The gray tint had not visited the darkened east, when a bomb broke through the garret roof, and falling on the bed, rolled thence to the window, which it forced from its frame, and exploded loudly in the street.

But those two quiet sleepers awoke not; without a pang they had passed into eternity.

CHAPTER VI.

In the crowded state of the city, it was needful to commit with all speed to their last earthly resting-place the bodies of the slain; and scarcely had the agonized survivors of M'Alister's race a competent time allotted to enshroud the forms so tenderly beloved, ere they were pent up in the narrow receptacle that sufficed for both—one coffin was prepared—one grave was dug—and ere yet the shell received its lid, a crowd of weeping friends hemmed in the individuals, who, stationed close around the shattered bed, gazed upon those lineaments, as uninjured and as calmly soft as when slumber first stole over them. The Lady's heart was rent beyond the power of her strong mind, and stronger faith, to sustain without a struggle that convulsed her frame; while the tearless stupor of poor Ellen, as she hung upon her brother's shoulder, appeared more pitiable still. But Bryan's trial was perhaps the hardest, for nature strove in his bosom against the subduing grace of God, and raised a cry of wrath and vengeance. Shane's grief was frantic, and his passionate lamentations woke a responsive chord in many a breast, for there were childless mothers by, and widowed brides, and orphaned children. The fugitives who had sought shelter in Derry had each some tale to tell that would have claimed an eminence in grief; and the stream of selfish sorrow now flowed afresh in the contemplation of another's woe.

Up to this period, Malcolm had not been apprised of the event; but he now appeared, led by vague rumor; and, hastily passing the deserted apartments, ascended to the spot. His presence occasioned a movement throughout the party, whose sobs and moans redoubled as they opened a passage for him to the coffin.

"See there!" said Bryan, moving his clenched hand towards it.

"And see there!" responded Malcolm, as he pointed to the broken roof, through which was visible a portion of the deep blue sky, and a little fleecy cloud, that glided like a distant wing athwart it.

But while other eyes were raised to mark, his own fell again on the lifeless forms, and he burst into tears. The firing at this time became more rapid; and whizzing balls passed through the streets, and another bomb exploded at a short distance. When the noise subsided, Malcolm spoke: "All is well; ay, better than well with them; for what halloo! what music of heavenly harpings, now surround those rejoicing spirits before the throne of the Lamb! Oh, blessed confession!"

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