

CARROLL O'DONOGHUE

CHRISTINE FABER
Author of "A Mother's Sacrifice," etc.
CHAPTER XI.—CONTINUED

"I am sorry to say, Morty, that I do. The look in your eye reveals your guilt. May God give you grace to repent I good-by."

Without even proffering his hand, he descended the old-fashioned stair, and passed out through the front entrance so rapidly that Carter hardly realized his departure for a second or two. Then he muttered: "So I'm being discovered on all sides, and ten to one but they've turned Carroll against me. Well, it makes little difference now; my plans are pretty well laid, and by all that's mighty, I'll see every one of them that's against me crushed yet, and I'll live long enough to behold dainty Nora McCarthy suing for mercy at my feet."

He turned into the room and went to a corner which was occupied by a stout trunk. Opening the trunk with a peculiar key which he took from his waistcoat pocket, there were exposed sundry discolored and half-torn newspapers, together with packets of yellow letters tied with bits of dirty tape. Carter plunged his hand amid the mass and drew up a little round tin box. It was securely locked, but a tiny key attached by a slender chain to the key he had already employed opened it, and there was exposed an evenly-folded paper. This he opened and spread upon his knee. There, indeed, was all the evidence required for the arrest and even capital punishment of Fenian leaders—full plans of the organization of the I. R. B. (Irish Republican Brotherhood) entire names of the officers; details of future movements. Carter's eyes sparkled.

"They didn't discover my treachery in time; and Father O'Connor thought I'd be omdaun enough to hand over this paper to him—oh, no! delivery of it to another quarter will bring many a pound into my purse. It was a fortunate stroke on my part to get this document just before I gave information of the boys' intended attack on the barracks; and they thought I'd keep it safely—so I will; I'll keep it safe for my own interest's sake. I haven't lived to this time of day, plotting and planning, not to know when a wonderful piece of luck like this falls in my way. With Carroll O'Donoghue hung, as he shall be, a large reward mine, as it will be for this information, and Nora McCarthy my wife, which she must be, the devil a hare I care for the rest of matters. To be sure, I'd like if something would take Rick out of the way after he had served my purpose, and may be I can manage that also. He knows too much of the past; and what with his mad love for Cathleen, and his devilish scruples about doing dirty work, as he calls it, he is getting to be dangerous.

He paused a moment as if surprised by some sudden thought; then he resumed his soliloquy: "I wonder, now, if this prying poke of a priest would take it into his head to go and see the Widow Kelly, and Cathleen! well, if he should, he'll learn nothing more than he already knows, for they are as much in the dark about my doings as I want them to be."

He began to fold the open paper still on his knee, continuing: "They will probably hurry Carroll on to prison, well, I shall see him, anyway, and sound him, if they have not told him about my proposal to Miss McCarthy, why he used to have such an affection for me, and to trust me so implicitly, that I think I can make it appear to him how I have been wronged and slandered."

He put the packet he had made of the paper carefully into his bosom, replaced the little box within the trunk, locked the latter, relocked the key to his waistcoat pocket, and going to the closet, began to devour the cold remains of his unfinished meal.

Rick still slept, his drunken nose beginning to grow ominously loud, as Carter, having hastily equipped himself for a journey, entered the room where the sleeper was yet extended on the floor. It required minutes to thoroughly waken the latter, and to make him comprehend what Carter was saying.

"I'm off now for Tralee, with this," touching his breast pocket in which he had placed the important paper; "and I don't know when I'll be back. Do you mind things about here, and be prepared when I return to do what I asked last night."

Rick shook himself erect, and glowered into the face of the speaker, but he did not reply. "You can have the liberty of this place if you like till I come back. You'll find all the provisions you need up-stairs, and if anything should happen that would make it necessary for you to see me, you can follow me to Hoolahan's—I'll drop in there every day while I shall be gone."

Without farther farewell he departed, walking down the street with that all-important and over-bearing air which the consciousness of a little power gives to mean and craven souls. There was no inward shrinking, nor impulse of shame at the dastardly part he was acting; such emotions had been stifled long

since, and for years he had worked but for one infernal aim. Toward that aim he strode, regardless of what he might cruelly demolish on the way.

