

Moels' Couquet.

TWENTY GOLDEN YEARS AGO.

BY JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN.

O, the rain, the weary, dreary rain,
How it plashes on the window sill!
Night, I guess too, must be on the wane
Strass and gass* are grown so still.
Here I sit, with coffee in my cup—
Ah! 'twas rarely I beheld it flow
In the tavern where I loved to sup
Twenty golden years ago!

Twenty years ago, alas!—but stay—
On my life, 'tis half-past twelve o'clock!
After all the hours do slip away—
Come, here goes to burn another block!
For the night, or morn, is wet and cold;
And my fire is dwindling rather low:—
I had fire enough, when young and bold
Twenty golden years ago.

Dear! I don't feel well at all, somehow:
Few in Weimar dream how bad I am;
Floods of tears grow common with me now,
High-Dutch floods, that Reason cannot dam.
Doctors think I'll neither live nor thrive
If I mope at home so—I don't know—
Am I living now? I was alive
Twenty golden years ago.

Wifeless, friendless, flagonless, alone,
Not quite bookless, though, unless I choose,
Left with nought to do, except to groan,
Not a soul to woo, except to muse—
Oh! this is hard for me to bear,
Me, who whilome lived so much *en haut*,
Me, who broke all hearts like china-ware,
Twenty golden years ago!

Perhaps 'tis better;—time's defacing waves,
Long have quenched the radiance of my brow—
They who curse me nightly from their graves,
Scarce could love me were they living now;
But my loneliness bath darker ill—
Such duns as Conscience, Thought, and Co.,
Awful Gorgons! worse than tailors' bills
Twenty golden years ago!

Did I paint a fifth of what I feel,
O! how plaintive you would ween I was!
But I wot, albeit I have a deal
More to wail about than Kerner has!
Kerner's tears are wept for withered flowers,
Mine for withered hopes, my scroll of woe
Dates, alas! from youth's deserted bowers,
Twenty golden years ago!

Yet, may Deutschland's bardlings flourish long,
Me, I tweak no beak among them; hawks
Must not pounce on hawks: beside in song
I could once beat all of them by chalks.
Though you find me as I near my goal,
Sentimentalising like Rousseau,
O! I had a grand Byronian soul
Twenty golden years ago!

Tick-tick, tick-tick!—not a sound save Time's,
And the windgust as it drives the rain—
Tortured torturer of reluctant rhymes,
Go to bed, and rest thine aching brain!
Sleep!—no more the dupe of hopes or schemes;
Soon thou sleepest where the thistles blow—
Curious anticlimax to thy dreams
Twenty golden years ago!

*Street and lane.

FLORENCE O'NEILL;

OR, THE SIEGE OF LIMERICK. A TALE OF THE REVOLUTION OF 1688.

CHAPTER VI.

SARSFIELD—LORD LUCAN.

PATRICK lifted his cap in due deference to the general, and then said, "Thin, if the truth must be told, general, I'm afther thinking that friend Denis is too gentle by half. Whisht, yer honour," he added, with a finger on his lips:

"Wouldn't it be a purtier thing to hang him up and let him die the traitor's death?"

"Hurra! hurra!" shouted the mob, the cry taken up by the multitude in the distance. "Let him die the death of the traitor; if ye spare him, general, it's sure and afther mischief he'll be goin' again."

"What say you, traitorous spy," shouted Sarsfield; "why should you not die the death of a spy, as you so richly deserve?"

"Spare me, oh, spare me!" cried the miserable wretch, "and I promise you I'll never, never set foot in Ireland again. Here, here," he added, putting his hands into his pockets, and pulling out, with frantic eagerness, sundry rolls of paper, "I had these from King William's favourite page, and give them to you instead of to those for whom they were intended. Pardon me, and I will—"

"Give him to us, general dear, give him to us, and we'll make the spalpeen pay for some of his tricks," exclaimed the mob who were raised to such a pitch of fury that but for the influence of a leader as popular as Sarsfield, the career of this dangerous fanatic had been at once cut short.

As it was, however, Sarsfield again commanded silence, and recommended him to mercy on account of his old age. Then, turning to Denis, he said:—

"I think I shall leave this wretched creature to your more merciful treatment, Denis, you undertaking, however, to see that he embarks for London as soon as the punishment has been inflicted."

