

CARROLL O'DONOGHUE

CHRISTINE FARMER
Author of "A Mother's Sacrifice," etc.
CHAPTER XLIV.—CONTINUED

"Miss McCarthy—pardon me, Miss Sullivan—do not fear me; I intend you no harm. Listen—as she still cowered from him, retreating to the farthest corner of the apartment,—I have come to save you, to rescue you from poverty, from shame. Be my wife—fly with me, Nora, and you shall have all that money can furnish! I have already riches, and I expect still more."

He paused for want of breath to continue. Sudden and almost supernatural courage seemed to animate the girl; ceasing to cower, she confronted him with an indignation before which it was his turn to quail for a moment.

"Cease, Mr. Carter, and no longer disgrace your manhood; if you are so lost to honor and feeling as to insult an unprotected woman, I have courage at least to defy you. She had the poise of a queen, the courage of a lioness. "Become your wife!" she continued; "twice before you have made that insulting proffer, and twice you have received your answer. To save me! from what would you save me—my poverty?—it is honorable, and were it ten times as great, it would be far preferable to the fate of being your wife: shame?—I have none, sir, save the shame of being forced to endure your presence. Leave me!" She pointed to the door.

"Nora, hear me!" He approached her, attempting to seize her hand. She recoiled from him, maintaining her fearless air.

"Stop!" she cried, in a tone that he was forced to obey. "Dare not to lay a finger upon me, and Heaven itself will interpose to check you!"

At that instant the door was flung suddenly open, and Rick of the Hills entered. One rapid glance conveyed to him the meaning of the scene. "Back!" he cried to Carter, and his threatening brow and outstretched hand gave a fierce and determined meaning to his words.

"Faith, it's a pretty touchy pair you two," said Carter, endeavoring to hide his discomfiture under a semblance of humor; "I came here with the best of intentions, and this is the way I'm received—turned out before I have time to state the object of my visit. Ugh!" he wiped his face with a handkerchief whose crimson color was scarcely deeper than the countenance it pressed.

"Why have you come?" demanded Rick, with no diminution of his stern and angry manner; "we were getting on well without you, and we do not need you."

There was a hidden significance in his words which Carter too well understood. "Oh, come, Mr. Sullivan," he said, in a conciliatory tone; "it was the first time he had ever used so respectful a term to Rick, but it was evidently lost upon the latter, for his lip curled, and his whole haggard face expressed his disdain of the speaker. "Let me explain myself," continued Carter, assuming his blandest air; "I have come with the honorable purpose of a gentleman to offer you both a life of independence and comfort—it requires but one condition—that Nora here will become my wife."

Nora sprang to Rick's side; for the first time since he had so sternly rebuffed her to touch him, her hands were upon him, clasping his arm. "Father,"—the agony in her voice pierced the heart of the poor wretch—"do not let him longer insult me—send him hence, for I cannot bear this—indeed I cannot!" Her appearance attested the truth of her words; her suddenly acquired strength and courage had as suddenly gone, and her pallid face and trembling form told of the painful reaction which had followed.

"You hear your answer," said Rick, "and I, too, bid you begone!" But Carter made no motion to obey. He evidently did not believe in Rick's determination—he could not realize that Nora's influence, won through her nobler devotion, had superseded his own old, evil power over the unhappy creature, and he waited with a brazen confidence of being still able to accomplish the object of his visit.

"Go to your own room," whispered Rick to Nora, "and leave me to deal with this man."

To glad to obey, the excited girl flew to her little apartment, shutting and locking the door upon herself.

The two men confronted each other; Rick hissed, but in too low a tone to reach her who had just left them; "Do you believe me now, Morty Carter? I told you before you would never win her, but you scouted my words."

"You have thwarted me!" answered Carter, in as low a tone.

"Never! I have been your tool up to the present moment, sending my soul down to hell for your promised reward; but your purpose is to prove as treacherous to me as you have done to those it was your sworn duty to defend."

Carter replied doggedly; "I shall keep my word with you when Nora consents to become my wife."

"She will never become such."

"She will," was the angry, but still cautiously-spoken reply, "if you will leave me to pursue my suit without your interference—in a word, if you will help me,—and the little ferret-like eyes looked significantly into the wild flashing orbs before them.

"Never!" hissed Rick; "and what is more, I shall protect her from you; there is many a crime upon my soul, Morty Carter, but the sin of delivering into your hands so pure and noble a being as Nora shall not stain it. In everything else I have done your bidding, but in that I never shall!"

"And what of Cathleen?" said Carter, in his anger slightly raising his voice.

"Not even for her shall I do your bidding with regard to Nora!" Carter's rage seemed beyond his control—his large form trembled, and his hands, according to their wonted habit, clutched convulsively.

"What if I open up your secrets to the world?" he hissed; "what if I tear off the mask which you now wear?"

"I could not be more wretched than I am," was the reply; "I have tasted so much bitterness under my present mask that it will be a relief to tear it off. I grant you free license to pull it away, Morty Carter—to publish all that you know; but remember—for an instant Rick also forgetfully raised his voice,—that I too hold secrets which the world shall have; that you also wear a mask which it is in my power to tear off!"

Carter, in his baffled rage, bit his lip till the blood came. "Rick," said he at last, "when he had appar-ently conquered himself, I have been, as I always am, too hasty with you; surely you will not play me false—you do not intend to desert me?"

