

CARROLL O'DONOGHUE

CHRISTINE FABER
Authoress of "A Mother's Sacrifice," etc.

CHAPTER LVII.—CONTINUED

"Indeed you can, Tighe!" And Carroll O'Donoghue was again supporting Rick, and warmly shaking his hand. "You shall live with me, Rick," he said; "your home, your happy home, with Cathleen at its head, shall be upon our estate, and neither you nor yours shall ever want for anything again."

"Surely, God is too good!" murmured the poor fellow, looking about him with eyes swimming in grateful tears.

All were to dine in the little pastoral residence, and Clare, and the joyful excitement was somewhat subdued, stole into the kitchen to assist Moira. Nora would have followed, but Carroll intercepted her, insisting that she should repair to the study to listen to some communication from him. She entered reluctantly, and he, closing the door, leaned against it with folded arms.

"Now, Marie, I insist upon a straightforward answer. We have both gone through too much to trifle with our happiness longer. In a fortnight work will begin upon the estate, and the dear old home will be speedily renovated. When that is done, will you become my wife?"

"She did not speak; instead, her bosom heaved, and her eyes filled with tears."

"Answer me, Marie!" he said in an alarmed tone. "Surely there is nothing now to prevent?"

"She answered slowly: "I would not have your wife one who is stained with the disgrace of her mother."

"Is that all?" he exclaimed joyfully. "Marie, did you think this heart of mine could give you up for anything in the world? It is *you* I want—*you*, as you are, with your own pure heart and noble mind, regardless of what those may have been from whom you have sprung; further, I deem the innocence of your mother to be firmly established. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes,"—placing her hands voluntarily in his—"but I have a request to make."

"Speak, dearest; it is granted before you utter it."

"That you defer our wedding."

"His face fell; he had not dreamed that such was to be the purport of her boon."

"There is no need for haste," she said; "wait, and busy yourself with the improvements you have planned on the estate. I have a hope that something will happen to convince Lord Heathcote of my mother's innocence, and I would bring to the altar with you a name as unstained as your own is."

"It was useless for him to remonstrate or entreat; the utmost to which she would yield was not to delay the wedding longer than a year."

"And in the meantime," he asked, "what will you do?"

"Continue to live here with Father Meagher and Moira; I thought of going to Father O'Connor, now that he is really my brother, you know"—speaking playfully—"but his reverence, in answer to the letter which I wrote him to that effect, disapproves of the plan—he says it is better to let his parishioners remain ignorant of his changed identity, especially as Lord Heathcote could not be quite convinced that he was his son. So, as I could not go, I shall remain as I am, and he will be still plain humble Father O'Connor."

Carroll shook his head. "Clare and I shall remove to the old home as soon as it is prepared, and your home shall be with us, as it always has been."

"No, no, Carroll, you must let me have my own way in this matter; and after, when Providence deigns to permit our union, I shall be as obedient as even you can wish me to be."

He was forced to be satisfied.

That very afternoon Carroll, accompanied by Father Meagher, sought for a cottage which might form a temporary home for Rick and his family; and one was secured not a great distance from the little pastoral residence. Thither, after an interval of two days, during which Carroll had it repaired and neatly furnished, the little family removed.

Sullivan utter grown alarmingly weak, even more so when he learned from Father Meagher—the latter being obliged to tell him because of Rick's own earnest questions—that, had he reached Dublin in time to give his evidence to Lord Heathcote, the latter might have been convinced of the innocence of his wife.

"I shall endeavor to get to London," he said; "I shall compel his lordship to believe me."