CHAPTER XII. IMPRISONED

Once more imprisoned! Young O'Donoghue looked round on the bare stone walls, familiar from his former imprisonment previous to his transportation, and it seemed but a day since he had stood in that identical spot, and felt for the first time all the horrors of incarceration. The numerous events of the past few months rushed to his mind—his trial, the verdict, the sensation caused in the crowded courtroom by the agonizing scream of his sister when that verdict was delivered, his sentence, his desolate voyage to Australia, his hard prison life there, his escape, due to the faithful Tighe a Vohr; his ardent hope of being able to achieve something for Ireland's independence; his brief blissful meeting with Nora; his sudden, painful re-arrest; and now, at the close of it all, death—too surely he felt that such would be the end. He threw himself on the wretched bed and covered his face with his hands, giving himself up to the most gloomy thoughts. He was so young to die; and to die, too, without having given one blow for the land he loved so well; to have all his enthusiasm crushed in an ignominious defeat, before it should find vent in one act which could aid the struggling cause; to be torn from the side of the bright creature whose look of anguish as he was hurried from her continually haunted him, were reflections which cut into his soul. He groaned in spirit, and clasped his hands tighter about his eyes, as if to shut out the vision of her face; but after a little calmer, and even somewhat hopeful thoughts returned. His early boyhood appeared before him—the happy years spent in the old home, when his father lived, and Nora, and Clare, and Father O'Connor and he were all as united and affectionate as though they were bound by the natural ties of kindred. He remembered their first sorrow when Father O'Connor was sent to college; their next grief, two years after, when Carroll himself, who was three years younger, followed Father O'Connor to a college in France. His recall because of his father's death; pecuniary troubles, owing to his father's boundless charity; and finally, the loss of their ancient and beautiful home. His mind was vividly picturing all, but in every scene stood Nora McCarthy; her gravity of character remarkable even in early youth, her gentleness to the veriest menial, her charity, seeking outlets which she intended should be known alone to God, but which accident, and the garrulous tongues of those she father's death revealed; her sympathy with the cause of her country; her noble admonitions to Carroll himself; and above all her simple and ardent piety which dictated every act, all pressed upon the young man with a force and sweetness which strangely cheered and stimulated him. He rose to a sitting posture and took from his bosom a little silver crucifix, Nora's gift to him on their betrothal. He pressed it to his lips again and again, and he rose strangely comforted and strengthened. He knew that he was more strongly guarded than on the occasion of his former imprisonment, and he doubted not but that his privileges would be more restricted, perhaps even to the cruel extremity of forbidding all visits from his friends.

Tighe a Vohr had won his way to him before, under difficulties well-nigh as great, and Carroll felt that the faithful fellow would spare no effort to gain access to him now. The step of the guard paused at the cell door, the bolt was shot back, the heavily-studded door swung open, and Carter entered. The unaffected smile which broke over Carroll's face, his exclamation of joy, and forward movement to welcome his visitor, all told the latter that his true reputation as yet had not been revealed to the prisoner.

"My dear boy!" He was embracing young O'Donoghue with well-stimulated, frantic affection, pretending even to be moved to tears at meeting him under such painful circumstances. "I never heard of your arrest till yesterday morning, when Father O'Connor told me; it gave me a shock; I could not rest till I had seen you, and it is only by bribes and influence that I am at last admitted to you. Keep up your heart, my dear boy; you shall not be here long. I think I can secure means of escape, only we must be cautious."

He looked carefully about the cell, and walking to the door, which had been closed and bolted on the outside, listened for a moment; the only sound that reached him was the step of the guard. Satisfied, he returned to Carroll.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE TIDAL SACRIFICE

AN EASTER STORY BY Z. MARIE HAYES

John Delmers had quarreled with his devoted wife. She insisted that Frances, their pretty daughter of seven should go to a Catholic school. He was equally insistent that she attend the nearby public one. That was nine years ago. This was the last quarrel—there had been others—for he cowardly left her to battle for herself and child.

He had left in what he termed a "huff." He hadn't really intended to leave her permanently, but he had gone away with the thought uppermost that she would come to her senses when the money stopped. He even told her that, when she was willing to forget her narrowness and be reasonable, he'd come back. But somehow Mary Delmers did not change, and, to the religion he had pledged himself to practice when he married her, clung only the more closely during the years of trial. Little Frances Delmers did not go to the public school. Her mother worked daily as a charwoman in one of the towering office buildings, and Frances went to the Sisters' School fully five blocks beyond the "convenient" public one. Time passed and, with it, no word from his wife. He knew her well enough to sense the truth. Mary would not change.

At first during the intervals, he wrote her; always, however, insisting on his rights as head of the house, and that she should give in on a question of such "little importance," as he put it. That she loved him, he had no doubt, and oftentimes he was very, very lonesome, and he longed to return. But then his wife stood in his way, or rather his pride—it was all her fault that he went away from home—she should have given in to his opinions long ago and all would have been well. Thus he reasoned it out.

To all this one-sided correspondence there came but one reply, and that fully three years after his heartless departure. It was a sad letter and rather a heart-broken review of what he had once been, and what he now must be. He had been a good Catholic. Then he began by reading Socialistic literature—unbelief followed and the joining of two secret societies forbidden by the Church, was a quick sequel. The quarrel over education was the last straw. The letter closed with the statement that Frances was well and attending the Sisters' School. There was a single word of reproach for his having left her or for having deserted his family.

