

William and Mary at that time held their Court, the baronet had hired a somewhat handsome residence; and flattered in his old age by the idea of notice from royalty, whilst he had never cared to receive or court its favour in the days of his youth and strength, Sir Charles really appeared as if he were meditating undoing the work of his whole life, during which, as we have already said, he had managed to maintain a strict neutrality as to politics.

But now the case was altered, and there fluttered about the old baronet a coterie of persons favoured at the Court of William, anxious to make a proselyte and entangle in their meshes the hitherto inflexible old Papist. Amongst these hangers-on at the Court was a favourite page of the King, named Arnold Von Keppel. As to his personal appearance, few men of his time could compete with him; his soubriquet was that of the "handsome page," and none stood higher in the favour of William than did this youth, who was also well known to Reginald St. John.

It was with feelings of alarm and indignation that Florence beheld the foolish old baronet fall unresistingly and readily into the hands of the Court parasites, who were none of them without a keen eye to the influence he possessed, as well as to the broad acres in the respective counties of Cumberland and Gloucestershire, of which he was the master; and she witnessed the time approach for his presentation at Kensington with absolute horror. Meanwhile, her mind was harassed at the thought of the distress which the Court of St. Germain's would experience—and, at the lapse of time which must pass beyond that originally intended for her return; for had not Ashton promised the Queen, that ere the festival of Christmas should be celebrated, he would bring her back to France? However, there was nothing to be done but to take patience for her guide, and thus resolving she endeavoured to watch calmly the demeanour of her fickle old uncle and his future behaviour, and also to endeavour through his means to procure admission to the English Court.

CHAPTER VI.

SARSFIELD—LORD LUCAN.

THE various clocks in the good city of Limerick had proclaimed the first hour of a new day, and save the occasional bark of a dog, or the pattering of the rain, mingled with the faint sighing of the breeze, all was hushed in profound silence.

Yet there were two watchers in one of the upper chambers of a house just without the walls; and these persons appeared to be buried in deep and anxious meditation.

This room was simply, nay, scantily furnished; for, in truth, it boasted of nothing, save two or three chairs, a mean-looking truckle bedstead, with a mattress, and a few blankets, a table, on which were the remains of a humble repast, and a chest of walnut-wood drawers at the further end of the room, on which were placed a sword, belt, cap, and other accoutrements, which declared the profession of the inmate of the apartment to be that of arms.

Pacing the room with a disturbed air was a lady, whose age it were perhaps not easy to guess, for to a still fresh complexion, and with hair whose rich dark brown recked not of one silvery thread, there was still that maturity of form which may belong to a woman of some forty or forty-five years of age, together with those unmistakable lines on the brow which we call furrows, placed on the smooth forehead of woman by care and anxiety, if not by the hand of time.

Seated by the fire sits a man in the military undress of an officer of high rank, and with one hand shading his eyes from the too bright glare of the lamp, he holds with the other an open letter, which he appears to con with care and attention.

This man was no other than the brave and gallant veteran, Sarsfield.

"Take heart, Catherine," he said, addressing the lady, "you may perhaps be suffering from groundless fear. Trust me, Florence, made up as she is, has yet discretion enough to take care of herself. I like not, any more than you do, this meditated encounter with Queen Mary, but you have owned that you know not in any way this man Layton, who has introduced himself to you; what grounds then have you for placing implicit faith in the word of, after all, one who is a mere stranger?"

"I cannot doubt his truth," replied Miss O'Neill; "he is too well acquainted with the affairs of my family to permit me to do so. He evidently knows Sir Charles de Gray personally, spoke of Father Lawson, describing to me the old Grange, in Gloucestershire, where he had met the good father in company with that Sir Reginald to whom Florence was long since betrothed; also that she had been seen in company with Ashton, who it is known has but recently returned from France, and is striving hard to return thither."

"Well, the story certainly is a strange one," answered the General, musingly; "so strange that I would like to see the man, for if anything be amiss I may be able to detect it. At all events I shall not return to my quarters till to-morrow night, and as you have said he intends to call on you to-morrow, I will take care to see him; I like much, too, the news contained in the letter now before me," continued Sarsfield, alluding to that which he held in his hand, "it gives me to understand that we may expect Tyconnell early next month, when our poor soldiers will again have an opportunity to show their intrepidity. And now," he added, smiling, "I think you and I had best betake ourselves to rest; and suffer not your slumbers to be disturbed by fears about Florence; depend on it all is right. I consider her too prudent to tempt danger."

Silent, though not convinced, Catherine O'Neill, the paternal aunt of Florence, retired to her chamber, not to sleep, but to muse over the fortunes of her orphan niece and the perturbed state of public affairs, which at that time invested the city of Limerick with so much interest, and has claimed for it and its gallant defenders so great an amount of prestige through future ages.

