THE EVENING NEWS.

Thursday, - - - May, 4, 1871.

[From Chambers' Journal.]

MY LODGER'S WIFE.

[CONCLUDED.]

As all attempts to recapture the convict had failed, and so there was no longer, I suppose, a hope of keeping it quiet, that night great bills were stuck up about the town, offering five hundred pounds reward for the apprehension of the Fenian colonel—for it was he after all—and one of these bills was stuck up on an empty house just opposite to my own door. I naturally got talking about this with Mrs. Lewis; at least I talked, and she listened, for she said hardly a word; and at last, when I struck a light to find something she wanted, I found she was crying. I told her I was afraid she was weak and low, that her long journey and her husband's illness had upset her, and asked her to let me make her some port wine negus the last thing that night. She thanked me, but declined; and when she went away, the remembrance of her face, with the tears on her cheeks, seemed ten times more familiar to me than ever. I determined to ask Mr. Lewis, when I saw him, if his wife had ever lived in Weymouth, but it seemed as though I never should see him again. However, I did see him that evening.

I had been up stairs for some time, and as I was looking over the contents of an old drawer, I was very quiet, and my lodger thought I was out; but presently I came down, and met Lewis ascending, carrying a light. I was in the dark.

"Good evening, Mr. Lewis," I said; "I hope you are better."

He looked up and said: "Yes; much better, thank you." He passed on, and left me almost petrified. *It was not the same man.* There was the same skin, moustache, hair, and whiskers; the same clothes; but this man, although short, was taller than my lodger, decidedly stouter, and had altogether a harder, sterner expression. There was no possible mistake. His voice, too, was wholly different; and I staggered, rather than walked, into my kitchen, feeling as though I had seen a ghost. I had not strength to procure a light; but in a few minutes Mrs. Lewis—sent down, as I found, by her husband—came in with one. Seeing me sitting, so pale and scared, in my chair, she said, "Are you ill, Mrs Gerran? My husband fears you are." As if a flash of lightning had suddenly penetrated all the dark places of my mind, I saw, as she spoke, the meaning of all that had been mysterious, and by her face I saw she knew her secret was revealed. She was my lodger; she was the Mr. Lewis I had known. Altered and changed in every respect as she was, I knew her now. She locked her hands together, and twisted her fingers with a nervous, frightend air, and looked anxiously at me.

"Who—who are you?" I asked. "Why are you dressed like this? Who is the man"——

"O Mrs. Gerran!" she cried, throwing herself down at my knees, before I could move to stay her, "forgive my deceiving you, and still be my friend—be my husband's friend. If you are not kind and true to us, we are lost. We have no home but this—no friend but you. It will soon, I trust, be different; but at this moment my poor husband is a fugitive, an outlaw, a convict, and a price is set upon his head."

"A price upon his head!" I echoed. "Is he then"——

"Yes," she said interrupting, me although she was sobbing as if her heart would break—"Yes, my husband—is Colonel La Trouile, the Fenian. We are Americans and, we are only waiting for the pursuit to cool, when we shall cross to France, and can then easily regain our home—never more, I trust, to leave it."

"Rise up, my poor dear girl," I said, lifting her on to a chair; "and believe me that no money would tempt me to betray your husband; for your sake, at any rate, I will be true to you both. I hope for your sake too, that he will leave his dreadful and desperate schemes."

"O Mrs. Gerran," she answered, "do not think him a bloodthirsty man; there never breathed a gentler or kinder being. He was sadly deceived in the business which brought him here; but pray, come and see him, that he may know he is safe under your roof."

I went with her; and found this desperate Fenian quite a mild, gentlemanly person. He was full of gratitude to me; and although his close cut hair, now he sat without his wig, and his dark face made him look stern enough, yet his eyes swam with genuine tears over and over again, when he spoke of his wife and her devotion to him.

Of course, every one can now see how it was managed. When he was sent to Portland, his wife came down, dressed as a man, and, while lodging with me, took care to familiarize the neighbors with the fact that I had a young man lodger. One of the warders had already been gained over—so Robert at the *White Lion* was not so far wrong in his guess—and he it was with whom I had seen the supposed Mr. Lewis talking, and who came to my house twice. On his second visit, he came to say that all was arranged, and that her husband would get away soon after dark the next night. It was fortunately for the scheme, a very stormy one; so La Trouile got past the station, and followed the Chesil Bank until he thought it safe to strike the line, and then got over the railway bridge without being recognized. He had a large railway rug over his shoulders, which hid his convict dress; and the only really dangerous part of his journey was through the streets to reach my house; but the dreadful storm cleared away all passengers, and he entered our street without having met half a dozen people. His wife was watching from her window, and seeing him, slipped down and opened the street door without my knowing anything about it. Then they removed the stains from her face, hands, and neck, with washes which she had brought with her, and he wore a wig made to resemble her, short curls. Poor young thing! she showed me such beautiful locks which she had cut off, to enable her to look more like a man; they must have been nearly a yard long, I am sure. They thought no place was so safe as Weymouth, and they were right, for the officers were hunting all over London, and Ireland, and Liverpool, and goodness knows where besides. La Trouile showed himself a little, but not too much, and no one ever suspected the change in my lodgers. In about a fortnight he got quietly on board a fruit sloop which was going back to France; and both he and his wife wrote to me when they got there, and also when they arrived at New Orleans. I don't know who the warder was, nor what he received for his services; but I heard, shortly after, from Robert at the *White Lion*, that one of them had left Portland to go and take a very handsome public house in London; so I had my suspicions. I know that if I wanted money, which I am happy to say, thanks to my poor dear husband, I do not, I should only have to tell Mrs. La Trouile, or go to the great house in Liverpool, of which they gave me the card, and I could have all I wanted.

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