

(From the Catholic World.)

NELLIE NETTerville;

OR

ONE OF THE TRANSPLANTED.

CHAPTER XI.

Happily unconscious of the peril by which her own life was so speedily to be placed in jeopardy, Nellie stood for a few minutes after Roger left her, watching his progress through the water, and speculating anxiously enough upon the nature of the summons which had been delivered to him by Paudeen. In spite of his apparent coolness, there had been something in the way in which he had almost forced her to leave him—something in the haste with which he had given her his last directions—something (if it must be confessed) in the very fact of his having rushed off without even a parting word or look, which made her suspect the danger to be more real and immediate than he wished her to suppose it, and now as she watched him bending to the oar, as if his very life depended on his speed, suspicion seemed all at once to grow up into certainty, and she bitterly regretted the shyness which had prevented her insisting on returning with him to the island. Regrets, however, were now in vain, and remembering that, if she delayed much longer, she would in all probability be too late for mass, and so lose the only object for which she had remained behind, she turned her face resolutely toward the path pointed out by Roger. It was less a path indeed than a mere narrow space left by the natural receding of the rocks and loose boulders, which lay scattered about in all directions. Such as it was, it led Nellie in a zigzag fashion upward toward the cliff, turning and twisting so suddenly and so often, that she could hardly ever see more than a yard or two before her, while the boulders on either side, being generally higher than her head, and the intervals between them filled up with tall heather and scrubby brushwood, she might as well, for all that she could see beyond, have been walking between a couple of stone walls. The congregation had, in all probability, already reached the church, or else they were coming to it by another path; for not the sound of a voice or of a footstep either before or behind her could she hear, though she paused occasionally to listen. Once, indeed, but only once, at a sudden opening among the boulders, she fancied she saw something like the glistering of a spear in the brushwood underneath, and a minute or two afterward the air seemed tremulous with a low sighing sound, as if some one were whispering within a few yards of her ear. Nevertheless, when she paused again in some trepidation to reconnoitre, everything seemed so lonely and so still around her, that she was obliged to confess that her imagination must have been playing her sad tricks. The light which she had seen was, in all probability, a mere effect of sunshine on some of the more polished rocks, while the sigh and sigh of the waters, as they lapped quietly on the beach below, might easily have assumed, in that distance and in the calm summer air, the semblance of a human whisper. Once she had satisfied herself upon this point, she resolved not to be frightened from her purpose by any nervous fancies; and stimulating her courage by the reflection that, if an enemy really were lurking near, her best chance of safety would be the church, in which her countrymen and women were already gathered, she toiled steadily upward until she reached the platform upon which it was erected. A sudden turn in the path brought her face to face with it almost before she fancied that she was near, and she only comprehended how heartily she had been frightened on the way, by the sense of relief which this discovery imparted. It was a low, mean-looking edifice enough, with the hermit's cell built against the wall, and forming in fact a kind of porch, through which alone it could be entered. From the moment it first came in sight, the path had narrowed gradually until there was barely room at last for the passing of a single person, and while it appeared to Nellie to descend, the rocks on either side rose higher, slanting even somewhat over, so as partially to impede the light. From this circumstance she was led to fancy that both cell and church had been built originally below what was now the surface of the land, a fact which added to its desolate, ruinous condition, and which easily gave pointed it out to Roger as a fitting place for the concealment of his friends. The low door of the porch was closed and fastened upon the inside, so that she was obliged, very reluctantly, to knock on it for admittance. A moment afterward she heard the sound of footsteps, the door was drawn back an inch or two, and some one from behind it whispered in Irish, "Who are you and for whom?"

"For God, our Lady, and Roger O'More," Nellie promptly answered. "Enter, then, in the name of God," the voice replied; and a strong hand being put on her shoulder, she was drawn within the building as easily and unresistingly as if she had been a child, and the door was again closed behind her. The cell into which she had been thus unceremoniously introduced was very dark, and she could only just perceive that the person who had played the part of porter was a tall, soldierly-looking fellow, and therefore she concluded, one of the outlaws, of whose residence in the building Roger had informed her.

