

HER IRISH HERITAGE

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CHAPTER VII—CONTINUED

"Yes, she is a dear girl," said Mary Blake. Then coming near to her friend she put her hands on her shoulders and looked at her lovingly—earnestly.

"And what about yourself, dearie?" she said.

Mary Carmichael flushed quickly and then paled again.

"Oh! I—don't know, Mary," she answered almost in a whisper, "sometimes I think that he cares, and sometimes I—well I just begin to think that it would be too good to be true."

"Such nonsense!" cried the other, "why anyone could see that he is devoted to you, my troubles and perplexities to the Blessed Mother—you may be sure that she will make everything right for you. But come now—we must go down, or they will be waiting tea for us."

As they emerged into the corridor Clare Castlemaine was passing on her way downstairs to, and greeted Miss Carmichael in her usual quiet way, but her eyes showed that she was really glad to meet her again.

"Well, Miss Castlemaine," said Mary, smiling, "have you quite recovered from your slumming experiences yet?" Clare smiled back, but her face was grave as she replied.

"I have not forgotten it, anyhow."

"Don't think too much about it," advised the other. "I'm beginning to think that it was rather a mistake to bring you into such surroundings at all. One needs to be thoroughly accustomed to such scenes before one can face them unmoved. Of course Bride and myself are immune, so to speak."

They reached the diningroom as she spoke, from which came a buzz of talk and laughter. As Clare advanced she was suddenly conscious that the voices were all speaking in an unknown tongue—unknown at least to her, for she could not understand one word.

Clare had been for years in France and spoke French perfectly, and German fairly well, and had a smattering of Italian—she found herself wondering what this language could be, as she stood for a few moments, taking stock, as it were, of the people in the room. Mary had told her that some friends were coming to see Shamus, but that was all she knew. She looked at them curiously now as they called out greetings to her cousin and Mary Carmichael—still in that strange, unknown tongue.

Shamus was there, sitting beside a small, dark girl in a plain "tailor-made" of Donegal tweed, with a red Tam o' Shanter on her rather unruly curls, and Clare noticed at once that these two seemed very interested in each other. Anthony Farrell was standing talking to a tall, clean shaven, very clever-looking man of about thirty-five to forty; and a slight, fair-haired girl wearing a pince-nez, stood near them and joined in the conversation rather languidly. The rest of the Blake family were scattered through the room here and there. As Clare advanced, her cousin Mary slipped an arm round her and drew her towards the group round the fire.

"Now please—you Gael!" she called out, "return to the hated Saxon tongue!—my cousin does not understand Irish! Clare, this is Norah Donovan," as the red Tam o' Shanter came forward, "and this is Eithne Malone"—indicating the languid lady, "and this last—but not least—is Mr. Robert Hewson—and they, are all Irish mad like Shamus."

A peal of good-natured laughter answered her and a few remarks in Gaelic were hurled at her, but just then Mr. Blake came in and tea was commenced—the conversation in deference to Clare and a few of the others who "hadn't the Gaelic" being carried on in English.

After tea Clare found herself sitting by Anthony Farrell, and as usual they had plenty to say to each other. Somehow when they were together, their surroundings were forgotten and in a few minutes they would be deep in conversation, discussing a hundred and one things of interest to both. They had become such real friends that Clare took his ready sympathy—it was almost intuition where she was concerned—almost as a matter of course, and tonight she discussed with him—not for the first time—those pitiful conditions of life which had been revealed to her during her one, never to be forgotten, morning in the slums.

"It seems so *unjust*!" she was saying now. "Why have these poor people to suffer like that? In some cases I know it is largely their own fault—but not in all. And then the poor children—oh! if you had but seen the little suffering atom that Miss Carmichael was visiting—poor wee thing, and all alone as one might say, for the whole day. Oh! it was pitiful!"

Anthony Farrell smiled down at her.

"I have seen such cases—many of them," he said sadly, "I did a number of special articles last year, on slum life, for a Christmas copy, and well—to pretty hardened for I've knocked about a bit in my time, but still, as you say, the kiddies—and, well—I felt jolly bad for some time after."

"And yet you are a Christian?" said Clare. There was no sneer in her voice, no contempt, but just a great note of wonder and surprise, as if she was stating something that was incomprehensible to her, and as she spoke her clear, blue eyes looked straight into his.

Farrell returned her gaze unflinchingly, but his eyes were pitiful as he looked at her.

"Yes," he answered quietly, "I am—thank God—a Christian."