But the priest well knew that his journey would be sooner to the bourne beyond the grave than the one he contemplated. And so it proved to be. From the moment he entered the pretty little cottage he was scarcely able to leave his bed; everybody vied with Cathleen in ministering to him—even the neighbors, who could not cease to wonder at the strange fact of Rick's new daughter, as they called Cathleen; but, next to Cathleen's own tender hand, Rick liked to have Tighe a Vohr about him; the simple fellow, gentle and kind as a woman, had won the poor sick man's heart, and to Tighe, when Rick's strength

would permit, he loved to talk of all the recent strange events, and to deplore his absence from Dublin at a time when his evidence might have done so much. In that way, Tighe learned all about Lord Heathcote's refusal to make any public acknowledgment of his children, owing to Carter's denial of his guilt of the past, and with his natural shrewdness, he divined the cause of Dennier's (or Berkeley's) absence, and on the day on which he was thus enlightened by his reflections, he vented his feelings to Shaun, when the two were out on the country road:

"So, it's that ould baste o' a Carther that's the manes o' kapin' Miss O'Donoghue an' that noble-hearted Englishman apart!—it's a wonder the lightnin' o' Heaven doesn't strike the ould vagabone an' make him confess! How an' iver, it's a long lay that has no turn, an' mark me words for it, Shaun, he'll be ketchin' in a noose o' his own makin' yet!"

CHAPTER LVIII.

CONVICTED AT LAST

Carter was in his old room in Tralee, a bottle and glass on the table before which he sat, and his bloated face and blood-shot eyes betraying how deep had been his potation.

"They thought to snare me," he muttered, again, half-filling his glass, and draining its contents, "but I carried the day by my courage. It's a wonder they didn't have Rick of the Hills to face me—and if they did, it would have been the same, for I'd pretend to put the lies down his throat. They snatched the game from me—they foiled me of my revenge—but I'll give them a parting blow before I leave! I'll wait awhile yet, and I'll set another watch on Dhrommacol and may be I'll find some opportunity of abducting that pretty Marie, if I don't put a bullet through Carroll O'Donoghue's heart—that will give his dainty affianced a life-long grief. It is time Thade was here,—looking at his watch; and then he helped himself to another glass of the liquor. At that instant there was a knock at the door, and before Carter could respond, Thade entered.

"Well, will you be ready to start this evening?" said Carter.

"Aye," answered Thade.

"And mind you do your business better than you did it before—sending me reports that everything was quiet, and the pastor of the parish at that very time thinking of starting for Dublin!"

"Well, how was I to know that?" said Thade surlily; "didn't I watch, an' as soon as I saw himsel' an' Miss O'Donoghue, an' Tighe a Vohr follyin' thim, didn't I write to tell you so? but you were away when the letter came, an' I, wonderin' that you give me no answer, nayther to that nor to another that I sint, came up here mesel', to find that you had gone to Dublin. It's you that had a right to send me word, an' not be kapin' me in the loike o' that suspin'!"

"Well, I suppose I had," said Carter, considerably mollified; "but I didn't expect to be gone long, and I wouldn't have been, either, only they showed me such attention in Dublin Castle, telling me that Lord Heathcote was too ill to see me for a few days, but that he wished everything to be done for my comfort."

"Faix, Mr. Carther, but you must be a great man intirely to be received at Dublin Castle that way!"

"May be I am, Thade; and may be, if you serve me well, there's no knowin' what I'll do for you."

"The devil a fear o' me," Mr. Carther; "I'll serve you as if you were me own brother!"

"Very well, then, Thade; and here are the funds you will need"—counting out a couple of pound notes; "and help yourself to a drink before we part."

Thade, with every sign of delight, obeyed the invitation, drinking to Carter's health and success, and at length, having safely put away his money, he departed.

Every day or two Carter received plainly-written, but badly-spelled letters, and for a fortnight after Thade's departure they contained no news further than that Mr. O'Donoghue and his sister, with the young lady now known throughout Dhrommacol as Miss Berkeley, were residing with Father Meagher; that improvements were being made rapidly on the O'Donoghue estate, and while everybody seemed to be anticipating the speedy marriage of Mr. O'Donoghue and Miss Berkeley, no one seemed to know the precise date of the expected event; the letters also stated how Rick of the Hills, in a dying condition, lived in a cottage near the pastoral residence, with a young woman said to be his daughter. And Carter read the missives again and again, and said to himself:

"I'll wait awhile longer; I'll wait until the full tide of happiness sets in upon them—until both of their hearts are bursting with joy—and then I'll strike!" He ground his teeth with savage feeling.

