

CARROLL O'DONOGHUE

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Author of "A Mother's Sacrifice," etc.
CHAPTER LX.
CORNY O'TOOLE IS SATISFIED

The little village of Dhrummacool seemed to have lost its identity in the gala place which it had become—it was so utterly unlike its former staid, quiet self. Excitement ran so high within it, owing to the many strange events that were taking place—Miss Berkeley, regarded as the angel of the little district because of her kindness to the poor, turning out to be the daughter of an English lord, and about to wed young Carroll O'Donoghue, the darling and idol of all his tenantry; then Carroll's sister—equally loved with himself, though she was not noted for the gentleness which marked her friend, Marie,—about to marry Marie's brother, now bearing a title, and the possessor of a vast English estate, and better than all, reported to have become a Catholic in faith and practice. In addition to these startling facts, there was still another; that of Father O'Connor being now Father Berkeley, and the son, also, of this great English lord. People wondered somewhat if the wealth which report said was now his would make any difference in his simple style of living. In a little while they were answered; and the aid which poured into every impoverished cabin, which provided for the sick and the ignorant, which lessened not a mite of the economy of his own household, told of one who in wealth, as in poverty, would follow in his Master's steps.

Both weddings were to take place on the same day. Father Meagher, assisted by Fathers Berkeley and McShane, was to perform the ceremony in the little parish church of Dhrummacool; immediately after, the bridal parties were to start for London, in which city Walter Berkeley—now holding his father's title of Lord Heathcote—and his wife, who would be Lady Heathcote, intended to make their home during certain seasons of the year.

So it was little wonder that the whole village of Dhrummacool was aroused, and in such a state of joyous excitement that even Ned Maloney, the miser, who was yet alive and pursuing his ostensible trade in his general shop, was noticed by parties who entered his dingy place to be more gracious than usual—it might be owing to the stir given by approaching events to even the little business he conducted. Disgusted and alarmed by the deception practiced upon him regarding the first and only race in which he had ever engaged, he had, on recovering his horse, availed himself of the first opportunity to sell the animal, and to discharge the groom, Arty Moore.

The only viege that was somewhat lengthy was that of Tighe's Vohr.

"Faith, Moira," he said one day, just a week before the eventful day of the weddings, "it's a burnin' shame, after all me good behavior, that Father Meagher won't as much as tip me a wink to let me know that he's aware o' me impatience in this matter o' our courtship—he jist purtinds to be noticin' nothin'! an' the same toime sure the widge o' Dhrummacool can see that 'im dyin' about you. Now it's hard to be thrated in this manner, an' I have it to yersel', Moira, if I haven't been as sober, an' as dutiful, an' as attentive for the past two months as you'd wish me to be—haven't I left off all me wild thricks?"

"Indeed you have, Tighe!" said Moira warmly; "and I undertook to tell uncle something about it last night."

"An' what did he say, darlin'?"

"And Tighe leaned forward with bated breath to catch her answer. "Why, he said that you had'd been tested enough yet—that I must wait until you were more settled down, and until he could be sure that you would abstain from liquor."

Tighe leaned back in his chair, disappointed and crestfallen. Well now, that's mighty hard, wid me heart breakin' for you the way it is! but never mind; it's far off God sinds, an' mebbe He'd sind a bit o' luck to us afore the wake is out."

"His hope was realized, for on the evening of that same day, meeting Carroll and Clare together and unaccompanied—as on most other occasions they were,—by the young Lord Heathcote and Marie, Tighe stopped them to ask a favor.

"Granted before you ask it, Tighe," said Carroll laughingly, "even to the half of my estate, my faithful fellow!"

"No, Mr. O'Donoghue, it isn't anything loike that I want; it's to ax you to get something for me that will make me happier than the whole o' yer estate could do. You see, Master Carroll, me heart is breakin' wid love o' Moira Moynahan, an' Father Meagher thinks I'm not staidy enough to get her, though I've been on me good behavior so strict that I didn't as much as give one crooked luk this while back. Now, mebbe if you'd give Father Meagher this character o' me, an' at the same toime puttin' in a coxkin' word to hip the matter, an' mebbe if Miss O'Donoghue would do the same, things would come right for poor Moira an' me."