"You have been long a-coming," said the man. "Why is not the chieftain with you?"

"How do you know that he brought me hither?" asked Nellie, startled by the knowledge he seemed to have of her proceedings.

"We keep a good look-out seaward upon Sunday mornings," he answered significantly. "Why did he go back?"

"A message—a summons from the island," said Nellie; not well knowing how much or how little it would be prudent to communicate. "It was nothing of any consequence, I believe; and he said you were not to wait. He will probably be here before all is over."

"Good," said the man; "then follow me." He went on as he spoke, Nellie stumbling as well as she could after him in the dark, until they reached the thick matting of dried grass which separated the church from the porch outside. Here the descent became so sudden that she would inevitably have been precipitated face foremost into the midst of the congregation if her conductor had not caught her by the arm in time to prevent this catastrophe, and landed her safely on the other side. The interior of the building, as Nellie saw it in that dim light, had a much nearer resemblance to a ruinous barn than to a place of Christian worship. As Roger had already told her, it had been so long dismantled and forgotten as a church that the people had come to look upon it simply as a storehouse for their winter firing, a fact amply attested by the piles of drift and brushwood which rose in all directions, blocking up the narrow windows, and forming a gigantic stack against the wall behind the altar. This latter was of stone, facing the door by which she had just entered, and so placed that there was a considerable distance between it and the wall beyond.

In this desolate-looking building about twenty or thirty people were assembled, most of them women and young girls, with a sprinkling of old men and half-a-dozen younger ones, in whom Nellie fancied she recognized the outlawed soldiers of the royal army. Two or three of these last stole a glance upon her, as she moved onward toward the altar; but the greater part of the congregation were so absorbed in earnest and loudly-uttered prayer, that they seemed absolutely unconscious of the entrance of a stranger. Passing quietly, so as not to disturb them in their devotions, Nellie made her way to a spot from whence she had a full view of the priest as he sat, a little on one side, engaged in hearing the confessions of those who presented themselves for that purpose. He was in truth a hero, in Nellie's eyes—the best of all heroes—a Christian hero. He had stood by that brave old bishop who had gone to death for an act of patriotism which, in the old heroic days of Rome, would have set him as a demi-god upon pagan altars. Quiet and self-possessed, he had knelt amid the thunders of the battle-field, to hear the confessions of the wounded soldiers. He had plunged into the fell atmospheres of plague and fever, braving death in its worst and most loathsome forms, in the exercise of his ministerial functions. He had buried the dead—he had consoled the widow and orphan, made such by the reckless cruelty of man; and now, when he had exhausted all the more heroic forms of service to his Lord, he had come hither, like that Lord himself—like the good Shepherd of the Gospel—to gather up the young lambs into his arms, and to comfort a conquered and stricken people; to pour the consolations of religion upon hearts wrung and disconsolate in human sorrow; to preach of heaven to men forsaken of the earth, and to teach them, houseless and hapless as they were, to lift up those eyes and hands, which had been lifted in vain to their brother man for mercy, higher and higher still, even to that Almighty Father to whose paternal heart the life of the least of his little ones was of such unspeakable and unthought of value, that not a hair might fall from one of their heads without his express permission. Thoughts like these passed rapidly through Nellie's mind as she watched the old man bending reverently and compassionately to receive, in the exercise of his ministerial functions, each new tale of sin or sorrow which, one after another, the poor people round him came to pour into his sympathizing ear.

