

CARROLL O'DONOGHUE

CHRISTINE FABER

Author of "A Mother's Sacrifice," etc.

CHAPTER XV

CAPTAIN CRAWFORD'S VALET

On the morning succeeding the events detailed in the last chapter, there was unusual bustle and excitement in the portion of the barracks reserved for the officers. The cause of the unusual commotion was an arrival, and the blazoned carriage and thorough-bred, gayly-trapped horses gave evidence of the wealth and title of their owner. Lackeys were in abundance, and the alacrity and obsequiousness with which the soldiers who were lounging about pressed forward to the service of the solitary occupant showed the latter to be more than an ordinary commanding officer. He waved his hand in response to the many respectful salutes which greeted him as he alighted from his carriage, and ascended the steps of the entrance with grave, soldierly mien. Numerous medals glittered upon his breast and his firm, rapid step, and the quick, keen glance which he threw about him, bespoke one accustomed to command. An apartment had been sumptuously prepared for him as the haste and exigencies of circumstances would allow, and to this he was immediately conducted. Having entered the room, he turned to an attendant, saying:

"I desire to see Captain Dennier—summon him."

The servant departed on the errand, and the officer divesting himself of his sword and ornamented hat, threw himself into a large easy chair. His grave, handsome face was deeply indented with lines that told of no easy, nor peaceful life, and his firm set mouth evinced the iron will which so often brings more of suffering than satisfaction to its possessor. His abundant gray hair, stiff and strong, as if it partook of the nature of the owner, was worn somewhat long, so that it fell on the collar of his coat, and added strangely to an already remarkable appearance.

Captain Dennier was ushered into the apartment. He was somewhat flushed, because of the haste of the summons, and because of his own agitated thoughts which started into wild being at the very prospect of an interview with this man to whom he was so deeply indebted. Yet, withal, he was so handsome, so graceful, and bore himself with so marked a deference, yet a deference that was entirely free from any servile or cringing, that an expression of pleasure shone for an instant in the cold, stern eyes before him.

"So you have achieved some success at last—the capture of this escaped convict."

The tone of the voice was cold, and the flush deepened on the young captain's cheeks. He bowed in response, but remained silent.

"I have come down here in great haste," the cold, hard voice resumed, "and I must leave again by noon. Evidence is pouring in from all sides of the country sufficient to convict every prisoner we now hold, and sufficient also to implicate many more upon whom the government has a watch. Preparations for speedy trials are making in Dublin, and it is probable that this Carroll O'Donoghue will be one of the first to be tried. He is under very strict guard, I believe."

Captain Dennier again bowed.

"No one should be permitted to see him. I understand that he has been one of the most daring and dangerous of these Fenians."

He paused, and the young officer, slightly advancing, said: "Permit me to inform your lordship that Morty Carter has been waiting here a day or two to see you; he has an important paper to deliver."

"Morty Carter," his lordship repeated, "I have not time to see him this morning; let him give the paper into your keeping, and you can forward it by some trusty person to Dublin Castle."

"Captain Crawford, your lordship, has received an order to start for Dublin this evening; can I intrust it to him?"

"The very thing—here! I will write an order for you to obtain the paper from Carter, so that he may not hesitate to give it up; and if he should hint at the reward he has been promised, tell him that on the conclusion of the trials I shall make good my word."

He repaired to a little writing cabinet which stood near, and indited the order.