One day a letter came to him stating that Carroll O'Donoghue and his sister had gone to reside in their old home, and that Miss Berkeley did not accompany them—that it was even reported how her marriage had been postponed for a year, for some unknown reason, and that she would continue to live in the pastoral residence.

"Now is my time!" said Carter glowingly, and that evening saw him on his way to Dhrommacol.

Rick of the Hills was dying; about his bed were gathered all those he so loved to see—Cathleen, his own tender Cathleen, on one side of him, Marie on the other; Clare, with affectionate Bartley, and Mrs. Kelly, the good woman whom Rick loved for her kindness to his child, and Carroll, and Tighe, all kneeling about his bed. Father Meagher, who had already administered the last rites, stood close to the dying man, often replacing the crucifix which fell from his clammy hand. He was perfectly conscious, and he turned to them frequently with such an exquisite smile that it seemed to transfigure his countenance, murmuring: "It is so sweet to be forgiven!"

But his lips closed at last to open no more, and the cold dew of death, and the ashen color of his face, proclaimed that his soul had fled. Then Cathleen's wild grief burst forth:

"My poor, penitent father!" she said, throwing herself upon his body, and pressing to her own the clammy face.

Brief as the time was during which she had known him, she had discovered all the depths of that touching love for herself; and his gentleness and patience during his illness, together with his contrition for the past, which was so constant and so sincere, had won all the affection of her gentle nature.

They would not leave her, and as she could not be persuaded to be removed from the lifeless body, it was decided that all should remain in the little cottage until morning—it was now an hour past midnight; and Tighe volunteered to go on any immediate errands which might be required.

Two stalwart neighbors, who had kindly remained in an adjoining room waiting for the final scene, proffered to accompany him, and the three departed. As they neared Father Meagher's residence, which lay in their immediate direction, and the moon emerging from a cloud distinctly revealed objects for a moment, Tighe fancied he saw the shadow of a man loom up against the wall of the house. He knew that Moira and his mother, who came on certain days to help the priest's niece, and at such times generally remained all night, were the sole occupants of the little domicile, and his heart beat wildly at the thought of danger to them.

"Hist!" he said to his companions, who declared that they also had seen the shadow; "do ache o' you take a soide o' the house an' watch; I shall take the spot where I thought I saw the man."

All were armed with good stout sticks, and they separated, each walking as guardedly as possible. It was quite dark again—not an object could be discerned; and with his ears strained, and with every nerve drawn to its utmost tension, Tighe waited. A long time elapsed—so long a time that Tighe began to think he was mistaken; and just as he had determined to end his suspense by rapping up Moira and his mother, a window just above his head was raised gently, and a voice called softly:

"Hist! she's not here—she's not in the house."

No answer being returned, the voice repeated its call, and even whistled—a low, shrill, peculiar whistle. But again, no answer being returned, Tighe heard the window closed.

Fearing now to rap up Moira and his mother, lest, while depending to his summons, they might encounter the robber which Tighe deemed the owner of the voice to be, he waited with wildly beating heart and trembling limbs for further developments. The developments came in a few moments, in the bold opening of the front door by the supposed robber, and in the same instant a man started up from the side of the house, against which he had been crouched. The moon, partially emerged from a cloud, just revealed the outlines of his form, and Tighe, calling to his companions, grappled with the man in the doorway. He was opposed by monster strength; both fell, desperately clinched, and rolled down the little stoop, and out on the walk. Tighe heard his companions scuffling with some one else, and his collar was caught in so tight a grasp by his antagonist that he could not about for aid. At length his adversary seemed to gain the mastery; with one stunning blow at Tighe, he freed himself and ran at full speed. The moon was once more fully out, and it revealed his flying figure.

"After him!" shrieked Tighe, whose stunned faculties recovered in an instant, and picking himself up, and waiting only to divest himself of his coat, he took up the chase.