Carroll laughed heartily, and Clare joined him in the burst of merriment. "Why did you not tell me this before?" he said.

"Belkase I thought his riverence, seein' me efforts to do better, an' me melancholy loks, would take pity on me, an' tell me from himself that I might have Moira."

"Well, well, Tighe, make yourself content—I think I can manage it for you."

"Thank you, Masther Carroll; you were never yet wantin' in settlin' a difficulty!" And Tighe's Vohr departed, so light-hearted that his joyful spirits would find vent in a merry refrain. That evening he was summoned to Father Meagher's study.

"Now, Tighe," said the priest, assuming a severity to make his words the more impressive, "if I consent to your marriage with my niece Moira, remember that I shall be confiding to your care the only, and to me the dearest, relic of my family—as in young and guileless, and unfit to cope with the trouble which an unsteady husband would bring upon her."

"I know that, yer riverence, but marriage'll make a man o' me." And Tighe's Vohr straightened himself, and looked with clear, frank eyes into the priest's face. "It will be the dearest task o' me loife, yer riverence, to protect ivery hair o' her head."

"Well, Tighe, if you will promise to be as true to her interests as you have been to those of your young master, Carroll O'Donoghue, I shall be satisfied."

"Oh, thin, I can swear to that, yer riverence—you'll never have cause to regret givin' Moira Moynahan to Tighe's Vohr!"

"Then God bless you, Tighe; and may He ever keep you faithful to Him!"

The priest's hand was raised in blessing, which Tighe, deeply affected, knelt to receive. Then Father Meagher said:

"Send Moira to me—I have something to say to her."

With a light heart he sought the young girl, and in the exuberance of his joy, when he had told her the good news, forgetting that he had not yet the right which alone would make Moira grant him the privilege, he would have caught her to him and pressed a kiss upon her forehead, but she, with instinctive delicacy, drew herself back:

"You forget, Tighe, we are not married yet."

"Thru for you, darlin', an' I loike you the better for yer modesty."

But when she had gone, and he was alone with Shaun, feeling that he must give vent somehow to his wild emotions, he caught up the dog, much to the animal's astonishment, and gave to it the embrace he would have fain bestowed on Moira.

"Shaun, agra! sure we were niver in such luck; marriage afore us, an' oceans av joy! Oh, how'll we contain oursel's at all, at all?"

And Shaun was hugged until the poor brute, fond as he was of his master, fain would free himself.

Had Carroll O'Donoghue his wish, he would have had the wedding of Tighe's Vohr occur at the precise time of his own, but Father Meagher refused to have it so, saying that it would be better, and that the young couple themselves would prefer to have a very quiet ceremony when the other bridal parties had gone to London. So it was arranged; and the important day arrived on which four faithful hearts were to be united.

The ceremony was quiet and simple, devoid of showy costumes and magnificent wedding favors; the ostentation consisted rather in magnificent gifts to the poor, in lavish hospitality to the tenantry; and true blessings went up from simple, earnest hearts, and grateful God-speed, which bore an omen of good in the very manner of their utterance, followed the wedded couple.

Never were there too more beautiful brides—the very simplicity of their costumes enhancing physical charms, which derived not a little of their beauty from the loveliness of the pure souls within.

Father Berkeley was the last to receive their adieux, and to his sister he turned for the final embrace. He held her to him; it was the first time his mortified heart would permit him so fond a caress.

"Marie!" he whispered, "to your noble sacrifice is due all our happiness. Heaven has well rewarded your devotion to duty. May He in whose footsteps you have sought, to follow ever keep and guide you!"

One kiss upon her forehead, one more touch of his beloved hand, and he turned away, while she, weeping with joy and gratitude, stepped into the carriage in waiting.

The quiet little wedding ceremony which Father Meagher desired for his niece was performed, and Tighe's "best man" had been Corny O'Toole. Tighe, however, had stipulated with Corny that he must permit himself to be dressed in accordance with Tighe's taste, and the latter man, too happy in the prospect of an opportunity to be near Mrs. Carmody, willingly assented. The result was that Corny appeared to better advantage than he ever had done before, although pretty Moira, excited as she was with joyful anticipation, could not help laughing at his odd little figure, and wrinkled, ill-featured face.