"You are even a Catholic," continued Clare, "and that church seems to me to be the most uncompromising of all the different forms of Christianity. Of course I know there are Christians and Christians—I knew various sorts and sects in London, and the latitude which they allowed themselves in the matter of doctrine was very great. It seemed to me that one could believe or disbelieve almost anything and yet call oneself a Christian. But since I came to live with my cousins I have begun to see that the Catholic faith is very different. It may be right or wrong—I don't know—but to its followers it is certainly a *living* faith—a faith that can say this is wrong or that is right—you may do this, you may not do that—a faith that can speak with authority—and authority that will be obeyed without question or argument."

Anthony Farrell's pale features lit up.

"You are right, Miss Castlemaine," he said, "ours is the living faith and we know it!"

Clare sighed, and looked at him wistfully.

"It must be a great, an unspeakable comfort to you," she said, "your faith. I would give almost anything to feel like that—to have some belief in something. A woman without religion of some sort is never happy."

Anthony smiled—a trifle sadly.

"Well for my part," he made answer, "I think that any human soul—let it be man or woman—who is living or existing, perhaps I should say—devoid of any spiritual help, must be wretched beyond words."

He hesitated a moment, glancing at the pale, grave face of the girl beside him and noticing the restless look in her eyes, and his voice faltered a little as he went on, "but you, surely if you wished—your cousins—"

But she stopped him with a quick movement—lifting her hands in protest.

"No, no!" she said, "it's no good—no good! My poor father thought he was doing it all for the best—and anyway he only acted on principle—when he would not allow any religious training to be included in my education."

"When I was eighteen he allowed me to read, study any books on any form of religious belief that I liked, but I simply got so frightfully muddled that I gave it all up in despair. It is only lately—since I came here and have seen what religion—real religion—can mean to people, that I have got restless again. But don't let us talk of these things any more. Tell me," with a quick change of tone, "who are these people—these friends of my cousin Shamus? I have not met them before."

Anthony smiled as he glanced across the room to the group of enthusiastic Gaelic Leaguers, now gathered once more together and discussing earnestly some knotty point in connection with the Irish language movement.

"Well, to begin," he said, "we will start with Norah Donovan. She is a school teacher and lives here in the country. She is a hot Sinn Féiner, and speaks at all their meetings and so on—only that you happen to be half a Celt I doubt if she would have shaken hands with you. She looks lazy and languid, doesn't she? That's all a pose. You should see her when she is aroused—pouring forth one of her speeches—you wouldn't know her."

Clare was still looking at the lady in question when Anthony went on to speak of the third stranger.

"And now there's Robert Hewson for you. A North of Ireland Presbyterian—and an out-and-out Home Ruler. His ancestors fought with Henry Joy McCracken in the days of yore, and the family have

always been good Irishmen down to the present time."

Clare looked her surprise as she said:

"But I thought that the North—"

"That they were all Orangemen, easy dupes of mercenary leaders?" said Farrell. "Well, unfortunately, that answers for a large percentage of them at the present day, but they are not all like that. Ah, no, not at all. Why, in '98, some of the leaders of the movement were northerners, and also Protestants. And what was Robert Emmet and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and dozens of others—all good Protestants, and all gave their lives for Ireland. As far as religion goes it just happens that Catholicity is the religion of the majority in this country—in spite of every possible effort on England's part to make it otherwise—but we won't touch on the Penal days now—and so most Irishmen are Catholics—but many a Protestant has been a better Irishman than his Catholic fellow-countryman."

"Well these are new thoughts for me!" said Clare, and I am certainly seeing things in a different aspect since I came to my mother's country. And is that really Irish that they are speaking? And can you speak it also?"

"Yes, that is really Irish—or the Gaelic as we prefer to call it—and I can speak it a little, but not with the fluent ease of our friends over there. You see they are nearly always at it, and especially in the winter they have any amount of Gaelic Classes going—but I haven't the time to study it as I should wish."

"It sounds very strange to my ears," said Clare, "is it difficult to learn?"

"Well—yes, I think so—rather. But some way it has such a fascination for one that its difficulties are soon overcome. It is a very ancient tongue, you know, probably one of the oldest in the world—and don't think me rude if I remind you that it was a spoken language and a language in which poems were written and battle and love songs sung, centuries before the mongrel accumulation of words—gathered from other languages and called English—was ever known."

Clare smiled and then laughed, although for a moment the "English half" of her had felt rather vexed.

"Oh, please, don't apologize," she cried, "I can assure you that I am rapidly finding my level since I came to Ireland."

Anthony was about to answer her, but just then several of the visitors came over to say good-night, and conversation became general so that he had not an opportunity of any further talk with Clare.

