

CARROLL O'DONOGHUE

CHRISTINE FABER

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

CHAPTER VII.

MACHINATIONS

The storm continued, growing each moment in fierceness; torrents of rain accompanied the shrieking wind, and at intervals, when a temporary lull ensued, and the elements seemed to have ended their strife, it was only to break forth again with more appalling fury.

During one of these lulls a man started up from a hedge by the roadside, as if he had been seeking protection from the storm; but he also seemed to have had another motive than shelter, for instead of looking for a more desirable covert, he stood in the attitude of listening.

Drenched, and heartily tired from their conflict with the wind and rain and the toil of a journey over a difficult road, the party halted after a half hour's march at a sort of country hotel. It was of rather pretentious size for the unassuming little country place in which it was situated, and bore evidence in its well-lighted windows and broad, illuminated doorway, of unusual accommodation for wayfarers.

Thus journeying, he arrived at length on the outskirts of a village. Threading the deserted streets with quickened gait, he stopped before one of a row of plain little cottages. Raising the latch, he gave a peculiar signal; it brought at once to the door a man in a gaudy dressing-gown, and with coarse sandy hair bristling from under a nightcap.

"It's time for you to arrive," was his salutation, as he admitted the new-comer. The latter scowled. "Have a care, Morty Carter, for I'm a desperate man tonight. I did your dirty work, and I've come for the reward you promised."

"Easy, now, easy, and we'll see. Come in here and we'll talk the matter over." He led the way to the open room, seating himself at a little table covered with papers in disordered arrangement, and motioned his visitor to a chair near. Then, appearing to notice for the first time the dripping condition of the latter, he rose, and going to a cupboard, brought forth a bottle and glass. Pouring out an unusually large quantity of the liquor, he tendered it to his guest. It was angrily pushed away.

"Sit down, man, and don't be so unreasonable. Give me time to think, and tell me how you succeeded—but no; I'll not hear a word from you, and I'll not speak one word to you, until you take that to keep out the cold you'll get after this wetting. Take it Rick." He held the glass almost to the miserable creature's lips, and spoke in a coaxing tone. It was a tone so foreign to him, and it was assumed with such awkward grace, that he to whom it was addressed laughed in mockery.

wretch, and folding his arms, stood back in a resolute attitude. The temptation was strong to one who had not tasted food for hours, and the sparkle of the liquor as it lit up the glass, and its stimulating odor, conquered Rick of the Hills. He raised the tumbler and quaffed its contents at a draught. Morty Carter smiled; then he stepped forward with alacrity, and resumed the chair he had left.

"Now tell me, Rick, how you succeeded." "I went, as you told me, an' prowled unobserved about the priest's house till I saw Carroll O'Donoghue an' Tighe a Vohr go in; then I posted away to Casey's an' told Captain Dennier. It wasn't long till the soldiers were at Father Meagher's, an' keeping guard outside the house as well as in it; Carroll tried to escape by the back door of the kitchen but I spotted him, an' gave the alarm to the soldiers that were almost next him. After that, I waited on the road till the soldiers passed with him, then I followed, an' watched them go into Casey's."

"Carter rubbed his hands. "Well done, Rick." "Aye, it's well done for you, Morty Carter, but it's hell's own work for me; my soul was black enough before, but how is it now? I tell you,—roused into his old fierceness by the tenor of his thoughts—"I'll do no more of it. Tell me where Cathleen is, an' I'll beg my way to her. You promised to tell me if I succeeded in this, keep your word."

"Never fear me, I'll keep my promise; but I have a word or two to say. But drink, man, to keep out the cold." Again he poured from the bottle, and again, more easily tempted than before, because of his recent potation, poor, miserable Rick quaffed the contents.

"Do you see, now," resumed Carter, drawing his chair closer to his visitor, and speaking in a confidential whisper, "it'll not be safe for you nor me till Carroll O'Donoghue is hung—the evidence is pretty good against him—and then the property will be mine, and maybe her dainty ladyship Miss McCarthy wouldn't mind becoming Mrs. Carter."

