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MORNING STAR AND CATHOLIC MESSENGER.

NEW ORLEANS, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1868.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

BY ST. THOMAS.

Thy hidden Godhead suppliant I adore,
Which 'neath this figure truly lies concealed,
And my whole heart doth lowly homage yield,
Though as I meditate, I shrink the more.

Sight, touch, and taste are all in Thee deceived:
Save what faith teaches I may trust to naught;
But I believe, O Christ, what thou hast taught:
So faith is firm, and every doubt relieved.

Erst on the Cross Thy *deity* was masked:
Here that and Thy *humanity* are hidden:
Yet firmly I accept what Thou hast bidden,
And pray for what of old the good thief asked.

I do not see, as Thomas saw, Thy wounds,
And yet I own Thy Godhead, and adore;
And pray my faith may still increase the more
My hope grow strong, my love surpass all bounds.

O sweet memorial of my Saviour's death,
O living bread that strengthenest for the strife,
Be Thou to me the source of heavenly life,
Be Thou my comfort in my latest breath.

Jesus, my Saviour, like the fabled bird,
Nourish Thy child with Thy heart's warmest stream,
Of which one drop could all the world redeem—
And purify from every stain incurred.

O Jesus, whom I now behold concealed
Beneath the mystic sacramental veil,
Grant that the hope—long cherished—may not fail,
To see Thy glory face to face revealed.

TRUE TO THE END.

CHAPTER IX.

Day after day went by slowly, and yet too quickly—slowly, because the hours were heavy with their weight of sorrow; and too quickly, for the time was precious, and no evidence worth anything was, as yet, forthcoming for the defense. Ellen was out of immediate danger, but still lay in a state of prostration of mind and body. Frank had sunk into utter dejection and misery, and his friends knew not how to rouse him from it, although they were well aware how terribly it would tell against him on the trial.

Mr. Fox, the solicitor, was in despair; never in all his life had such a case come under his notice; and he found great difficulty in getting counsel to hold the brief; one after another persisted that Frank must be guilty, and that he should take his advisers into his confidence, and thus give them some chance of getting him off. Mr. Fox believed in Frank; he had known him from a boy, and he was certain that if from some sudden pressure he had taken the notes, he would have confessed it to him now.

One day Mr. Fox called at Frank's house, and found Richard Dunne with Margaret. Poor broken-hearted Margaret, looking twenty years older than before the blow fell, literally bent with sorrow, watching, and care, was leaning back in her chair, wiping away her tears. She drove back those tears in Ellen's presence, and it was a relief to shed them now. Richard was sitting by her side, talking with soothing tenderness to his poor old friend, and she had quite forgotten her early prejudices against him, and poured out her sorrows to him as if he were a near and dear relative.

Hardly had Mr. Fox greeted them both, when Father O'Donnell entered the room. Richard gave a start as if something had stung him, and Mr. Fox, in surprise, asked if he were ill.

"O, no, not at all," answered he; "it is a troublesome tooth of mine, which every now and then gives me horrid pain for a moment."

"Poor fellow," said Margaret, "I know that kind of pain is very trying. Willie, dear, don't you remember how you used to suffer from the same thing?"

Willie had been speaking to Mr. Fox; now he came forward to greet Margaret, and put out his hand to Richard.

"A toothache, aunt? Yes, I recollect suffering a good deal, and you had a wonderful remedy for it. Can't you give Mr. Dunne some of it?"

Richard had been looking another way all this time; he now turned his gaze full on William O'Donnell. There was an answering look, full of kindness; the expression of the face was unchanged, only that there was a shade of deeper sadness over it.

Mr. Fox instantly plunged into the subject that was uppermost in all their minds.

"I really don't know which way to turn," cried he. "I am baffled at every point.—I believe in Frank's innocence as much as I do in my own, but it is one of those rare cases in which circumstantial evidence is against an innocent man. I feel that one little clue would unravel the mystery; but on that I cannot lay my hand. You have thought over what I asked you, Father O'Donnell, have you not?" continued the solicitor. "You can't think of any one who has a grudge against Frank, who wants to do him an injury? As you were at college with him, you must pretty well know all his early friends and acquaintances, while his wife knows those of a later date. Can't you really think of any one?"

Richard Dunne's eyes were fixed on Willie with a kind of fascination.

"No; I know of no one," said the priest quietly.

"Nothing that could give any clue whatever?" repeated Mr. Fox, impatiently walking up and down the room, his hands in his pockets. "Do try, do, for God's sake! No circumstance would be too trifling. What might seem to you a mere nothing, might be everything to me. I'll not conceal from you," said Mr. Fox suddenly standing still, and facing the other two men, "that I am *seriously* alarmed; Frank's fate hangs in the balance. If he be not acquitted, the sentence will be a severe one; his very position, education, and character will tell against him, not for him."