Captain Dennier received it with a bow, but he did not turn to leave the room as his lordship evidently expected. With his color each moment increasing, a slight agitation visible in his very grasp of the paper which he had just received, he began suddenly:

"Your lordship—"

The nobleman turned shortly from the cabinet which he had been adjusting and coldly confronted the speaker. The opening of his speech seemed to have restored the young man's self-possession. He stood erect, every trace of embarrassment vanished, and it was with his wonted fearless, yet respectful manner, that he continued:

"Something which has weighed upon me for months, and of which I have hesitated to speak, must at last be said now. I owe your lordship so much that my very gratitude renders the subject a painful one; but I have long felt that you are disappointed in me. Had

another received the benefits you have so kindly dispensed to me such an one, by at least his talent or tact in the affairs intrusted to him, would have repaid your bounty; I have done neither. The simple, though faithful, effort which I have made to perform my duty is all that I have to offer in return for your patronage. But your lordship has evidently expected more; and perhaps in your kindness you would still bind yourself to continue favor to one who has done so little to merit it. I beg you to release yourself from such an engagement. Feeling my incapacity to win renown or success in my present profession, I would respectfully resign the commission your lordship has so kindly procured for me, and seek my living far from these scenes in one of the humble walks of life, never forgetting, however, your lordship, to whom, under Providence, I owe all that I am."

"Impassive, cold, Lord Heathcote's face did not betray by the movement of a muscle whether any emotion had been awakened by the appeal, though its last words had been spoken in a tone of touching sadness."

"You claim to be grateful," he said at length, his stern eyes fastening more piercingly upon the young man.

The latter bowed, and his lordship continued:

"If I should make your obedience to my wish the test of that gratitude, would you object?"

There was an instant's hesitation on the part of the young officer, as if he divined what was coming and shrunk from it.

Lord Heathcote seemed to understand the hesitation. He said sternly: "Let your answer be at once, sir, full and free. I shall put my own interpretation upon it."

The vigor of his voice, the severity of his mien, were in some measure appalling. Captain Dennier could not resist their singular influence over himself. He answered: "I make no objection to your lordship's imposing what test you please."

"Then, if you would prove your gratitude, remain as you are."

He waved him away, rung for an attendant, and strode to a distant part of the room.

It was with no enviable feelings that Captain Dennier hurried to his own apartment. Loathing himself for his weakness in yielding where he had intended to be so firm, indignant at that very authority which his obligations to Lord Heathcote engendered, perplexed with his own emotions toward the nobleman, weary of his perpetual inward struggle between his duty to his country and the sympathies so largely and strongly enlisted for a suffering people, he felt all the unrest and unhappiness which wait upon a self-tormented soul. He threw himself into a chair, burying his throbbing, burning brow in his hands; then he suddenly remembered his commission to obtain a certain paper from Morty Carter. With a gesture of impatience and a face expressive of his repugnance to the whole matter, he summoned his servant and dispatched him for Carter.

Carter arrived, fawning, smiling, but secretly anxious. With haughty notice of him Captain Dennier produced the order of Lord Heathcote.

Carter looked disappointed. "I would rather give it into his lordship's hands; I could wait, if need be, or follow him."

"He does not desire you to do either," was the peremptory reply. "I have detailed his wishes to you, and any reluctance to obey on your part might be punished by an instant withdrawal of his lordship's favor; you can pursue your own course, however, Mr. Carter—I have delivered to you my orders."

Morty was fumbling in his bosom. "It has cost me so much time and labor to get it," he said half apologetically, taking out the paper and spreading it open before Captain Dennier.

The latter perused it carefully, reading with a kind of shock the name of Carroll O'Donoghue among the names of those appointed to important offices in the organization of the Irish Republic. He looked witheringly at his visitor. "You must have played a most treacherous part to get possession of so valuable a document as this."

"Every stratagem is fair in war," was the dogged answer, accompanied by a look that only half veiled the hate and fury aroused by the officer's remark.

"Except that of treachery," pursued Captain Dennier with covert sarcasm, which stung his listener more than would have done fierce, open accusation. The latter was goaded to the soul. His round, red face expanded and reddened still more; his little, winking gray eyes winked faster, and his hands opened and clenched as if they would have clutched vengefully at something. He said almost savagely:

"I recognize no right by which I am to be questioned or rebuked. Your government gladly furnishes rewards for any information given of her rebellious subjects and she does not inquire into the means by which such information is obtained. I have yet to learn by what right one of her officers takes upon himself to make such inquiries."