We have called him "old," for his hair was white and his face was plowed into many wrinkles; yet Nellie could not help suspecting that the look of wearied, patient age upon his features was less the effect of years, than of the toil and suffering by which those years had been utilized and made fruitful in the service of his Master. Altogether she felt drawn toward him by a feeling of reverent admiration, which would probably have found vent in words, if he had not been so completely occupied in his ministerial duties as to make it simply impossible to interrupt him. For in a congregation deprived, as this had been, of a pastor for many months, there was of course much to be done ere the commencement of the Sunday service. There were confessions to be heard, and infants to be baptized, and more than one young couple—who had patiently awaited the coming of a lawful minister for the reception of that sacrament—to be united in holy wedlock. At last, however, all this was over, and Nellie had just made up her mind to go and speak to him in her turn, when, to her infinite annoyance, he rose from his place and commenced robing himself at the altar. Kneeling down again, therefore, she endeavored to withdraw her thoughts from all outward things, in order to fix them entirely upon the coming service. In spite, however, of her most earnest efforts, she felt nervous and unhappy at the prolonged absence of O'More, and she could not help envying the people round her, as with all the natural fervor of the Celtic temperament, they abandoned themselves to prayer; prostrating, groaning, beating their breasts, and praying up aloud with as much naive indifference to the vicinity of their neighbor, as if each individual in presence there imagined that he and his God were the sole occupants of the church. Poor Nellie could obtain no such blessed absorption from her cares. Her eyes would glance toward the door for the coming of Roger, and her ears would listen for his footsteps; once or twice, indeed, she felt quite certain that she heard him moving quietly behind the screen of matting, which shut in the church from the porch outside, and became, in consequence, nervously anxious to see him lift it and take his promised place beside her. He never came, however, yet the sounds continued, accompanied at times by a slight waving of the screen, as if a hand had accidentally touched it; and this occurred so often that Nellie began at last to be seriously alarmed. The thought of Paudeen's mysterious message to his chieftain, and her own half-extinguished fancy of having seen a spear among the brushwood, recurred vividly to her mind. What if she had seen rightly,

after all? What if an enemy were really lurking in the neighborhood; or, worse still, crouching behind that terrible screen, ready to massacre the congregation as they passed through it to the open air after service? The thought was too terrible for solitary endurance, and she was just about to lessen the burden by imparting it to her nearest neighbor, when she found herself forestalled by a heavy, stifling cloud of smoke, which rolled suddenly through the church and roused every creature present to a sense of coming danger. There was a rustle and a stir, and then they all stood up, men and women and little children, gazing with wild eyes and whitened faces on each other, uncertain of the "how or from whence" of the threatened peril.

The priest alone seemed to pay no attention to the circumstance; nevertheless he felt and comprehended far better than they did the nature of the fate awaiting them, and hurried on to the conclusion of the mass which was by this time, fortunately, well nigh over.

He had hardly finished the communion prayer before the heat and suffocation had become unbearable. In an agony of terror the people made a rush to the gates, and tore down the screen of matting which separated the church from the porch beyond. Then arose a wild cry of despair, filling the church from floor to ceiling—the cry of human beings caught in a snare from whence, except by a cruel death, there was no escaping. The porch was already a blazing furnace, filled almost to the roof, with fagots burning in all the fury that pitch and tar, and other combustibles flung liberally among them, were calculated to produce. These, then, were the sounds which had disturbed Nellie during mass.

The enemy had profited by the rapt devotion of these poor people to build up, unheard and unsuspected, their death-pile in the porch, after which doughty deed they had retired, closing the gates behind them, and trusting the rest to the terrible nature of the ally they had so recklessly invoked.

To attempt a passage through that sea of fire in its first wild fury would have been instant death; and amid the cries of women and children, many of whom were well-nigh trampled to death beneath the feet of their fellow-victims, the crowd swayed backward.

Then came another horror. An unhappy girl, one of the foremost of the throng, in her eagerness to escape, had rushed so far into the porch that her garments caught fire, and, mad with pain and fear, she flung herself face downward upon a heap of driftwood near her. It was all that she needed to complete the work of destruction. The wood, dry and combustible as tinder, ignited instantly, and in two minutes more was a mass of flame. In vain some of the men, with the priest at their head, leaped on it with a wild effort to trample it out before it could spread further. As fast as it was stifled in one place it broke out in another, the subtle element gliding along the walls and seizing upon stack after stack of wood with an ease and speed that mocked at all their efforts to extinguish it.

