

CHAPTER XIX.

FRANCES I'ANSON, THE LASS OF RICHMOND
HILL.

The Lass of Richmond Hill.

On Richmond Hill there lives a lass,
More bright than May-day morn,
Whose charms all other maids' surpass—
A rose without a thorn.

Chorus.

This lass so neat, with smiles so sweet,
Hath won my right goodwill;
I'd crown resign to call her mine,
Sweet lass of Richmond Hill—
Sweet lass of Richmond Hill;
I'd crown resign to call her mine,
Sweet lass of Richmond Hill.

Ye zephyrs gay that fan the air
And wanton through the grove,
Oh, whisper to my charming fair,
I die for her and love!

Chorus, &c.

How happy will the shepherd be
Who calls this nymph his own!
Oh, may her choice be fixed on me!—
Mine's fixed on her alone.

Chorus, &c.

It is a popular South country delusion that this old and well-known song refers to Richmond in Surrey. From reference to the printed pedigree it will be seen that Frances I'Anson was baptised at Wensley, Co. York, on the 11th November, 1766. At

the College of Arms this date, and those of her marriage and death, are on record. She is also recognised by the Heralds as the heroine of the song. In Vol. VII. of *The Visitation of England and Wales*, edited by the late Dr. Howard, Maltravers, Herald Extraordinary, and Mr. Crisp, F.S.A., of Denmark Hill, London, published in 1899, there is a portrait of Frances P'Anson (afterwards the wife of Leonard MacNally, the clever and witty Barrister-at-Law and Solicitor, and author of the song), also that of her brother, William P'Anson, King's Bench Solicitor, of Leyburn, Yorks; Hill House, Richmond, Yorks, and of Bedford Row, London, and Cotgrove Place, Co. Nottingham, as part illustration of a branch pedigree of the family.

It was at her father's house in Bedford Row, London, that Frances P'Anson first met her future husband, Leonard MacNally. Her father, in marrying Martha Hutchinson, of Hill House, Richmond, Yorkshire, where they afterwards lived, married an heiress and a fortune of £10,000, which in those days was considered a very large sum of money. Some few years later they removed to London, where he was for several years in practice as Attorney of the Court of King's Bench. Hill House, Richmond, Yorkshire, was then made their country house.

William P'Anson, father of Frances, opposed the match, and she was rusticated to The Hill House, Richmond, Yorkshire.

The consent of the parents was, however, eventually obtained.

In the marriage register of St. George's, Hanover Square, for the year 1787, is the following entry:—

"Jan. 16.—Leonard MacNally and Frances P'Anson."

Their children, Frances and Elizabeth, were born in London, and later the MacNallys went to Dublin, where Leonard became an ardent advocate of religious equality and political reform. Amongst his exploits was a duel, fought by him with Sir Joshua Barrington, in connection with some rebellious verses written by himself when conducting the defence of the celebrated Napper Tandy. The father of Leonard MacNally was a Catholic, who acquired considerable built property, but was denounced under the Penal Laws as a Papist and stripped of it. The ancestors of MacNally possessed the castle and lands of Rahisbeth, as is stated on the tombstone at Donnybrook. The boy was brought up a Protestant. O'Keefe wrote of his mother (MacNally's): "One of the finest persons of a woman I ever saw; tall, full, and majestic . . . Leonard himself was much undersized, but had a handsome, expressive countenance, and fine, sparkling, dark eyes." Sir Joshua Barrington says that Frances P'Anson had herself some turn for versification.

The MacNallys resided in Dominic Street, Dublin, and their house was a scene of lavish hospitality. He died 13th February, 1820, and was buried in Donnybrook Church.

