

CARROLL O'DONOGHUE

CHRISTINE FAHER Authors of "A Mother's Sacrifice," etc. CHAPTER LII.—CONTINUED

"So things are progressing, Thade," said he who had been addressed as Jack, "between yourself and Carter?"

"Faith, they couldn't be fairer—I have nothing to trouble me mind but watchin' Rick o' the Hills an' his young lady daughter, an' 'jist reportin' all their movements to our Carter, an' he grases me fist for it every time. First, when the pair lived at Mrs. Murphy's, it seems he didn't have any watch on them, but jist as they were leavin' there he zey me the job. Well, I thracked them closely. They went from Mrs. Murphy's to a poor place intirely, an' I used to see the young lady—it'd be a sin to call her anything else, even if she is Rick's daughter, be rayson o' her beauty,—going out as if it might be on business, an' goin' out o' her way to pass the jail; well, I tould our Carter the whole o' it, an' I don't know what happened, or what was betune them, but that's do you think o' this, Jack?"

"Well, Thade, what's the news now?" "The devil a liss than Miss Sullivan is off to Dhrummacool wid Miss O'Donoghue, an' that Englishman that goes to Mrs. Murphy's so much lately, an' a young praste, an' Tighe a Vohr."

"Carter dropped his bone, and ceased to masticate. "When?" he asked. "They went in the last mail-car that lift."

"And Rick of the Hills—where was he?" Carter's voice had become agitated. "The devil a know I know—sure there's nayther hide nor hair o' him to be had in Tralee."

"Carter rose—his agitation would find its old vent—he must pace the room, and he did so, stopping after intervals to rub his face, as if that action might help to clear his intricate thoughts. His visitor watched with a look expressive of his own shrewd conclusions. Carter paused at length. "Will you run down to Dhrummacool, Thade, and keep the same watch there that you did here? you know the place well, and it will not be difficult for you to act the spy on Miss Sullivan's movements, and report to me by letter; you are able to write, I believe?"

"Oh, I can write, Mr. Carter; aisy enough—it's only the spelling that bother's me; but it'd be unconvanient for me to lave Tralee now, unless you'd make it worth my while."

"Certainly, Thade, I'll do that and welcome; you shall have no cause to complain—only serve me well."

"Never fear, Mr. Carther—I'll sarve ye to the dist o' me powers!" and having received from Carter the stipend which was always the reward of his report, and promising to depart that very evening for Dhrummacool, Thade took his leave.

Once more the traitor began his agitated stride of the room, and this time all his fiendish emotions were suffered to appear in his bloated countenance—rage, hate, jealousy struggled together in his breast, and swept by turns over a landscape in which the stamp of a guilty soul had long been set. "Rick has at last discovered upon me!" he said, as he walked; "it must be so, or he would be seen somewhere, and that is why Nora has returned to Dhrummacool. They all know the story now, and what will become of me—what, oh what, if any of them should take steps to acquaint Lord Heathcote? Pshaw! what a fool I am! there is no proof to fasten the guilt upon me, but there is every proof to place it on Rick; I shall not fear." He straightened himself and walked with a firmer step. "I have wealth, and when I receive the amount which I expect for having turned witness against Carroll O'Donoghue, I shall have enough to purchase the O'Donoghue estate, and when Carroll is hung I may find means to obtain possession of Nora. If I do not, I shall at least gill them all by my ownership of the O'Donoghue property, even though I cannot make of it a home. It was a desperate stroke," he continued, folding his arms and walking with slower gait, "to turn open informer in the court, but the loss of the paper I had obtained from Carroll left me no other alternative—the case was to be closed that day, and the testimony did not seem to be sufficient to fully convict him; did I not go on the stand I should have been deplored, not alone of the O'Donoghue homestead, but of my revenge—the execution of Carroll. Beside, there was nothing more to be gained by pretending to be true to the prisoner, and by informing thus openly I could crush both him and his affianced,—speaking with bitter mockery—"Nora Sullivan, or Marie Berkeley."

He strode to the closet and helped himself bountifully to the contents of one of the bottles on the shelf; then, apparently calmed and fortified, he returned to the table, and prepared to resume operations on his grilled bone.

"No," he said, suspending his knife and fork in the air for a moment, "I am safe—and I shall remain quietly waiting Carroll's hanging, and Thade's reports from Dhrummacool, and then, when I have purchased the O'Donoghue estate, I shall plan for other successes."

He bent to his breakfast with renewed ardor, compensating by his animal gratification for all his recent discomfort and anxiety.

THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE

By Christian Field

The dusk of Christmas Eve was falling when, among the people passing out of the suburban church, where many were kneeling around the confessionals in preparation for the great feast near at hand, four persons met unexpectedly in the swinging door that led from the church into the vestibule. An elderly woman, with a typical Irish face and a girl with dark blue Irish eyes were in the act of going out just as a slender young woman in deep mourning, accompanied by a small child, was entering; and collision was averted only by the quick drawing back of the latter. There was a murmured word of apology on one side, and of thanks on the other, as she held the door open while the two passed out; and the girl's gaze was attracted for an instant by the child, who looked up at her with a smile. He was a handsome little fellow, of not more than four or five years, with a singularly winning expression; and she noticed that he was carrying a small bundle with great care beneath the cape of his coat.

A few minutes later, as her mother and herself were walking along the streets where electric lamps were gleaming through the frosty dusk, Mrs. Gilroy said abruptly: "You'll likely be surprised, Alanna, at the thought that came to me a little while ago in the church—that we haven't our Christmas candle; and it's the first Christmas I've ever been without one in my life."

"But, mother dear," the daughter remonstrated, "what would you do this with a Christmas candle here? It isn't Ireland."

