

Poets' Quay.

ON THE RAMPARTS OF LIMERICK.

BY JOHN F. O'DONNELL.

Cheerily rings the boatman's song
Across the dark-brown water;
His mast is slant, his sail is strong,
His hold is red with slaughter—
With beeves that cropped the fields of Glynn,
And sheep that pricked their meadows,
Until the sun-set cry trooped in
The cattle from the shadows.
He holds the foam-washed tiller loose,
And hums a country ditty;
For, under clouds of gold, turned puce,
Gleam harbor, mole, and city.
O town of manhood, maidenhood,
By thee the Shannon flashes—
Where Freedom's seed was sown in blood,
To blossom into ashes.

St. Mary's, in the evening air,
Springs up austere and olden;
Two sides its steeple gray and bare,
Two sides with sunset golden.
The bells roll out, the bells roll back,
The lusty knaves are singing;
Deep in the chancel, red and black,
The white-robed boys are singing.
The sexton loiters by the gate
With eyes more blue than hyssop,
A black-green skull-cap on his pate,
And all his mouth a gossip.
This is the town beside the flood—
The walls the Shannon washes;
Where Freedom's seed was sown in blood,
To blossom into ashes.

The streets are quaint, red-bricked, antique,
The topmost story curving;
With, here and there, a slated leak,
Through which the light falls swerving.
The angry sudden light falls down
On path and middle parquet,
On shapes, weird as the ancient town,
And faces fresh for market.
They shout, they chatter, disappear,
Like imps that shake the valance
At midnight, when the clock ticks queer,
And time has lost its balance.
This is the town beside the flood
Which past its bastion dashes;
Where Freedom's seed was sown in blood,
To blossom into ashes.

Oh, how they talk, brown country folk,
Their chatter many-mooded,
With eyes that laugh for equivocation,
And heads in kerchiefs hooded!
Such jests, such jokes, such plastic mirth
But Heine could determine—
The portents of the latest birth,
The point of Sunday's sermon;
The late rains, the previous drouth,
How oats were growing stunted;
How keels fetched higher prices, South,
And Captain Watson hunted.
This is the town beside the flood,
Whose waves with memories flashes;
Where Freedom's seed was sown in blood,
To blossom into ashes.

How thick with life the Irish-town,
Dear gray and battered portress;
That laid all save her honor down,
To save the fire-ringed fortress.
Here Sarsfield stood, here lowered the flag,
That symbolised the people—
A riddled rag, a bloody rag,
Plucked from St. Mary's steeple.
Thick are the walls the women lined,
With courage worthy Roman,
When armed with hate sublime, if blind,
They scourged the headlong foeman.
This is the town beside the flood,
That round its ramparts flashes;
Where Freedom's seed was sown in blood,
To blossom into ashes.

This part is mine: to live divorced
Where foul November gathers;
With other sons or thine dispersed,
Brave city of my fathers.
To gaze on rivers not mine own,
And nurse a wasting longing;
Where Babylon, with trumpets blowing,
South, north, east, west, comes thronging.
To hear distinctly, if afar,
The voices of thy people—
To hear through crepitating air,
The sweet bells of thy steeple.

To love the town, the hill, the wood,
The Shannon's stormful flashes;
Where Freedom's seed was sown in blood,
To blossom into ashes.

THE WARD OF THE PRIORESS.

A LEGEND OF CATESBY.

CHAPTER I.

THE BELATED TRAVELLER.

It was a dark and bitter winter night! A night in the January of an unusually severe winter. There had been a hard frost for three weeks, and the ground was like iron. Nowhere had the inclemency of the season been more painfully felt than in the always bleak country of Northamptonshire.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening, the curfew bell had rung out, when a solitary traveller, who had lost his way, drew his bridle, and looked around anxiously for shelter.

The hard black frost had seemed to give away about noon, and the sky was overspread with clouds; but a shrill and bitter wind howled over the face of the country; and when those clouds descended, it was not in genial rain, but a heavy fall of snow.

The traveller had purposed to rest that night at the little town of Daventry, but he had been detained at Northampton, and evening began to fall, and the snow with it, soon after he was clear of the little country town.

The traveller was not acquainted with the neighborhood, and even had he been so, the customary road marks were speedily obliterated by the snow.

He had crossed a wild moor with danger and difficulty, for the snow was only drifting into the hollows, but covered the hard ground to more than a foot already; and it was no slight increase of peril that it would also overspread the frozen surface of the pools and streams so common to the country, but which were not, it was probable, frozen so thick that the ice would bear a horse and its rider.

Well might the traveller look around anxiously as he dismounted, for to continue his journey was at the risk of his life.

Bordering the moor which he had just crossed, was a strip of woodland.

Leafless as they were, the thick branches might afford some shelter, however slight and indifferent. Beyond this, there was the chance that some one of the larger trees, which were of great magnitude, might furnish a really secure shelter in its hollow trunk.

It was in vain that the eyes of the traveller, aching and half-blinded with the snow, sought through the eddying drift for the cheerful rays of a lamp, in some cottage, or that, through the howling blast, he listened with strained ear for the bark of some watch dog.

There was no resource but to adventure into the wood. This the traveller did on foot, leading his horse by the bridle.

The wood was less dense than he supposed—and a double row of beeches, the broad limbs of which, linked together from either side, made a canopy, through the interstices of which the snow had drifted so lightly that our wayfarer discovered that there was a beaten track below.

This avenue crossed the wood diagonally, and was so palpably an avenue in the contrivance of which, art must have assisted nature, that the benighted man pressed on with renewed hope, confidently expecting that the stately colonnade of beeches had some human habitation in proximity.

In this expectation, he was not disappointed.

After proceeding for about a quarter of a mile the path widened, the trees were more sparsely scattered, and presently the wayfarer emerged upon a wide lawn-like space, at the upper end of which, through the rents which the wind made in the veil of snow which hung pendant between earth and sky, he perceived the walls of what seemed a dwelling of some pretension.

The ground was now smooth and level, and over the thick carpet of the snow the traveller led his wearied steed.

He was, however, surprised as he proceeded that along the broad black edifice that faced him appeared no twinkling ray of light.

The building he was approaching seemed scarcely a ruin, but assuredly there was about no signs of human habitation.

The mystery was explained when the traveller stumbled over a gate which lay on the ground, in the interstices of which had grown up tall thistles, which shook the snow from their rank heads as they bent in the fire blast.

A few feet further, and the traveller stumbled again. This time the obstruction was caused by a statue which had been thrown from its pedestal.

The head was knocked off, but a figure of an infant was in the sculptured arms; and the traveller—a devout Catholic—immediately apprehended that the mutilated figure had been that of Madonna and child.

A heavy sigh broke from the bosom of the wayfarer as, dimly through the white glare of the snow, he perceived yawning, the black arch of a dismantled doorway.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I mind me somewhere in this district stood the Nunnery of Catesby, so cruelly suppressed by our vile king some three years since. Oh, beneficent Lord, look thou with a pitying eye on the afflictions of the children of thy Church in this unhappy land!"

As the traveller ceased speaking, and sadly leaning on the cropper of his tired horse, looked up at the dismantled doorway, a female shriek, long, loud, and piercing, smote his ear.

It was a cry expressive of the extremity of anguish, and was