No words can paint the horrors of the scene that followed! Heavy volumes of black smoke, ever and anon rolling upward from some new spot upon which the fire had fastened, at times shut out the light of day, and made the darkness almost palpable to the senses. Fire, bright and angry, flashing at first here and there at intervals, like forked lightning, through the gloom; then coming thicker and quicker, as it grew with what it fed on, hurrying and leaping in its exultant fury, licking up and devouring with hungry tongues all that opposed its progress—now spreading itself in sheets of molten flame, now contracting into red, hissing streams, bearing a terrible resemblance to fiery serpents, but never for a moment slackening in its work of woe, winding hither and thither, and in and out, and fastening with all the malice and tenacity of a conscious creature upon everything combustible within its reach, until the very rafters overhead were wreathed in flame—and underneath that awful canopy the panting, shrieking crowd, struggling in that sulphurous atmosphere of smoke and fire, rushing backward and forward, they knew not whither, in search of a safety they knew too well they could never find; for even while obeying the animal instinct to fly from danger, there was not a creature there who did not feel to the very inmost marrow of his being, that unless a miracle were interposed to save him, he was doomed then and there to die.

Nellie was the only person in the church, perhaps, with the sole exception of the pastor, who made no vain effort at escaping. Driven by the swaying of the others, after their first rush to the door, backward toward the altar, she had remained there quietly ever since, praying or trying to pray, and shutting eyes and ears as much as might be to the terrible sights and sounds around her. Accident had, in fact, brought her to the only spot in the building where safety was for the moment feasible.

The altar was built, as we have already said, of stone, and being placed at some distance from any of the walls, the space in front, though stifling from heat and smoke, was clear of fire, and consequently of immediate danger.

Hither, therefore, the priest, who, having done all that man could do toward the stifling of the flames, now felt that another and a higher duty—the duty of his priestly office—must needs be exercised, endeavored to collect his flock, and hither, at his bidding, one by one they came, every hope of rescue extinguished in their bosoms, and scorched, and bruised, and half suffocated as they were, lay down at his feet to die. There was no loud shrieking now—the silence of utter exhaustion had fallen upon them all, and only a low wail of pain broke now and then from the white, parched lips of some poor dying creature, as if in human expostulation with the sputtering and hissing of the flames that scorched him. Once, and only once, a less fitting sound was heard—a curse, deep but loud, on the foe that had so ruthlessly contrived their ruin.

It reached the ear of the priest as he stood before the altar, sometimes praying up aloud, sometimes with look and voice endeavoring to calm his people, waiting and

watching with wise, heroic patience for the precise moment when, all hopes of human life abandoned, he might lead them to thoughts of that which is eternal.

But that muttered curse seemed to rouse another and a different spirit in his bosom, and filled with holy and apostolic anger, he turned at once upon the man who spoke it. "Sinner!" he cried, "be silent! Dare you go to God with a curse upon your lips! What if he curse you in return? What if he plunge you, for that very word, from this fire, which will pass with time, into that which is eternal and endures forever? O my children, my children!" cried the good old man, opening wide his arms, as if he would fain have embraced his weeping flock and sheltered them all from pain and sorrow on his paternal bosom. "see you not, indeed, that you must die!—with foes outside, with devouring flames within, all hope of life is simple folly. Die you must. So man decrees; but God, more merciful, still leaves a choice—not as to death, but as to the spirit in which you meet it. You may die angry and reviling, as the blaspheming thief, or you may die (O blessed thought!) as Jesus died—peace in your hearts and a prayer for your foes upon your lips. Have pity on yourselves, my children; have pity on me, who, as your pastor, will have to answer for your souls, as for my own, to God—and choose with Jesus. Put aside all rancor from your hearts. Remember that what our foes have done to us, we, each in our measure, have done by our sins to Jesus. Pray for them as he did. Weep, as he did for your sins (not his) upon the cross, and kneel at once, that while there yet is time I may give you, in his name and by his power, that pardon which will send you safe and hopeful to the judgment-seat of God."