"I know well that it isn't," the other answered, with a sigh that seemed drawn from the depths of her heart; "but it's Christmas here as well as there, and it's sorry I am to think of lacking a Christmas candle."

"But you haven't said anything about it before, and you always prepare the Christmas candle in time for Christmas Eve."

"I haven't thought of it," Mrs. Gilroy confessed, "everything being so strange here, and my mind so full of trouble about Dennis. It was only when I was saying my beads in the church before the altar of Our Lady that the remembrance came to me; and it seemed that I heard her whisper, reproachfully: 'Where is your Christmas candle?' Then it flashed on me that I hadn't any, and I made up my mind that I'd try to get one, late as it is. But you must help me, Alleen; for I've hardly my wits about me at all in this strange place."

Alleen knew very well that this was true. Her mother, so capable and energetic in their Irish home, had, in a strange environment and amid unfamiliar conditions, developed a weakness of mind and body which was saddening. It seemed fresh proof of this weakness now, that she should insist on the observance of a custom which Alleen felt had no place or meaning in their present surroundings. But, with the instinct of humoring her, and giving any comfort possible to one in sore trouble, the girl said quickly: "Why, to be sure I'll help you, mother, if you really want the candle. It's late to be getting one now, but I've a blessed candle still untouched from last Christmas, and I'll make it ready for lighting as soon as we get home."

It's the good girl you are, and always have been, Alleen; her mother said gratefully. "I know you think it's foolish to do anything of the kind here; but the thought came to me so clear, back there in the church, that I couldn't feel easy to disregard it. For, you see, I'd just ended my novena, and begged the Blessed Mother, by the memory of the Son she laid in the manger of Bethlehem, to bring my son back to me; and how could I expect such a blessing if I hadn't my candle lighted, as an invitation to my poor soul needing shelter, as Herself needed it on that night?"

"It would have to be a poor soul from Ireland to understand what the candle means," Alleen said. "And isn't that what I should like best—that she should be from Ireland?" the mother answered.

They hurried on, as they talked, along the streets of what had lately been a pleasant suburban town, but which the constantly encroaching strides of the great city near by had now overtaken; and where tall buildings were rising on the erstwhile green fields. The general aspect of a country town still remained, however, especially in the streets lined by detached residences of moderate size and modest pretensions. It was before one of a row of these cottages that the mother and daughter presently paused, went up the short walk leading to the front door, and found themselves in; for Alleen had learned that nothing would satisfy her mother but to live in her own house—attached houses and tenements of the city were alike dreadful to her—and, therefore, they had come to the suburbs, where it was still possible to possess and to live under their own roof-tree, even if it were a lowly one. The rent was no more than that of a flat in the city; the furnishings needed were few and simple. And here they settled, in the hope that time might bring them tidings of the son and brother whom they had crossed the ocean to seek.

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Their sadness and homesickness accentuated by the season which was filling the air with the spirit of festivity and gladness, seemed more easily borne in the church than elsewhere; so they had lingered there long, and dusk had given place to night by the time they reached home. Then Mrs. Gilroy, with the thought of the Christmas candle firmly fixed in her mind, refused Alleen's help in preparing their supper, but urged her to bring the candle at once, that it might be decorated and lighted without delay.

So Alleen brought out the tall candle and proceeded to dress it with the green leaves and crimson berries of the tree which from time immemorial the Celts have held as holy. And as her quick, deft fingers twined the holly, her tears fell fast in thinking of the many Christmas Eves when she had decorated such a candle, which when evening fell was lighted and placed in the window; while all night the door of the house was left ajar, so that if any poor woman and her infant came by and wanted shelter, the woman would see the light and might come and welcome; "for was it not on that night that the Blessed Virgin herself could find no shelter save in a stable? And God forbid that in Ireland such a thing should ever happen while there was a candle that could be lighted or a door to open!"

But this was not holy Ireland; and Alleen felt as if it were absurd to place the candle of such meaning and such association in the window of a house in materialized America, where none would understand or appreciate its tender and poetic significance—unless, indeed, some poor soul, as her mother had said, exiled like themselves, and like themselves also pining for the old home across the sea, should see the candle shining like the faith of Ireland through the dark night, and be warmed and heartened thereby. And then a thought came that made her catch her breath. Why should such a passerby not be Dennis himself? And if Dennis, going along the street, caught sight of such a candle, would he not understand—would he not know that Irish hands had placed it there, and enter perhaps to ask who had done so? It did not seem impossible, in view of the novena just ended, and of the time and place where the remembrance of the candle had come to her mother. So, with a murmured prayer, Alleen put the last touch to her decoration, and called her mother for the lighting.

Mrs. Gilroy's eyes filled with a light of pleasure when she saw shining amid the green leaves and red berries, tinsel flowers, such as they had always used, to give a touch of brightness to the decoration; and she turned to her daughter eagerly. "Sure 'tis you that have the fairy fingers, Alleen," she said. "How did you get the lowers?"

"They were left over from last Christmas, mother," the girl answered gently. "I remembered that I had put them in one of my boxes, and I knew you would be glad to see them on the candle."

"Oh, I'm glad—I'm glad indeed!" her mother cried. "It's like a bit of Ireland the candle is now, and we'll light it and say a 'Hail Mary' that herself may send me news of my boy."

Meanwhile, the other two of the four who met so unexpectedly in the door of the church had, after the momentary encounter, passed on into the warm and lighted buildings, filled with the fragrance of evergreens—cedar and holly and box—which were twined around the pillars, and hung in green wreaths about the sanctuary. The little boy drew in a deep breath. "Smells like the woods, muvver," he whispered; and his mother answered softly: "It's the cedar, darling! See, they've brought trees of it, to put

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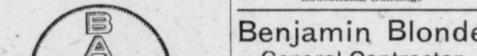
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