Cathleen Sullivan and Mrs. Kelly, with fragile Bartley Donovan—the latter growing more fragile, and at the same time more beautiful every day—were also present, with many of Tighe's old friends and acquaintances.

At the repast which followed the ceremony, Father Meagher presided, and a merrier party had never assembled. In the midst of a temporary lull which had followed the ebullition of mirth caused by one of Father Meagher's excellent witty stories, the company were suddenly and amusingly electrified by Corny O'Toole—who had contrived to be seated next to Mrs. Carmody—rising and saying with his hand on his heart:

"Understand me, Mrs. Carmody; I never meant to have you remove your affections from the cold grave of your lamented husband; if it is any satisfaction, ma'am, to have them remain there, Corny O'Toole is not the man, no, Mrs. Mollie Carmody, Corny O'Toole is not the man to ask you to remove them!"

The words, the look, the attitude of the little man, together with Mrs. Carmody's flushed and indignant face, convulsed the assemblage. Roar after roar shook the table, in the midst of which Father Meagher's hearty laugh could be distinguished; he remembered the episode of Mrs. Carmody's love-letter, and it made his mirth the heartier, while Tighe's Vohr, laughing as loudly as the rest, thought within himself:

"Poor Corny has proposed to me mother at last, an' I'm afeerd he's got his final answer."

Quiet was restored at length, and Mr. O'Toole humbly saying that, as he now was convinced of Mrs. Carmody's sentiments, he would no longer annoy her by an offer of himself, that indignant lady consented to pardon him; and when he explained further to the company how the unbounded admiration which, from his earliest manhood, he held for Mistress Mollie Carmody, would descend unchanged with him to the grave, she deigned to be exceedingly friendly, thus cheering the little man's heart, and the perfect peace and pleasure of the party were restored.

On their short wedding trip to Tralee, Tighe and his pretty young bride were one day confronted in the street by a couple whose faces were familiar to Tighe, and the sight of which brought back some of the amusing incidents of his life. They were Joe Canty, the sporting man, and the fair, stout Widow Moore. Evidently from their manner to each other they were husband and wife; and Tighe, looking at them with a roguish twinkle, was met by a glance of haughty contempt from Canty.

"I supposed he learned all about the thrick I once played on him," said Tighe to Moira, "an' that's the reason he gev such a luk when he passed." And thereupon Tighe told the whole story of the thrick which had resulted disastrously for Mr. Canty, concluding with a humorous detail of the deception regarding the Widow Moore which he had practiced on the soldier Garfield, and Moira was so convulsed with laughter that she was obliged to lower her veil.

Weeks passed, marked by no sad event save the death of Bartley Donovan, and that was so like the end of some fair, youthful saint, that even those who loved him best could scarcely regret his demise. With his hand in Cathleen's, with his eyes fixed upon her face, he had said with one of his exquisite smiles:

"Do you think I shall see that Heaven you used to tell me so much about—and that dear God, and his blessed mother?"

His lips and his eyes had closed simultaneously with the utterance of the last words, and with one gentle sigh he had died.

Father Meagher, hardly thinking that the end was so near and yet prompted by a singular impulse, had brought him the *Vaticum* scarcely an hour before. Mrs. Kelly would no longer detain Cathleen from the desire of her heart—to consecrate herself to God in religion; and as the good woman herself had been offered a permanent and lucrative position in the home of Carroll O'Donoghue, and nothing now remaining to be done, she herself gladly availed herself of the opportunity. Marie, or Mrs. O'Donoghue, on being told of Cathleen's desire, insisted on furnishing a magnificent dowry.

Mrs. Carmody had taken the place of Moira in Father Meagher's household, and Corny O'Toole was quietly living his old obscure life in Tralee; but he sometimes cheered himself by visit to his Dhrummacool friends.

Tighe and Moira were the happy owners of a pretty little home on the O'Donoghue domain, and Shaun, faithful Shaun, as devoted to his master as ever, had a most honored place in the household.