The following is extracted from an account of prominent men at the Bar:—

Only son of William McNally, of Dublin, where he was born in 1752. He was called to the Irish Bar 1776 and to the English Bar 30th May, 1783. In 1792 he was Counsel for Napper Tandy in an action against Lord Westmoreland. He was a member of the United Irishmen, and wrote verses in the *Northon Star*, their organ, but in 1794 deserted secretly to the Government and became their agent and informer, whilst openly acting for defendants in Government prosecutions. This treachery was not discovered until after his death, so cleverly was it concealed. He was the author of a number of dramatic pieces and of two legal treatises—"The Rules of Evidence" (1800) and "The Justice of the Peace" (1812)—but the only thing which "lives" of his (if, indeed, it be his, for it has been attributed to others) is the song, "Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill," composed in honour of Frances P'Anson of Richmond, Yorkshire, who became his wife. He died 13th February, 1820.

Letter from Leonard MacNally to Licut. Ralph Mark P'Anson.

Letter addressed to "Licut. Ralph P'Anson, *Vesuvius*."

DUBLIN, 14 October, 1793.

The gentleness of your upbraiding carries with it more points than severity of rebuke, and I consider it a criterion, not only of your good nature, but of your friendship and affection, which, believe me, dear Ralph, I most warmly reciprocate. You shall not again have occasion to accuse me of neglect; yet, in truth, for some considerable time past, I did not know where to direct to you; and this reason, I trust, if it does not completely excuse, will at least palliate my fault.

Your promotion gives me infinite satisfaction, and I doubt not but your spirit and conduct will ultimately raise you to the first line of your profession, and that we may yet salute you Admiral. The prospect you hold out of visiting us here I shall continually look to with the most anxious hope; your sister and I have very often indeed wished for your society, and, whether you come to us in adversity or prosperity, you will find a house and everything it affords at your devotion. You will meet a kind reception and every attention within our power to render Ireland agreeable. Our circle of acquaintance is extensive, pleasant, and respectable, and when we have you amongst us, if your heart be disengaged, if no "black-eyed Susan" has laid hold of your affections, who knows, I say, but we might send you home a Benedict coupled to an Hibernian ten-thousand-pounder.

My family has not increased since I left England. Two little ones came into the world, and scarcely looked about them, when they spurned this sordid earth, as unworthy of their innocence, and took flight to Heaven. There is, however, another *in ventre semere*, which I am given to understand will be a March bird; so that, though my fair partner and self have been rather unsuccessful, you see we have not been idle.

Misses Frances and Eliza are, I assure you, much admired—the eldest must be handsome for she is said to be *like me*. She is slender, lively, with a turn for humour, and resides very much with my sister Fetherston, about eight miles from Dublin, who is extremely fond of her. Eliza is a blue-eyed maid, of a gentle, affectionate disposition, and has, in my opinion, a very strong resemblance of your Mother; she is constantly with ourselves.

I read, but not with wonder, your account of "my dear brother-in-law." I say without wonder, for it was anticipated by *honest* George Crossly, one of the gentlemen attorneys from the Adelphi, London, who visited Dublin a few weeks ago on law business; he dined at my house.

Your sister is, as you hope, in good health and spirits. She is much admired, and, what is still more pleasing to me, is much respected. My relations love her most sincerely, and if they did not I should hate them from my heart. Seven years have now nearly elapsed since our marriage, and though we have experienced some severe rubs, I can say for her, as I can sincerely say for myself, there has not been a moment of repentance.

As to myself, business increases daily, so does connections. I have been able to pay off several heavy debts, and will shortly be able to liquidate the whole. Our house is in one of the politest streets in Dublin, and though not spacious, is fashionable, and furnished with some taste and expense under the direction of Madame Fanny, who has as strong an attachment for carpenters, painters, etc., as her mother.

I was indeed sorry to hear of your Mother's indisposition, and I assure you it has been a very sensible influence on your sister's mind. She has written three letters without receiving an answer; probably they have miscarried. I am much obliged to Tom for his kindness; to you, as I have ever been, so will I ever remain, dear Ralph, your affectionate friend and brother,

LEO. MACNALLY.