"Och thin, general, sure and I think out of consitheration to his white hairs, barring the rale fact that he dosen't care one bit about them himself, I'll be afther letting him off more aisy than I thought of doing" so, yer honour," added Denis, in one of his most persuasive tones, "suppose we give him only fifty lashes. Sure and I have the hould of him, and will see that he is fairly banished from the Emerald Isle for ever."

The general bowed his assent, and aware that he might safely commit this discomfited villain into the hands of Denis, he delivered him up to his safe custody, the former carrying him off in triumph, amidst the yells and groans of the mob. Poor Denis, Benson, escaped better than he deserved, for he chose to give the lashes himself, and laid them on as lightly as his own merciful nature prompted, to every roar the wretch uttered, answering—

"Hould your tongue, you spalpeen, or I'll give the lash to some one who will be afther laying it on heavier than I am doing."

In good truth, Benson was most mercifully spared, save and except the matter of shaving the head, which Denis scrupulously exacted, and which occasioned him and his fellows no small degree of merriment; this was in fact the most bitter part of Master Benson's punishment, as will be seen later.

No sooner had the mob dispersed, than Sarsfield, quietly seated with Miss O'Neill, proceeded to examine the papers, which proved to be a packet of letters that had passed between Benson and William's favourite page, whereby it appeared that not only was the worthless Benson contriving to break of all prospect of a union between Sir Reginald and Florence, but also had offered himself in the capacity of a spy on the movements of the general, in Limerick, and unless fortunately discovered by the brother of the worthy Denis, would very probably have caused much mischief to the good Father Lawson, now an inmate, for the time being, in the residence of Miss O'Neill.

CHAPTER VII.

THE KING AND THE SPY.

"YOUR candid opinion now, uncle, of William of Orange," said Florence, as she watched with something of curiosity, certain preparations Sir Charles was making for presenting himself at Kensington the evening after his first introduction to the King.

The Baronet, somewhat embarrassed, answered evasively, and testily—

"The King received me courteously enough. What makes you so curious, child? Has he not already shown me a mark of his royal favour, or why do I spend this evening in his banquetting-room? I should not much wonder, Florence, if the like favour shown you by Mary, who is more gracious than you imagine, in time makes a convert of Florence O'Neill."

"Yes, truly," replied Florence, with a contemptuous smile on her lip; "Mary would be extremely gracious to me on the morrow, did she know what my feelings really are."

"Suppose I were to whisper in the King's ear a few words concerning your disloyalty, Florence; can you trust me, think you?"

"Yes, dearest uncle," replied Florence, kissing the forehead of the venerable old man, as he prepared to depart, "I can trust you, because you love me too well to betray me; and moreover, know that Florence has read your own secret. You dislike the Dutch king, though you will not own it, perhaps even to yourself."

"Go, saucy one," said the Baronet, parting back the golden hair of his fair niece, "do not presume to say you can read mine own thoughts. I will tell, girl, I think myself highly honored by the king's friendship."

"Especially, my dear uncle, as you know, to a certainty," replied the aggravating Florence, "that Dutch William has a keen eye to your broad acres and widely-spread influence."

Sir Charles made no reply, but seemingly anxious to close the conversation, retreated from the room; whilst Florence drew her writing materials before her and wrote as follows:—

DEAR MISTRESS A.—

I pray you inform your good husband that I will certainly see him on the morning after the arrangements now pending shall have been completed, provided you can yourself undertake to accompany me to your house, without which our interview will be attended with some danger. I, on my part, shall also have some communications to make, doubtless serviceable to absent friends.

Yours, in all friendship,

F. O'N.

This cautiously worded epistle was then carefully scaled and despatched by a trusty messenger to Mrs. Ashton's house in Covent-garden, and for the next half-hour the young lady amused herself by revolving in her mind the few words that had passed between herself and the Baronet, together with certain little points which clearly showed her that Sir Charles had seen nothing in William to make him change his own tactics; and though he would not speak out, she was well aware that he was restive under the mirthful spirit with which she chose to force upon him her conviction that, spite of the honor conferred on him by the invitation he had received, he had seen nothing in the Dutch King to warrant his espousal of his interests.

The Queen had expected, with some curiosity, the arrival of