The two Marys—as the Blake family called them, said good-bye in the hall, and Mary Blake whispered into her friend's ear as she helped her on with her coat—"you will let me know the result of your Novena, won't you dear?"

And Mary Carmichael with one of her vivid blushes, nodded her head, but said nothing.

She was thinking of Mary Blake's words a few evenings later on the 7th December—as accompanied by Nurse Seelye she rang the bell of St. Paul's Dispensary, and was ushered into the waitingroom by the polite Miss Beckett.

"The last, patient is with the doctor now," she informed them, "and I know you ladies will excuse me if I leave you as I promise to call and see a sick friend tonight, and I don't like to be too late—it's after nine as it is. Sit down and warm yourselves at the stove—the Doctor won't be long, I'm sure," and so saying, with a jerk at her rusty bonnet string, she departed.

The minutes went by but still the last patient lingered. The two girls were chatting over their day's work and discussing an especially interesting case, when suddenly three sharp little rings—a signal evidently—came to the outer door.

Mary Carmichael flushed and then paled a little, and Nurse Seelye laughed.

"There's dear Theodore!" she said, "Will you open the door Mac?" but Mary only smiled and shook her head, "shrinking back a little as she did so. She was highly strung this evening, and in spite of all her efforts to be calm and collected she felt that she was in an acutely nervous condition. She was standing at the further end of the waiting room when Dr. Delaney followed Nurse Seelye in, and their eyes met across the room in one lightning glance, and Mary felt her heart give a great throb and then rush madly on for a few minutes.

They shook hands and the three seated themselves, Dr. Delaney starting to talk and joke—a lot of nonsense most of it, but it served the purpose of putting Mary at her ease, and soon she was talking and laughing away as usual.

Dr. Head found quite a merry group, when he entered presently, after having at length got rid of a rather garrulous patient. He suggested a move into the surgery as being more comfortable—it contained a few easy chairs, and was larger and more convenient in every way than the little waiting-room with its benches and hard chairs.

The two girls rose and Nurse Seelye followed Dr. Head from the room, but Dr. Delaney remained seated and as Mary passed him he followed the others, he put out a hand and laid it on her coat sleeve, pulling her gently back.

"Wait a minute," he said, "those two want to talk over a case—we had better wait here for awhile."

She stopped and looked at him in amazement. She knew perfectly well that this was only an excuse—they were all "medicos," and she was quite aware that any of the "cases" could be discussed freely before Dr. Delaney and herself. So taken by surprise was she that speech was impossible for the moment.

"Sit down," said the other, and she found herself sitting beside him, with a feeling that there was something strange—electrical in the air around her.

But nothing happened. Dr. Delaney talked on very much as usual—in the ordinary friendly "chummy" way to which she was accustomed when they were alone together—telling her about his visit to Paris a few months previously, and going into raptures, as he generally did, over Napoleon's tomb.

"I would like to show it to you," he said, "you would never forget it."

They were both Bonaparte worshippers—one of the many bonds between them.

They seated themselves on one of the Picture Houses next week, he went on, "some episode in the life of the little King of Rome I believe—we'll go and see it—shall we?"

"I should love it," said Mary.

"All right—Friday next,"—this was Monday—"will that suit?"

"Perfectly—it's my night off," said the girl, "and now don't you think that those two have finished their very private consultation, and that we might join them?"

Dr. Delaney hesitated and seemed inclined to say something, but rose to his feet the next minute and followed her from the room, switching off the light as he did so.

Mary turned the handle of the surgery door, and was literally dumbfounded to find it locked. At the same moment a smothered laugh from within fell upon her ears.

She turned in amazement and looked up at Dr. Delaney standing tall and silent beside her. She could just see him in the dim light coming in from the street lamp.

"The door," she gasped, "it's locked."

"Never mind," he said, drawing her away—"it's evidently locked, they don't want us yet. We will wait for a few minutes longer—come back to the waiting-room."

Mary suffered herself to be led back in a sort of dumb surprise. Why on earth was the surgery door locked?

The reason was made clear to her later on by laughing Nurse Seelye, but at the moment it did not dawn upon her.

Dr. Delaney followed her into the room, but did not switch on the light.

Mary waited for a breathless moment, expecting to hear the little click of the switch, and to see the room flooded again with light. But it did not come—instead there was silence—a silence that at last she felt compelled to break.

"Oh, put on the light, please," she said—her voice coming with difficulty in little gasps. (Oh! if she could only see him—what was going to happen?)

"I don't think I'll put the light on again," was the quiet reply, "it might bring in more patients if they saw the waiting-room still lit up."

Then in a softer—dangerously soft voice—"Are you afraid of me in the dark?"