Mary had not changed! John Delmers knew she never would. He was ashamed and he had learned to his sorrow during that three years of absence that home with a devoted wife and child was worth infinitely more than Socialism and unrest. He hated it all. His home life with its joys haunted him, but his pride held him back. He would not go to Mary and admit his wrong, cowardly conduct. So matters dragged through the years. Then he grew desperate. He drifted with the tide and sometimes he was found intoxicated. Then he left the Middle West where he had gone in his anger, and eventually landed in the far South without friends and with little money. By trade a carpenter—and a good one—how he started out to find work. Somehow it happened that he drifted into the Knights of Columbus' Employment Office, and, strange to say, in the ways of Divine Providence, they directed him to St. Rita's Home for Orphan Boys, where the good Sister Superior set him to work making many necessary repairs.

The irony of his position gnawed at him and annoyed him intensely, when in his room under the roof he used to think it all over. "The fates are against me," he would say, and then one night he did a wonderful thing—for him—he threw the emblems of the two secret societies far out into the darkness. It may have been the very atmosphere of the religious house which had cast a spell over him, with its peaceful, happy, holy religious; or it may have been the effects of the prayers which mounted from the chapel to the heavens above. Be that as it may, John Delmers was a changed man, after he had been a workman at the Home for three months.

Then came the morning when he received instructions to tear down the old barn. The boys had grown to know him well, and, at the first sound of ripping boards, a bevy of boys crowded around him. "I say," cried one urchin, "don't you dare tear down our haymow!" Delmers only laughed and pretended to make a lunge at the youngster. "I tell you what," he replied, "orders is orders, and when Sister Superior says, 'tear down the barn,' down she comes!" The boys looked gloomy and one of the very little fellows wiped his eyes on his coat sleeve—or tried to. There was just one point which was settled in favor of the boys, Sister Superior's orders notwithstanding, though Delmers was sure she would not object, and that was about the half-rotten flooring. The boys were determined not to have it broken up.

"That's all right, Delmers," a bigger boy said, "if you leave us our floor with the old frayed rope what was used to pull up hay with; we're going to make a raft of it." "Yes, and when the water comes up in a freshet," said another, "we'll have a real boat, for Sister Superior won't care."

"It's a go," answered Delmers, hammering away at a board as he spoke. "You fellows can have the fun and get in and help me, if you want; it will be great sport."

With a wild hurrah, which brought a Sister to the back door to see what all the rumpus was about, they pitched it.

The discussion was settled, and all hands, big and little, pitched in with such good will, that Sister Joseph, who was watching out the kitchen door, beamed with real pleasure. "Come here," she said to Sister Anna, "just look at those boys helping Mr. Delmers tear down the old barn. That's because it's play, I suppose."

"Indeed it is," returned the other. "I'd have quite a time in getting those same boys to bring in wood enough to fill that big box. They always say their backs give out about the time the box is half-filled, and the only way I can get the job finished is to reinforce their backs with bread and jam."

"Boys are boys, Sister dear, the world over, you know. Their souls must be very dear to the Sacred Heart." Then Sister Superior sighed. "What's the matter, if I may ask?" inquired Sister Anna. "Oh, I'm just wondering about Mr. Delmers. Somehow I feel he's seen these days. Something has happened to him, and, what's more, I think he's been a Catholic."

"What makes you think so?" the good Sister replied. "I never thought that. Why, didn't you notice the strange emblems he wears; and then he's always getting packages of newspapers and pamphlets. I think he's a Socialist, and I'm quite certain he belongs to secret societies."

"You are right about the emblems and the papers, but your observations have not gone as far as mine, I fear. Otherwise you would have noticed that he does not wear those emblems any more—even his watch charm is gone—and, as for papers, he doesn't get any at all. As for pamphlets, they come very irregularly—at least I don't find them in the mail."

Just then a streak of lightning flashed through the sky, followed by a distant rumbling. "A storm's coming," Sister Superior continued. "Another one of our regular spring ones, I suppose. Well, God has been good, even with the sparing of our rickety buildings. He has kept us through all the years. We're now beginning Holy Week. Let us renew our prayers for poor fallen humanity, and we must be sure to remember Mr. Delmers especially during this time. Somehow I feel he's undergoing a great moral struggle."

Another streak of lightning, followed by a louder rumbling. Sister Superior's attitude changed from complacency to one of anxiety for her charges. Her hand instinctively sought the beads at her side and her fingers closed over her crucifix. Interiorly she raised her heart to the Master. "Sister Anna, please," she said aloud, giving her instructions with decision. "I fear a 'norther' is coming up—one of our genuine Southern kind—you will see that all the children are called in immediately, and that the windows in the dormitory are closed."