On they went, pursued and pursuer,—the moon fortunately not entirely disappearing—down the village street, on to the country road; then, making a turn, they continued to dash on to where a steep, rugged descent led to a deep hollow filled with bowlders, through which a stream of water meandered at certain seasons of the year. Would the robber keep on to that? did he know his danger? or would he stop himself in time? No; on he went, and just as the moon came brilliantly out, now sailing in an unclouded sky, he disappeared with a wild cry over the descent. Tighe, horrified, stood on the summit and looked below. He saw the man lying helpless among the stones, and he shut his ears to the fearful cries and groans which reached

him. Knowing that he would be unable to render assistance alone, he hurried back. His companion, had made a capture, and Moira and Mrs. Carmody, who had been aroused and were sadly frightened, now encircled Tighe for an explanation.

TO BE CONTINUED

JULIA AND HER FAMILY

Julia was kneeling on the floor arranging the cotton around the base of the Christmas tree, when a knock sounded on the door.

"No; open the door!" ordered her mistress.

Very cautiously she turned the key, asking in a wavering voice: "Who's dat?"

"A stranger," a man's voice answered. "Something's happened to my car. I have a little boy with me."

"Oh! Do open the door, Aunt Cindy," pleaded Julia. "I'm afraid he'll catch cold."

The door opened slowly and the two women saw a man with a sleeping child against his breast, while his free hand carried a travelling bag. Something like relief came to his face at sight of the white woman.

"Good evening," she now said, rather faintly. "Please close the door, Aunt Cindy."

Her suspicions aroused and riling, the old woman obeyed and then stalked over to her mistress.

"Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you," he replied, relinquishing the bag and taking Aunt Cindy's chair. He eased the child against his breast and then removed his hat. His face was bronzed by sun and wind, the hair was graying over the temples, but the blue eyes held a laugh.

"I'm on my way to Cincinnati," he was beginning—

"What did you start from?"

He turned in surprise at the interruption, but after a second glance at his questioner, he smiled and said: "From Texas."

"Humph!" she snorted, disbelievingly.

Once more he addressed the white woman.

"I expected to make Lexington tonight, but down the road a bit, my car stopped. I worked with it for a while—but it's pretty raw outside. I was afraid for my little boy. I saw your light and thought you might let me leave him here, while I walk back to the village for help."

"Ah-h! Yoh's heard about Miss Julie's family, and think you can put dat ovah on us! We ain't as green as mebbe we look. You may be from Texas, Mistah White Man, but we's from Mizoury!"

The man again turned in astonishment and regarded the speaker, but now he encountered a pair of glaring eyes. He could not understand such conduct in a colored servant. When he looked toward Julia and read the distrust in her face, he reached down for his hat.

"I don't understand," he began, and then the light dawned on him. "I begin to see a glimmer," he laughed. "But I assure you, madam, your woman is altogether mistaken. I am taking my little boy to a relative in Cincinnati. His mother died when he was a baby. He's not getting the right—why should he? with nobody to look after him but Mexicans; so I decided to fetch him north."

"Yoh made a mighty late start, wif dat long trip befoh you," objected Aunt Cindy.

"I had to wait until I got my potatoes dug and shipped," he explained.

"An' I spect yoh had a bumpah crap," she said, still snarling.

"No; this wasn't a good potato year with us. I didn't have more than ten thousand bushels—"

"Yoh hear dat, Miss Julie?" she cried triumphantly. "Dah ain't dat many 'tators in de worl'! An' yoh's foh bein' took in—I can see it in his eyes!"

"Really," began the man, his wrath rising, but meeting the troubled eyes of the mistress, the words died on his lips. "I am detaining you from your work," he said instead. "If you will permit me to lay the child down, I'll hurry into the village and get help."

"There is nobody in the shop this late," she replied.

"In that case, I'll go back to the village. I suppose there is a hotel there?"

He was at an utter loss to understand her. She looked so fair and gracious in the lamplight—why should she treat him so inhospitably and subject him to the hectoring of her servant? Plainly, there was something wrong, and he and the child might as well be out of the house as in it.

"Oh! I couldn't think of letting you do that. It's a good mile and a half away. The boy is heavy and, as you said, the night is raw."

"Honey!" cried the old woman. "Oh, please don't say any more, Aunt Cindy!" she rejoined as she moved toward the next room.

With the door closed behind her, Julia stood for a moment, while her

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