Mary laughed tremulously.

"Not a bit!" she said, trying to speak in her ordinary tones.

"Well, come nearer to me—won't you?"

She endeavoured to laugh again but failed ignominiously. "I can't see you in the dark!" she whispered.

"Well I must help you then," was the answer, and the next moment she was in his arms.

TO BE CONTINUED

OH! YOU ARE GOOD!

Michael X. Frazer and The Missionary

It was early for evening confessions, but as the following day was a feast, Father Griffin went into the church to see if any of his penitents were there. He entered at the back and saw that no one had come, but as he knelt for a momentary prayer he saw a child up near the altar rail. He shuffled his feet to draw her attention. "Perhaps," he thought, "she is one of the 'Children of Mary' who are to receive Communion tomorrow, the Feast Day of Our Lady." But the child did not stir. Father Griffin walked up the aisle quietly to ask her if she wished to go to confession. But when he was within a few yards of her, he hesitated and stopped short; she was speaking in a clear and distinct whisper, and he could understand the words that she was saying: "O, Blessed Mother, if you are so good, help mama and me convert poor daddy!"

The child's face wore such a look of sorrowful pleading, and that comfort of souls, the good priest, considered it his duty to say a word to her, thinking that he might be able to assist her in some way. He laid his hand quietly on her arm, and as he did so she turned suddenly, almost frightened at his touch, for she had not known that anyone was near. She looked up at him with a vacant stare, and then tried

to hide her face, as though she had been caught in some wrong.

"Are you preparing to go to confession?" he asked, more as a way to make her talk than to forgive her sins. The look on her face told him that she had no sins.

"No, Father," she answered, "I am not preparing for confession. I go to Confession every Saturday, and on Sundays mother and I go to Holy Communion for my father. We would give anything to make him a Catholic, but we can't, for we have no one to help us. Mother says that if I am good and pray hard enough some day God will make him a Catholic; so I come to church every time I can and pray—and pray—" she stopped so suddenly that Father Griffin wondered if she feared that it was a hopeless task.

"Well, perhaps I can help you some, my child. What is your name?"

"Louise Carter."

"Come with me a moment," he asked, leading the way toward the sacristy.

Why should the innocent heart of this child be so upset? he thought. And who can she be? He knew no one by the name of Carter; but his parish was large and there were many with whom he was not acquainted. But of a sudden he felt interested in the Carters who could be represented by such a child as Louise.

They seated themselves on the long bench in the sacristy, out of sight and hearing of anyone.

"You must tell me where you live, Louise, and then if I find I can help you I will do all in my power."

The girl smiled and Father Griffin understood that it was this promise of help that she desired.

We live on Jefferson Street, down close to the river by the wharves," she said, "when father is at home, but sometimes he is gone for a week or more, and then we live with grandmother till he comes for us and makes us go home with him."

"What does Mr. Carter do?" he asked.

He drives trucks on the river; sometimes he goes off on a long trip, and we don't know where he is. We used to work about him when he was away, but now we don't mind it so much."

"Your father is not a Catholic, then?"

"No, he doesn't like any church, and I have heard him tell mother that preachers are the biggest rascals in the world. He even got very angry at her once and said a lot of mean things when she tried to tell him that Catholic priests are good men and never harmed anyone. Mother wanted some money for the Sunday collection, and he said, 'That's all those preachers are good for, to rob poor people, when they are the richest men in the world. Give you money for them,' he said, 'no, I won't give you a cent, and you can tell your old priests that I said so.' So Mother and I had to go to church that Sunday without even a cent for the collection."

"But you shouldn't worry about that, my child. We don't expect anyone to give us money when it is so hard as that. You must try to be good to your father, and now I am going to try to help you. I'm coming to see you tomorrow, so you can tell your mother that I'll be there in the evening."

"Thank you, Father, I know mother will be glad to have you come."

"Now how old are you, Louise?" he questioned further.

"I will be twelve next December. My little brother died about two months ago. He was younger than I, and father was always very good to him."

The child went away extremely happy for Father Griffin had promised to help her pray for her father, and he had told her that Mr. Carter would some day regret very much that he had been so unkind to them. She skipped back into the church again to beg God to fulfill the promises of the priest. Her prayer was too, one of Thanks-giving. God had provided her with a friend who was to help her and her mother in her father's conversion. For this she thanked Him with all her heart, and promised the Blessed Virgin that she would some day become a nun if her prayers could be answered.