With these directions, she hurriedly passed to other parts of the large orphanage. Sister Superior had not given her orders one moment too soon. It was a "norther" and coming up without warning, as usual. A gust of wind nearly took Sister Anna off her feet as she ran into the yard to round up the youngsters. However, they did not need much coaxing, for they had already lived long enough to understand the significance of a Southern "norther"; they scampered into the house as fast as their little legs would carry them. After a couple of more flashes of lightning, which fairly blinded Delmers, he wisely dropped his tools and followed the children into the house. "Up to the dormitories," ordered Sister Anna, "you big boys, and shut the windows and see that the doors on the verandas are closed."

Thoughts were uppermost—Mary, his darling wife, far away in an Eastern city, and Frances, his little daughter, whom he had not seen for nine years.

Suddenly an older boy raced down the stairs and cried out: "Sister Superior wants all you little boys to go up to the recreation room at once; and, Delmers, she wants you to come upstairs and watch the rafters on the top floor."

The boys face was strangely white. The little fellows took alarm at once. "What's the matter?" they cried in one voice, as they scampered up the basement stairs. Once in the room above, all who could wiggle into a tiny space were at the windows, despite all warning of the Sisters.

Below in the streets, men and women were running helter-skelter. The truth dawned upon the children, and they cried aloud with all the anguish of their young hearts. Above the noise of wind and rain, Delmers heard a shout that chilled his very heart. He heard the swish of roaring, raging waters amid the ominous clap of thunder. Just one thought filled his mind. He would willingly lose his life in those rapidly surging waters, if he only could send Mary the one single word, "Forgive me!"

Shortly after vigorous tapping of the hand-bell, Sister Superior succeeded in getting all the children into the chapel without much confusion, though all were trembling with fear and excitement. Upon her face rested a look of infinite calm—the calm of a peaceful conscience in the hour of death. Instead of going to the roof at once to watch the rafters, as Sister Superior had ordered, Delmers stood riveted to the spot at the door of the chapel, as he beheld the beautiful face of the Sister illumined with a spiritual beauty far beyond his comprehension.

"Children," she said quietly, with a voice filled with unspeakable confidence, "we will recommend ourselves to the care of the Sacred Heart." Then followed the Rosary. Somehow, with the rising and falling inflexions of the children's voices, Delmers slipped in the back pew and began almost unconsciously saying: "Holy Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." Old memories had been awakened, and before the close of the first decade tears were coursing down the sunken cheeks. He was lost to the storm, lost to the immediate danger all were in, lost to all save that he was once again a Catholic, body and soul. His Socialism had fallen from him under the influence of prayer, like a rotten garment, and it left him with the determination to make his peace with God and the world at the first opportunity—if one should be given him.

The Rosary ceased, and before the children could file into the recreation room Delmers had disappeared into the attic. He felt a shame creeping over him for having neglected his duty by not going to the attic at once, and he wondered what Sister Superior would say if she only knew. Could he have but read her heart—how she rejoiced when she observed him stop at the Chapel door; when she beheld him drop on his knees; and when she heard his voice praying with the rest. Even in the hour of extreme need, Sister Superior's heart rose to God in thanksgiving over the return of one of His own children.

The water had risen above the basement during prayer and all went to the higher floors, there to await a rescue or a receding of the flood, or death, as Providence might decree. Ten minutes later the water was surging and gurgling around the corner of the building as high as the second floor. How much higher the water could come, before the old building would collapse was wholly problematical. Delmers had descended from the attic and joined the children on the upper floor. He opened a window and looked out. Up and down the streets furniture, boards and debris were sailing mournfully along with the raging waters.

Just then one of the boys called out: "Oh, look at our flooring!" Delmers stuck out his head. Sure enough there was the flooring with the frayed rope dangling from it. It was jammed against the corner of the building near the end window, and there it was held by the eve-spout. Soon the strong current swung it around and Delmers reached it suddenly and caught the rope just as the large piece of flooring started on its onward rush up the street. The force of the current nearly pulled him out through the window, but he held on like grim death. "Quick, someone," he shouted, "here's a chance to save the babies at least. It's only a chance, but if we can tie them onto the flooring, it will make a good raft, and perhaps they'll float to safety. As for us, we'll take the one long chance that the water won't sweep the old building off its foundation."

Sister Superior looked out a moment. The water was steadily rising, though the storm had passed as rapidly as it came. The sun shone brightly, but the peril was still there—it could only be a few minutes at most before the water would reach the third floor. Under the tremendous pressure the building must soon go to pieces. Wherever her eye rested, death and destruction met her gaze, and she saw small frame buildings collapse like paper boxes.

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