Despite Rick's rapidly increasing maudlin condition, there arose within him amazement and indignation at such an aspiration on the part of his companion, and he started from his chair, but finding himself too unsteady to stand, he sunk into it again.

"She wouldn't look at you, Carter, if you had all Ireland to your back; and I'd be sorry if she would." Again Carter, by an effort, controlled his rising anger. "Maybe she won't be able to help herself; maybe she'll be glad to accept me when she knows—when he stooped forward and whispered in Rick's ear. It had the effect of completely sobering him for a moment. He jumped to his feet, this time able to stand without even the support of the chair.

"Are you man, or devil, Morty Carter, to plot the like of that? And do you think I'll lend myself to that scheme for you? I did as bad for you twenty-five years ago, but it wasn't the hellish work then that it would be now. No, you'll never count on me for that; and the tongue that would utter that lie ought to be blasted forever."

For an instant Carter quailed before the sudden and unexpected resistance; then recovering his wonted boldness, he said: "You'll do it, Rick; you know you will, and then I'll keep my word with you; then you shall see Cathleen, and have peace and prosperity to boot. But if you refuse me, never shall you know her fate, and you shall swing for the murder at B—; I swear it."

He paused to recover his gasping breath, and when he resumed, his voice was thick and hoarse. "Altogether it would have been a great document for the government to get hold of, an' somehow I didn't like the look in Carter's eyes when he took it, but maybe I was wrong."

Again he paused, and in response to the priest's whispered admonition, said, when once more he had recovered sufficient strength: "Yes, father, I will be quick now, for I have only this to say; will you tell Morty Carter all that I told you about Cathleen? he can't blame me for tellin' you, as you are a priest, and he knows that I never told mortal before, anything save that Cathleen was a cousin of my own—I never told that Carter was her uncle. We all kept this secret—the young cratur, herself, an' my mother an' me. Will you do this for me, father, an' then will you ask him if he'll continue the bit of support to my poor old mother? Cathleen will not leave her till she dies; I know she'll not."

The whole of his poor, struggling soul seemed to be in his pleading eyes as he turned them on the pitying face above him.

"Yes, my poor fellow," answered the priest, "I shall do all you ask?" "An one thing more—will you write to Cathleen? I'll not ask you to make the journey to see her; it would be too far for your reverence, but write to her, an' tell her how the love in my heart for her never leaves it, an' how, when she's one day afore the altar givin' her pure young heart to God forever, she will not forget to pray for William Kelly. An' say to my mother, father, that I love her the love of my dyin' heart."

He was utterly exhausted, and the priest looked in some dismay at the ghastly countenance, and the scarcely breathing form; but the poor fellow rallied once more, and asked with painful eagerness: "Will you promise that also, father?" "Yes, all that you ask."

"Thank God!" he had freed his hands from the coverlet and strove to clasp them in his gratitude, but they fell helplessly on the bed. "I can prepare to die now," he said, "and there's a loss of my mind."

He murmured the words, and then signified his desire to make his confession. On its conclusion the doctor arrived, and instantly pronounced the case hopeless. Death would ensue within the next twelve hours.

The dying man caught the half-whispered words, and he smiled. "An' not afraid to go now," he said, "an' somehow I think it's best. Sure it was glorious to get my death striking a blow for old Ireland."

"I shall return," the priest said to the woman and her male companion, who had entered the room with the doctor; the latter having given some brief directions about the treatment of the wounded man, departed with the clergyman.

Groups of men and women were everywhere; on the road, in the doorways, and everywhere with the same melancholy and somewhat defiant expression of countenance. Gloomy determination looked from every brow, and a fierce animosity gleamed from every eye. The conversation was always in low tones, but it was accompanied at times by a hopeful shaking of the head, and a threatening gesture of the hands which evinced how deep were the feelings of the speaker.