Clear, calm, and quiet, amid the confusion around him, rose the voice of that good shepherd, sent hither, as it seemed, for no other purpose than to perish with his flock; and like a message of mercy from on high his words fell upon their falling hearts. They obeyed him to the letter. Hushed was every murmur, stifled every cry of pain, and prostrate on their faces, they waited with solemn silence the word which they knew would follow. And it was said at last. With streaming eyes, and hands uplifted toward that heaven to which he and his poor children all were speeding, the priest pronounced that *Ego te absolvo*, which speaking to each individual soul as if meant for it alone, yet brought pardon, peace, and healing to them all. Something like a low "Amen," something like a thrill of relief from overlaid bosoms, followed, and then, almost at the same instant, came a loud cry from the outside of the church—a crashing of doors—a rush—a struggle—a scattering of brands from the half-burned-out fagots in the porch—and, blackened with smoke and scorched with fire, O'More leaped like an apparition into the midst of the people. A shout almost of triumph greeted his appearance, for they felt as if he must have brought safety with him. It seemed, in fact, as if only by a miracle he could have been there at all. Unarmed as he was, he had rushed through the English soldiers, and they, having all along imagined him to be in the church with their less noble victims, were taken so completely by surprise that they suffered him to pass at first almost without a blow. By the time they had recovered themselves, their leaders had staid their hands. It was better for all their purposes that he should rush to death of his own accord than that they should have any ostensible share in the business. No further opposition, therefore, being offered to his progress, he easily undid the gates, which were only slightly barricaded on the outside, and having cleared the porch at the risk of instant suffocation to himself, he now stood calling upon Nellie, and vainly endeavoring to discover her in the blinding atmosphere of smoke around him. She was still where she had been from the beginning—at the foot of the altar, faint and half-dead with heat and fear. But the sound of his voice seemed to call her back to life, and, with a cry like a frightened child, she half rose from her recumbent posture. Faint as was that cry, he heard it, and catching a glimpse of her white face, rushed toward her. In another moment he had her in his arms, wrapped carefully in his heavy cloak, and shouting to all to follow and keep close, he rushed behind the altar.

Half an hour before, this had been the hottest and most dangerous position in the church, but O'More had well calculated his chances. The real danger now was from the roof, which, having been burning for some time, might fall at any moment. Below, the fire, having rapidly exhausted the light material upon which it had fed its fury, was gradually dying out, and boldly scattering the fagots upon either side as he moved on, Roger made his way good to the only spot in the building from whence escape was possible. Here the floor sank considerably below the general surface, and dashing down a heap of brushwood which still lay smouldering near, he lay bare an aperture effected in the wall itself, and going right through it to the cliffs beyond.

Through this he passed at once, carrying Nellie as easily as if she had been a baby, and landing her safely on the other side. The people saw, and with a wild cry of hope rushed forward. Even as they did so the roof began to totter. They knew it, and maddened by the near approach of death, pressed one upon another, blocking up the way and destroying every chance of safety by their wild efforts to attain it.

In the midst of this confusion, a shower of red-hot fire poured down from the yielding rafters. Then came another cry (oh! so different from the last)—a cry of grief and terror mingled—then a crashing sound and heavy fall—and then a silence more terrible even than that of terror—a ghastly, death-like silence, only broken by the hissing and crackling of the flames above, and the deep sough of the sea below—and all was over.

[To be Continued.]

ARCHBISHOP McCLOSKEY.

The New York Sunday News has a series of papers under the title of "Etchings in Ink." From the number of June 28th we take a sketch of the Most Rev. Archbishop of New York:

The Catholic hierarchy of the United States is composed of almost as many different nationalities as we have varied peoples constituting this immense republic. The United States, Ireland, Germany, France, Spain, and even Holland, are represented. New York's great ecclesiastic, scholar, and statesman, the late illustrious Archbishop Hughes, was a native of Ireland, but came to this country at so early an age that he, although always a patriotic Irishman, became, if we may use the expression, more American than the Americans in his love and devotion to his adopted country. His commanding intellect marked him as one of America's greatest citizens, and it is well known that our countrymen traveling in Europe were in the habit of boasting of him as an American who had achieved a world-wide renown. If the successor of Archbishop Hughes has not attained to similar wide spread and brilliant fame, he is well known among the Catholic hierarchy of the United States for his eminent talents and his great executive abilities, and widely beloved for his exalted virtues. Of tall and commanding presence, his is a face that at once attracts attention. If, according to physiognomists, the face is the index of the soul, the features of Archbishop McCloskey indicate the character of the man, a general, benevolent expression about his features that is wonderfully attractive, and the strongly marked lines of the mouth, and the square chin, indicating great force of character and executive ability, blend admirably with a certain childlike simplicity and benignity of countenance that win the hearts of all with whom he comes in contact. Archbishop McCloskey's career has been an eminently practical and useful one. His works are of that unostentatious character that shuns observation and the applause of the world; but any one familiar with the onerous duties connected with the administration of the archdiocese of New York will have some idea of the untiring labor and great ability necessary to have brought the Catholic institutions of New York to their present flourishing state. The Catholic charities of this city, in particular, have always been the objects of Archbishop McCloskey's most devoted care, and it is hardly necessary to say that the results of his labors in this particular have been of the most flattering character. Archbishop McCloskey is a native of Brooklyn, and is now fifty-eight years of age. From early youth he was destined for the priesthood, and, after passing with great credit through the usual course of studies, he was ordained priest at the rather youthful age of twenty-four. Shortly after his ordination he was appointed to the charge of St. Joseph's Church, in this city, and fulfilled the duties of that position for several years. His piety, oratorical ability, and great executive talents soon attracted the attention of his superiors, and in 1844 he was ordained bishop and appointed coadjutor to the Archbishop of New York. In 1847 the diocese of Albany was created, and Bishop McCloskey appointed to that see. His administration of the diocese of Albany was marked by the same untiring zeal and the same practical abilities that had marked his career in New York. The late Archbishop Hughes, in particular, held him in high esteem, and at the death of that eminent prelate he was, it is said, at the dying request of Archbishop Hughes himself, appointed to the Archiepiscopal See of New York, being installed in August, 1864. How ably Archbishop McCloskey has managed the affairs of this diocese, during the past four years, is known to all. The immense strides the Catholic faith has made among us in this time have surprised many; churches, schools, convents, and charitable institutions have sprung up on all sides, but persistently for the spread of the Catholic faith and the elevation of his co-religionists. While earning the gratitude and benediction of thousands of all denominations, for his no mere sectarian charity, he has everywhere won the esteem of good men of all parties and denominations.

The great trotting horse race will come off to-day, at Oakland Park.

ORACULAR.—The London Times, in noticing a recent demonstration against disendowment, thus summarizes what may be said for and against the measure:

The great Protestant deputation which waited on Mr. Disraeli a few days ago, modestly requesting that the Established Church in Ireland should be let alone, that the grant to Presbyterian ministers should be increased, but that the old rule of wrong toward Catholics should be persevered in, met with a very encouraging reception from the premier. His answer, to quote the Times, "had in it the true ring of 'no surrender,' and might well have elicited a round of Kentish fire." But the same journal very fairly says that the programme of the Protestant Defense Association "is the one programme which public opinion will never ratify, outraging, as it does, both equity and common sense. There is much to be said for Lord Russell's original scheme for endowing all three religious denominations in Ireland out of the title rent charge in the proportion of their numbers. There is much to be said for Mr. Gladstone's plan of disendowing all impartially, with due security for vested interests. There is something to be said for leaving things as they are, though a more favorable opportunity for a settlement is not likely to occur. There is nothing to be said for retaining all the revenues of the wealthiest communion, and increasing the revenues of the next wealthiest, while the Church of the poor is not only to be left unendowed, but to be informed with contumely that Protestants will never listen to any plea in its behalf."

A fine band of music will be in attendance at the Oakland Park, to-day.

All the great races published in the programme—foot, sack, horse, and mule—not forgetting the one between the boys and the greased pigs—will take place to-day, at Oakland Course. Don't fail to attend.