"You are insolent, sir," said Captain Dennier, surprised and indignant.

Carter became suddenly subdued, being not a little alarmed for

the effect of the daring speech into which his passion had hurried him; he answered humbly:

"I beg pardon, sir, for speaking so boldly, but I was cut to the quick when you mentioned treachery; is it treachery to help the cause in which one's sympathies are enlisted? England has given me no grievances that I should need redress; from my own countrymen have come the wrongs which stir my soul to vengeance."

"Enough of this!" interrupted the officer, disgusted at the boldness and unwarranted freedom of the man's manner, as well as the infamous part which the latter had been acting. "I shall give you," he continued, "an acknowledgment of my having received from your hand this paper containing information important to the government, that you may show it to Lord Heathcote."

He wrote out a careful receipt, which Carter read a second time to be certain of its accuracy. Still he did not depart.

"Have you another remark to make?" asked Captain Dennier coldly.

Carter answered with something of the dogged air which had characterized one of his former replies:

"I would like to be certain that Lord Heathcote will not forget about the reward; this will prove the most valuable information I have given yet, and his lordship promised me that whenever I should give information as important as the present is I should be amply compensated."

"Did he stipulate the amount?" asked the officer.

"Yes; sufficient to enable me to purchase the estate that used to belong to the family of the recaptured convict, Carroll O'Donoghue; it became so encumbered by debt that it passed from his possession and is now in the market to be sold."

A sickening sensation passed over the young captain; he remembered the ancient and picturesque building which had attracted his attention on the occasion of his first visit to Drommochol, and his inquiry about it, which had elicited such a pathetic response from Clare O'Donoghue. He saw again the lonely, unprotected girls, their humble little abode within sight of their former elegant home, and he looked at the flashy, vulgar Carter the would-be possessor of the ancient homestead; it was with difficulty he restrained himself from spurning the fellow.

"Go," he said, his voice slightly quivering with the scorn he could not entirely repress, and treat with Lord Heathcote for your promised reward. He had me assure you that he would make good his word on the conclusion of the trials; and I wish you"—despite his effort to the contrary, all the contempt which he felt for the miscreant became manifest, not alone in his voice, but in the flashing scorn of his look—"all the happiness which is the recompense of a traitor."

Without further adieu he walked to an inner room, taking with him the paper Carter had brought, and closing the door between them.

Carter became purple with rage; it required a mighty effort to restrain himself from giving loud and profane vent to his violent passion. He waited, however, till he had reached the street, and was striding rapidly toward his daily rendezvous. Then he muttered:

"I shall make him pay dear yet for his treatment of me this day; I could have whispered something to him that would have made him civil at once; but it wasn't the time, nor it won't be the time till Carroll O'Donoghue is disposed of."

TO BE CONTINUED

TIME SMOOTHED THE WAY

Middleburgh is a charming little American town, neat and well-kept, but with an air of aloofness about it, an old-time stillness and peace which it had preserved despite the proximity of bustling centers and huge emporiums of trade. Therefore was Middleburgh started one day by the news of a sensational murder, which took place on one of its most exclusive streets and in a palatial mansion. The victim of this atrocious crime was Lawrence O'Brien, a leading citizen of the town and its foremost banker.

The crime, which remained obstinately shrouded in mystery, had been discovered by the banker's daughter, Marian. In her horror and dismay, she had rushed screaming from the house to summon the nearest doctor. But the physician could only pronounce life extinct and declare the cause of death to have been a blow on the head from some heavy but dull instrument. Nor did the inquest elicit anything more than this bare fact. The servants, men and women, who had been in the house, had heard no noise of any sort, and could throw no light on the mystery. Their antecedents and their long years of service prevented the possibility of suspicion falling on them.