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"Some escaped Australian convict, I believe. I did not hear the name. But, father, how excited you are! does my news affect you?" The priest was violently trembling, and the perspiration stood thickly upon his face. It was some moments before he could speak, and then his voice sounded husky and strange.

A SEVRES VASE

By Florence Gilmore

St. Bonaventure's parish was the richest in the city, and the richest and most prominent women in it formed the Tabernacle Guild. They did careful and beautiful work, for love of their Eucharistic Lord, and if they seemed to forget that Christ belonged to a humble village home, as well as to the house of King David, the falling was a comparatively harmless one.

It was not often that a new member was received, and then only by invitation and with the consent of all the old ones; but on a Thursday morning, late in November, Father Johnston brought a woman into the sewing-room, introduced her as Mrs. Capretta, and quietly announced that she had spoken to him about joining the Guild, and that he had assured her she would be most welcome. She was an acquisition, he told the ladies, for she had done tabernacle work in Rome for one of the great churches; he explained, also, that she had just come back to the city with her mother, and as they were living in a hotel she would have ample time for good works.

The women were too well bred to be other than cordial, and too greatly amused by Father Johnston's temerity to feel very indignant. So Mrs. Capretta was given an altar-cloth to hem, and the place of honor beside Mrs. Baker, the president, who carried on a rather labored conversation with her during the remaining half-hour of the meeting.

Across the sewing table from them sat Mrs. Norton, who had decided opinions on every subject and was never slow to express them. Seeing that Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Capretta were talking together and paying no heed to her, she said, in an undertone, to the woman at her left: "Priests do such strange things! What was Father Johnston thinking of?"

"I don't know when anything has amused me as much! Evidently he had no doubt that we would all be delighted to get any new member, her friend said, with a low laugh. "If he does such a thing two or three times he'll ruin his Guild," Mrs. Norton said, rather hotly.

Her friend laughed again, and said, half-seriously: "What rights has he here? He's only the pastor." Mrs. Norton tried to glare at her. "Don't preach to me in that underhand way!" she retorted, laughing in spite of herself.

Mrs. Capretta was younger than any of the other members—about twenty-eight or thirty years of age—and slight, and almost girlish in appearance. She did not seem to feel at all shy, or to be in the least awed by the wealth and aristocratic traditions of her new associates. She made no advances, and evidently looked upon the meetings as for work only, without thought of their social phase. She came promptly to a second meeting, and a third, and was always the same: pleasant, capable, but somewhat aloof from the others. A few of the women were attracted by her; most of them were not interested.

Only Mrs. Norton disliked her. She could not help feeling that Mrs. Baker the third time Mrs. Capretta came. "You dislike her!" Mrs. Baker echoed in surprise. "I can't imagine why. Surely she is as inoffensive as any one could be."

"No doubt you will think me foolish, but her eyes annoy me every time I look at her. People with those big, bright blue eyes are always horribly stubborn," Mrs. Norton said.

Mrs. Baker was greatly amused. "What a strange idea!" she exclaimed, and laughingly added: "Do you know, since you have called my attention to Mrs. Capretta's eyes, it occurs to me they are very like your own. Truly, I mean it!"

"Nonsense! Don't dare to say such a thing!" Mrs. Norton cried. "Surely you don't mean to imply that I am stubborn." "No, no! I wouldn't imply such a thing for the world; but, of course, we both know that you are," Mrs. Baker answered. The two were the best of friends and delighted to tease each other.

Mrs. Norton laughed, but did not defend herself. After a short silence Mrs. Baker said, in another tone: "We have business to discuss today. Every one is here now, so it would be well to begin." "What is the business?" Mrs. Norton inquired. "Oh, it's a long story; you will hear with the rest," Mrs. Baker answered gently. Then, having answered on the table for silence, she addressed the meeting: "We must make up our minds how we will raise money for the fine new vestments. You know we promised Father Johnston to pay for all of them, and he told me a few days ago that he wishes us to raise the money in January, as he has already

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