Early in the morning the general met his cousin, Miss O'Neill, at breakfast. He had for a few days become her visitor, on one condi-

tion alone—viz., that all ceremony should be foregone, and the poorest, simplest room in the house fitted up for his use, with a mattress for his bed, and plain diet for his table; and he was musing on the state of public affairs, when a servant entering the room announced a visitor. Then came the sound of many voices, as of persons clamorous for admission, accompanied by the footsteps of a large concourse of people; a peal of deafening knocks was heard at the door, and tumultuous cries of "*Bring out the Saxon spy! Down with the traitor!*" reverberated on his ear.

Scarcely one moment had elapsed between the entrance of the servant and the utterance of the shouts and cries which now met their astonished ears, and the acute general immediately divined that in some way or another their stranger visitant had to do with the fearful disturbance now being raised. Accordingly, he bent a searching gaze on the person who stood before him trembling with fear, scarce able to speak from excessive agitation, his light-grey eyes bending beneath the eagle glance of Sarsfield. Our old acquaintance, Benson, stands face to face with Sarsfield, no longer with his own silvery locks out close over his forehead, and in the sober suit of brown cloth which it was his wont to wear; but with his head adorned with a powdered wig, his garments of the newest fashion, and made of gay material to boot, and his whole outward man strangely metamorphosed; but two ringleaders of the mob without still clamoured loudly for admittance; their voices were recognised by the general, and, acting on a sudden impulse, he gave orders that the door should be opened, and some half-dozen of the rioters be admitted.

But the figure of Sarsfield as he passed through the hall had been seen through the open door; it was no longer a question of admission of five or six persons, for, pushing forcibly by the affrighted servant, a tumultuous crowd rushed in, shrieking out, "Och, and is it yourself, General, dear? Give us up the cowardly spalpeen, the black devil of a Saxon; let us have the bluid of the traitor sure; and isn't it from the camp of the inimy he comes?" such were the string of epithets which rung in the affrighted ears of Miss O'Neill.

"Silence, silence, my friends," exclaimed Sarsfield, rising on a stool, and gesticulating with all his force to secure the attention of the infuriated mob, for the greater part of the inhabitants of the city of Limerick seemed to be thronging to the quarter in which his cousin's house was situated, and taking care to commit Benson to the safe custody of two stout serving men, he said: "We must be just, and before we punish see in what the prisoner is guilty. Now, then, speak; how has he offended?" he added, in loud tones, addressing the ringleaders of the unruly mob.

Denis McCarthy, a tall muscular man, attired as a private soldier, stepped forward, saying—

"Arrah, yer honour, then the rale fact is this, yonder spalpeen has just come from Derry, where he has a mighty many friends, I'm afther being towld. My brother Barney knew him in London, yer honour, and sure that is why we know him for a traitor; it's thrue that he is, and, General, dear, when ye takes off that wig, a white-headed old fellow you'll see."

Sarsfield found it no easy matter to make himself heard in reply to this not very clear speech of McCarthy's, for more than twenty voices at once exclaimed—

"Whisht, yer honour, sure and he's afther mischief, the false Saxon has heard that a priest from England is in the house of good Miss O'Neill, and the spalpeen and spy, dog that he is, is afther seeing the good father, and thin sure and its easy to see he'd soon know where to find him, and afther all that's done, the Saxon traitor can still do a mighty purty business of his own, respecting a relation of Miss O'Neill's herself."

"What have you to say, villain?" said the general, darting on him a look of mingled indignation and contempt, "what have you to say for yourself, you wretched spy? What reason can you give why we shouldn't hang you like a dog, on the Limerick gallows before the sun has set? How dare you presume to set your foot within these walls, to carry out your treasonable practices? Hark ye, boys," he continued, addressing Denis and another who appeared to have acted the part of ringleaders, "I will hear what punishment you shall each decree, and then decide which he shall undergo."

"Arrah then, general dear," said Denis, who acted as the general's servant when in his quarters, "sure and I am afther asking your honour to let me do him one little service before we are afther punishing him."

"With all my heart, Denis, I put him entirely in your hands," said Sarsfield, whilst a low groan escaped from the lips of the terrified wretch before him. With a shout of joy Denis bounded forwards, and the next moment, amidst loud and deafening huzzas, the curly peruke was thrown high over the heads of the assembled crowd.

"See, see, the spalpeen! and sure is it not a shame," shouted Denis, "that ye should be afther disgracing an old man's white locks in such a way? And now what will we do, general, with this traitorous spy? I'm afther thinking it would be mighty well done, to tie him on a donkey's back and give him a rope's end all through the streets of Limerick; and, first, yer honour, let's have a bit of sport sure, and be afther shaving his head, seeing that thin he'll have thrue and real reason to wear a wig."

"Well said, Denis," exclaimed Sarsfield; "now let's hear what punishment you advise Patrick, and then it will remain for me to choose between the two."

A German doctor has discovered that several grave diseases, as heart affection, Bright's disease, and consumption, may be caused by the parasites found in the false hair with which ladies so largely supplement their natural supply. Under the influence of heat and moisture these parasites swell and burst, and their nuclei float in the air and penetrate with it into the body, inducing disease. The doctor estimates that in a ball-room fifty ladies with false chignons may set free no less than 45 millions of the lethal germs.