Marian O'Brien, who had been spending the evening with friends, had returned about midnight, and hastily throwing off her outdoor wraps, she had hastened to the small and plainly furnished room which the banker had chosen for his study and where she saw a light burning. She opened the door to

find her father lying on the floor almost directly under the portrait of his ancestor Sir Malachy O'Brien, who had been executed during the penal times in Ireland. There was evidence of a struggle. Various objects were strewn about the apartment, but there was nothing to give any clue to the midnight assassin, his motive or his means of entrance.

Marian O'Brien was never again precisely what she had been. And yet that very evening had been a red-letter one in the young girl's experience. Lewis Lansing, a brilliant young graduate of a foremost Catholic university, and son of a wealthy and influential citizen of Middleburgh, had walked home with her from her friend's house. She had met him that summer on several occasions, during which they had resumed a childish intimacy, when the judge's son and the banker's daughter had attended school or spent their holidays together. Lewis Lansing had so distinguished Marian by his attentions that already the wise ones were putting their heads together and whispering what a suitable match this would be. Upon that fatal evening of the murder, he had come to her where she sat at the piano and begged her to sing his favorite—a quaint old English melody:

"When first I saw thy face,
I resolved to honor and adore thee!"

Her cheek had flushed and her heart had begun to beat a little as she nodded assent, with her bright smile, and played the first lines of the accompaniment.

As Lewis Lansing stood waiting at the foot of the stair to see her home and Marian was having a parting chat with her hostess, the young man whistled that exquisite air softly to himself. He was a handsome and stalwart youth, well-proportioned of figure, gay and good-humored, as he stood thus, the cynosure of many eyes, while above, the hostess said slyly to her young guest:

"We are all so glad, dear. It will be an ideal match."

And Marian called back to her, laughing:

"How can you be so absurd!"

During the homeward walk Lewis Lansing began quite naturally, as it seemed, to talk about that old song and quite as naturally to apply it to his own peculiar case. It is true, his speech was not quite so fluent at times as befitted the cleverest graduate of his year and the now promising young member of the bar, and he even fell silent now and again, a silence which the young girl by his side made efforts to break. It was a lovely night, and the palpitating hush of the midnight stillness, and the confused, moist-shrouded radiance of many stars looking down upon the young people to whom life seemed so fair and full of promise.

When Marian was deeply moved her voice had a peculiar, vibrating sweetness, and she talked with the quietness of the subject he had mooted of their youth, and of the obstacles which might be in their path.

"We must be very sure of ourselves," she said, with a gravity which was almost quaint, as she stood a moment at the gate which led into her father's grounds and gave Lewis her hand in farewell.

"I cannot be any surer of myself than I am now," Lewis cried, with a confidence of youth, which, after all, so fine a thing as confidence you care for me and are willing to be my wife, nothing can part us!"

Was it the chill of that passing dark cloud, which struck upon Marian's heart coldly just then? But she gave Lewis permission to come and see her and talk matters over, before he should speak to her father.

Marian turned toward the house, while Lewis played hide-and-seek with the shadow of a last glimpse of her, and as she walked away he whistled that quaint old roundelay again:

"When first I saw thy face."

Marian went upstairs full of life and hope, and with the warm glow of a great happiness at her heart, to meet that fearful presence, Death, and under its most terrible form. The shadow of the tragedy seemed to unfold her from that hour. She shut herself up in the old mansion, with only the faithful old servants for company. A woman who had been her nurse from childhood was the only one to whom she ever spoke freely.

She seemed in some mysterious way to connect Lewis Lansing with the awful event of that night. Perhaps she was remorseful that she had been so completely absorbed in her own happiness while that terrible drama was being enacted, and, indeed, she declared to her nurse that had she not been absent the crime might never have been committed. In any case, she refused to see Lansing or even to hear his name mentioned. For a time he haunted the house, being observed by the vigilant townspeople on moonlight nights to walk like an uneasy ghost up and down in front of the mansion, and in point of fact, he was frequently there in darkness and storm, while Middleburgh had sometimes known. The silence and peace, the unutterable magic or moonshine, seemed to ease her pain. As she drew near that point where the garden fence was lowest, she thought she heard a sound and

what seemed a morbid devotion to her father's memory.