One morning the whole village was electrified by the news that Maloney, the miser, had been found dead in his bed. "Died without prate or dother!" was the conclusion of every announcement of his death made by the simple folk, and accompanied by a look which told their horror of such an end. More money than even people dreamed he possessed was found in his wretched abode, and having no one to claim it, it reverted to the government.

We leave them all at last—the friends whose fortunes we have accompanied so long—happy in the reward of that virtue which sacrificed no duty, and which never forgot its allegiance to Him who even in this world so lovingly rewards goodness, and so justly punishes crime.

FATHER REARDON'S FIRST MASS

The Widow Reardon had not spent so much time over her toilet since she was the blushing coquette that "bowed over" the dashing Dublin barrister some thirty years ago. That was Dan Reardon's way of expressing what had happened when he first met her.

"You simply bowed me over, Nellie," he assured her afterward in such tragic tones that the girlish figure at his side was convulsed with merriment at the expense of the young giant towering above her.

Those were bright days, and for some years no misfortune came to mar the happiness of the young couple. But, like the wolf lurking around the campfire, death was hiding in the shadows of the domestic hearth. Dan Reardon was the victim.

Mrs. Reardon was a brave little woman. When grief threatened to overwhelm her, faith came to her rescue. Soon she was able to face calmly the problem of securing a livelihood for herself and her two children on a bank account of good wishes. Dan Reardon had lived well and died poor. Sympathy for his widow was not lacking, but little practical assistance was forthcoming from her friends. She bitterly realized that she was left to face the issue alone and unaided.

This was the beginning of a life of sacrifice that is not chronicled in history, save in the Book that contains the golden record of the saints and martyrs. None but the Crucified could understand the daily immolation of those long bitter years. None save the Father of Orphans could measure the depth of suffering that nightly welled up from that heroic mother's heart.

Some such thought now passed through Mrs. Reardon's mind as she brushed a few silent tears from the faded blue eyes that had once looked so hopefully on the world.

"Mother, when will you ever get so long?" I have been waiting ever so long."

The voice was followed by the entrance of a young girl whose likeness to Mrs. Reardon unmistakably proclaimed the relationship.

"Mother, dear I believe you are getting giddy," she laughed, as she came up behind her mother and observed the unusual care with which the gray hair had been combed under the new bonnet.

"Of course I am giddy this morning, Moira, darling," she answered with a little catch in her voice that made the young girl impulsively throw her arms around the frail figure.

"But why are you crying, little mother, when we are all so happy?"

"You are crying yourself," answered her mother. Then they both laughed.

At length they were on their way to the cathedral to witness the ordination of the young ecclesiastics from the Seminary of St. Sulpice. Soon after they had taken their seats the great organ pealed forth the "Veni Creator." The hymn was then caught up by the procession of the seminarians slowly marching up the aisle toward the altar. Even the most indifferent spectator was moved on beholding that large body of white-robed youths about to consecrate their young manhood to a life of sublime sacrifice.

Two by two they came, bearing in one hand a lighted taper while the other held the book from which they sang. The scarlet robes of the priesthood with which they were soon to be invested were borne on the arm of each. The combination of light and color presented an aspect at once beautiful and devotional, typifying as it did the red of sacrifice, the white of innocence, and the light of Faith which made both possible.

On all this the Widow Reardon looked as if on a vision from heaven. Not until Moira pressed her arm did she realize that part of this glory belonged to her. But could it be true? Yes, here he was, the same innocent face that had smiled up at her from his mother's knee, the same golden curls that her mother fingers loved to twine. There, too, was a living replica of her dead lover, but with such a light on his countenance as had never graced the comely features of Dan Reardon.

The mist before her eyes shut him off from her sight. But she heard the solemn tones that challenged each candidate for the Sacred Office, heard the firm answer and the step forward that preluded a life of sacrifice. With a mother's instinct she whispered a prayer for each, then her heart almost stopped beating.

"Daniels Reardon diaconus \* \* \* \* \* "Adsum!"

She did not know the translation of the answer, but she spelled it into a meaning of her own. It mattered little if the language was unknown to her when the voice that spoke it was that of the blue-eyed babe who had first whispered to her the magic name of mother.

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