Father Griffin received a glad welcome when he entered the Carter home on the following evening. Louise had told her mother of the expected visit, and Mrs. Carter made many preparations to receive him. No priest had visited them for years, but she had not blamed them for this, but ascribed it to the attitude of her husband. Now one was to come, and she knew that he would be kind, from the way he had spoken to Louise. Father Griffin had wondered what kind of a welcome he might get, for he was not aware that Mr. Carter was not at home. It was a little relief therefore to find the smiling young woman at the door welcoming him into her neat but plain little parlor.

"I just met your charming little daughter at church yesterday," he explained, "and I promised her to come to see you today. This is outside my parish but a friendly visit can do no harm anywhere."

"I am so glad, Father, to have you come, and Louise is almost beside herself with joy. She has told me all about her conversation with you, and how she went into the church after she left you in the sacristy to pray that you would

really come. The child is really a little saint, and she longs to become a nun, although she has never gone to a Sister's school, and even now she thinks and speaks like a woman."

Louise came timidly into the room and sat down near her mother. The priest spoke to her kindly, and reminded her that he had come as he promised. After a time Father Griffin addressed Louise. "Why do you wish to become a sister?" he asked.

The child looked down at the floor almost afraid to tell why, in fact she had never told anyone why she desired to be a nun. Then she answered, "So I can pray for father all the time and make him a good Catholic."

"But where have you learned anything about sisters?" he inquired further.

"Oh! I don't know any sisters, but I see them so often in Church, and they pray so much and look good and happy, I would like very much to be one."

"Well, of course, you can become a nun some day, but you are too young now. You are only twelve years old and you will have to wait till you are at least sixteen. That is only four years and by that time you will be sure whether you wish to become a sister or not."

"Four years! That is so long, Father; that is like a whole lifetime, and I do not know what may happen by then. I would like to go somewhere now and work and pray and give my life for father. I will give our Blessed Mother everything that she asks of me if she will only make him a good Catholic. I know you can help me Father; and mother is willing, aren't you mother?"

Father Griffin was beginning to feel much interested in this unusual family. He wished to speak to Mrs. Carter again in private. Not only was Mr. Carter to be subdued, but her daughter's spiritual life was likewise to be cared for. He had many things to tell her, and some things he wished to learn. And it was principally about Louise; if she could be cared for her father would soon be conquered.

"The child must have a very unusual vocation," Father Griffin explained to Mrs. Carter, "and we must take care of it. As for becoming a nun, she is far too young and it is out of the question. But I think it would be possible to find a place for her in some one of the many convents in the city, where she can be cared for, and educated. However we shall think this over, and in the meantime I shall look around and see if such a place can be found."

"I will be very thankful to you, Father, for what you may do with regard to her. I have not known what to do. She begs me all the time to take her to a convent where she can be with the sisters. But she is such a child that I could not do that. I would be very glad to see her placed in one of her homes, for I know she would be happy there. Her life is anything but happy here, and the influences of the neighborhood are very bad for children."

"I will consider this," the priest promised, "and see if we can place her immediately. However, I must meet your husband, and talk over the situation with him. He may oppose the move when it comes to parting with his daughter, although you tell me he is not good to her."

Father Griffin promised to pay them another visit on the following Sunday, when Carter would probably be at home.

The Carters were very proud of the visit that they had had, and little Louise thanked God with all her heart that she had found a friend for her mother, and a friend for herself who she hoped would help her get admission to a convent. The girl's enthusiasm, however, was dampened a little when Mrs. Carter tried to explain that it might be impossible for her to go away immediately, as she was too young, and that her father might offer stubborn resistance. But she prayed all the harder that her desires might be fulfilled.

On the appointed night Father Griffin appeared at Jefferson Street by the Wharves as he had promised, in the hope of finding all the Carter family at home. He felt a little uneasy as he approached the place, not knowing what Mr. Carter might have in store for him. But he feared no man when he was doing his duty. Mr. Carter, himself, met him at the door. The man sat expected the visit of a priest and was completely taken aback. He was not in ill-humor; nevertheless, he glanced stealthily at the visitor as he stood back from the door to let him enter.

"Oh," said Carter, catching his breath, "I see you are a minister. Do you wish to see me?"

"Why, yes, certainly I would like to talk to you. You are Mr. Carter are you not?"

"That's my name; at least that's what my wife calls me. Guess you are selling Bibles, eh?"

"Is Mrs. Carter in?" the priest asked, kindly.

"She's in unless she's out. Do you wish to see her or can you transact your business with me? I'm somewhat of a business man myself."

"Well," explained the priest, "I'm merely on a friendly visit, and I prefer to have a friendly chat with you both, and also with little Louise."

"Little Louise!" Carter retorted, not offering to bring the priest

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