"If playing you false, and deserting you, means saving her from your insulting presence"—he pointed to the room within which Nora had locked herself,—"then I intend to do both."

Again Carter bit his lip. "You will not help me to press my suit?" he said bitterly.

Rick shook his head. "What has changed you, Rick? you worked in accord with all my plans until this—this one last stroke, which would bring me the fulfillment of all my wishes, and you the possession of Cathleen."

"Would you know what has changed me, Carter?—Nora's goodness. I have looked at her sometimes, wondering if she were not more an angel than a woman, and I have loathed myself for suffering her so near me!" He folded his arms, and with his old habit let his head fall sadly upon his breast.

"Well, Rick, bear with it all till Carroll O'Donoghue's trial is over; I shall not intrude my presence upon your home again; and here—take this money; I am in better condition to afford it than I was when you last asked me for it." He had taken his porte-monnaie out, and was proceeding to open it.

"Put your purse back," said Rick, "we want none of your money; when I asked you for it, you drove us to poverty, and now Nora earns for us."

Carter's eyes opened to a wider stare than from their shrunken size they seemed able to do.

"It is true," continued Rick, replying to that look of angry surprise; "and were it in your power to offer me the wealth of Ireland's bank, Morty Carter, I would not touch a penny of it."

Without a word, Carter put up his port-monnaie, gave one look toward the room into which Nora had retired, a sharper look at Rick, and strode toward the door; on the threshold he turned to say: "When you think better of this, Rick, you know where to find me." He hurried out, disappointment and rage choking him, and he loosened his cravat and flung his coat back, as if he would thus give vent to his bitter and stifling emotions. "At least I can crush them," he muttered, "and nothing shall stop me this time—I shall crush them!" He ground his teeth together and quickened his pace.

CHAPTER XLV.
A CRIMINATING PAPER

Carroll O'Donoghue had returned to his cell, weary and dispirited, on the first day of his trial; he was not buoyed up by the hope which others entertained regarding him—he was scarcely even animated by it, for his mind was racked by wild conjectures about Nora; that she was ill was his first fear, and he tried to comfort himself by thinking that if it was very serious Cathleen would not have left her. But a strange misgiving tormented him—he could not account for it, he could not explain it—he only knew that a mysterious fear of some ill having happened pressed upon him, and he passed the heavy hours in a dispirited mood which he could neither banish nor lessen. In the evening of that day his cell door opened, and Morty Carter was admitted. The visit was like a ray from Heaven to the poor prisoner—the sight of one whom he deemed so true to his interests—and he sprang to meet him, his face aglow, his form trembling with delighted eagerness. Had Carter any lingering fear of his treachery having been revealed to Carroll, the latter's welcome at once dissipated it; and thus re-assured, he returned the prisoner's greeting apparently with all the warmth of a sincere affection.

"I felt you would come, Morty," said the young man, "and I looked for you every day since the night of my unfortunate attempt to escape."

"Yes," answered Carter; and he pretended to gasp, as if in the very thought of his failure on that occa-

sion there was a threat of one of the spasms of pain which Carroll had before witnessed; "that faithful fellow, Tighe a Vohr, was barely in time to warn you back to your cell, was he not? I do not know how I should have managed on that night but for him—the discovery of my plan came to me by such providential chance, and there seemed to be no way to get you timely word. I met Tighe, and told him; in a moment he had an idea, and you, my dear boy, were saved, and Tighe, as he always does, got beautifully out of the difficulty."

"And the brave fellows who were waiting without for me what of them?" asked Carroll.

"They have been sentenced to imprisonment and hard labor, but it is hoped that they will be pardoned before the expiration of their time."

Carroll's face fell. "Could I suffer entirely alone," he said sadly, "my pain would lose much of its sting; but when through me punishment is inflicted upon others, it is a double stab to my own heart, Morty." His tone became suddenly enger. "You were in the courtroom today—tell me where was Nora? she did not accompany Father Meagher and my sister?"

"I know not—my dear boy; you forget that I am banned by all save you—that my presence is shunned as an evil thing. I marked her absence, but I did not dare to inquire the cause. Ah, yes! I did forget," replied Carroll sadly; then, as if influenced by some sudden thought, he continued: "But you can learn from Tighe—you will do so, and you will let me know tomorrow—will you, Morty?" speaking with renewed animation.

"Certainly, my dear boy; but how if I am not admitted to your cell tomorrow—my visit tonight has cost me labor, and time, and invention—and if it was suspected by the authorities that I was friendly to your interests, your prison door would be closed to me as it is to Father Meagher and your sister. You know, my poor fellow, that they are even more particular since the unfortunate failure of that attempt to escape—so particular, that even I, with all the influence I thought I could command, was unable to gain access to you from that time until tonight!"

Carroll bowed his head in bitter resignation. "Do you know, my dear boy," continued Carter, "that the strange hopes are entertained of your case? It appears you have attracted the sympathy and interest of some of the highest officials. The fact of your having remained quietly in your cell, as it has appeared on your trial that you did, when every avenue to release was opened before you, has told wonderfully in your favor; and it is a current belief that your sentence will be comparatively light. In view of the sympathy and interest of some of the highest officials. The fact of your having remained quietly in your cell, as it has appeared on your trial that you did, when every avenue to release was opened before you, has told wonderfully in your favor; and it is a current belief that your sentence will be comparatively light. In view of the sympathy and interest of some of the highest officials. 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