But Marian had a reason apart from the tragic associations which hung around Lansing's name. On the night when she had entered her father's room to find him dead she had discovered under a heavy frame, which had fallen to the floor, a fragment of a letter, which her father had evidently been writing to a friend.

"By all the gods, Martin," he had written, beginning in the style of Horace, "I would declare to you that my pet anxiety is now the future fate of my daughter. I will not have her marry, no, not before she is twenty-five. If she does it, it will be as in the old fairy tales, with my malison. Besides there is no one in this town who shall ever put a ring upon my daughter with even a fragment of my consent. She will have to run away like that ill-fated damsel who was rowed over the stormy sea and swallowed up in the flood."

These were the last words on the page, and either another page had never been written, or was hopelessly missing. Marian took the letter to heart, and within absurd literalness determined to obey it, as the express-d wish of her dying father.

Yet, as time went on, and her nature began to rally from the shock, she found her self-imposed duty a hard one. So that while she kept the fearful anniversary of her father's death in silence, and there was, nevertheless, associated with it a memory of that sweet, homeward walk in the starlit gloom, when the love of an honest heart had been offered to her.

Her health began to fail under the stress of loneliness, of regret, of the solitary life she led, and she grew more dull and listless as day passed after day.

She scarcely roused herself from a brooding reverie, one September twilight, when her nurse came in with a look of importance in her face. She was bursting indeed, with the news she had to tell, but she knew that it must be told carefully. Its purport was briefly:

In a distant city, a man had died confessing upon his death-bed to have been the murderer of Lawrence O'Brien. His motive had been solely that of gain. He had been informed that the banker on the very night in question had taken home a large sum of money which he meant to secrete for the night in the chimney under the portrait of Sir Malachy. The murderer had effected an entrance through an unused cellar door and had cautiously made his way upward to where the banker worked alone. He had hoped merely to disable him and having administered a drug, to fly with the money. But Lawrence O'Brien was both a powerful and a courageous man, and there had been a struggle there in that silent room in the dead of night which had been terminated by a blow from a loaded stick which the burglar carried. He had then secured the money and had taken away in the shape of finding bonds and papers which she felt, and other values among them, a sheaf of papers from the table. These he returned with some few articles of value. The money had long since been spent.

It gave Marian a sickening feeling to hear these details and seemed to renew the full horror of the tragedy. But she conquered this repugnance and began to turn over the papers which she felt might throw light on some of her father's affairs. Among them she discovered a page of a letter the consecutive page to that she had read, and it was as follows:

"I repeat that no one in Middleburgh shall marry my daughter, unless indeed Lewis Lansing should incline to do so and that Marian's inclination should run that way. But I can scarce hope for such a consummation. The fates forbid such ideal unions. Seriously, my friend, I would it were God's will, Lansing is a gentleman, honorable, high-principled, a sterling Catholic. His father was my best friend, his mother my first love. I should be happy could I see my daughter married to this lad, who has a career of his own, outside of his father's position. I would give them my blessing were it with my last breath."

The letter ended there abruptly, perhaps the hand of death had already cut it short. Marian sank upon her knees. A rush of happiness penetrated the deep gloom of her sorrow as sunlight invaded a long-darkened room. But this happiness presently gave way to a pang of unavailing regret.

"It is too late!" she cried out. "O my God, it is too late!"

The days that followed were full of this same blending of pleasure and pain. Her father had, as it were, spoken to her from the world of shadows whither he had gone. But Lewis' patience had been tried too far. He had passed out of her life forever. And yet he had been so sure that nothing could ever part them.

One moonlight night barely two weeks after the receipt of that startling budget of news Marian went out into the garden. She was feeling unusually restless and her heart was aching with that sad sense of loss, which all hearts must sometimes know. The silence and peace, the unutterable magic or moonshine, seemed to ease her pain. As she drew near that point where the garden fence was lowest, she thought she heard a sound and

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