Margaret sank back in her chair, sobbing. Richard saw an expression of keen and bitter suffering pass over Father O'Donnell's features, and he saw his eyes raised for a moment to heaven; then he answered calmly: "I can give you no help, Mr Fox. I cannot point out any one."

"But that note—that note which was brought to you? Yes, yes; I know 'twas in the confessional, and you know, though I'm a Protestant, I respect that; but surely you could give some idea, some clue? You see the matter is so important. Was it a man or a woman who brought it? Couldn't we get at him or her, and by promising them a pardon, or to get them out of the country, ascertain the truth? Now, Father O'Donnell, couldn't you help me as far as this? *Was* it a man or woman?"

"I don't know," said the priest.

"Don't know?" returned Mr. Fox; "why, my dear sir, you *must* know the difference in a man's or woman's voice?"

"Yes, perfectly," he answered.

"Then, which was it? which did it resemble?"

"I don't know," said the priest again; all that I know about the note I stated before the magistrate. I know nothing further."

"But you *do* know!" rejoined Mr. Fox, losing his temper in his anxiety; "it is some ridiculous scruple which prevents you telling me a little, just a little; and I can tell you that on that little Frank's future depends—indeed, his life; for I firmly believe if he is not acquitted, it will kill him. And what is to become of his wife and children?"

At this juncture Margaret could bear it no longer, and ran out of the room. The three men were left alone, and they would have formed a good study for a painter; Mr. Fox standing opposite to William O'Donnell, his face flushed, and his eyes sparkling with excitement; the priest quiet and immovable, his face calm and grave; and Richard close by them, glancing from one to the other with keen, eager looks.

"Are you immovable, Father O'Donnell?" pursued the angry solicitor.

"Quite, Mr. Fox," he replied; "I have nothing to tell; if I had I would say it in an instant. I would do anything on this earth to save my brother and sister. If by bearing the blame and the shame myself, I could spare them, I would do it gladly; but I know nothing."

"You *must* know something," returned Mr. Fox, "because the note was brought to you."

"Yes, it was brought to me; and the person who brought it permitted me to say it was given to me as restitution money. I have said this publicly; I can say no more. I can say no more in confidence to you than I could in open court. What is told in the confessional is told to God, not man; and as man, I say with perfect truth, I know nothing more."

"And you will sacrifice your brother and sister by keeping up this distinction?" demanded Mr. Fox.

"Certainly, if need be," said Father O'Donnell, "if it be the will of my Master. He has said: 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me, he is not worthy of Me.'"

Mr. Fox was silenced; he saw the keen anguish painted on the pale and patient face, and his anger melted away into a deep respect for one who could so faithfully keep a trust committed to him. Not choosing, however, to acknowledge himself in the wrong, he snatched up his hat and hastened from the room, and Richard, who had no mind to be left alone with the priest, ran after him.

Meantime, the day for the trial rapidly drew on, and Mr. Fox's hopes grew fainter and fainter. He could find out no one at the bank who had a grudge against Frank. There had been a little jealousy felt by all his fellow-clerks at his sudden elevation, but it had never been serious, and was not felt by one more than another. Mr. Brown was grieved for Frank from his very heart, and was altogether above suspicion of foul play. The servants at Frank's house had all lived with him for years, and were honest, simple, and faithful creatures, broken-hearted at what had occurred. Minute inquiries were made as to who had entered the house from the time the notes were lost to the day on which they were found. No one had called during that interval but Dr. Grant, Father O'Donnell, and Mr. Richard Dunne. Mr. Fox was at his wits' end.

The trial day came; the court was densely crowded, and Frank, pale and worn, with black lines under his eyes, deep furrows on his cheeks, and a touch of white amidst the hair that till now had been Ellen's pride for its glossy blackness, stood as a felon in the dock before judge and jury. The evidence for the prosecution was the same as that given before the magistrate, and though every witness was keenly cross-examined, the testimony was unshaken. The numerous ladies present were deeply affected at the genuine emotion and marks of fervent friendship for the prisoner evinced by Mr. Richard Dunne when he stood in the witness-box. Father O'Donnell was sharply cross-examined by the prisoner's counsel, but his answers were invariably the same: he would add nothing to his former statement, and denied any further knowledge of the business. The speech of the counsel for the prosecution was thought by many to be unnecessarily severe. The barrister dwelt on Frank's previous education and excellent position as reasons, not for mercy, but for greater punishment. "If we condemn," said he, "a poor man, who is ignorant and vicious, for a crime of felony, how much more one whose conscience must have plainly warned him, who could have had no strong incentive for the crime, who was easily earning an honorable livelihood, who had been treated with extraordinary generosity by the very employers whom he was thus wronging? It is the evil examples that such men set," continued the learned counsel, "that tend to the increase of crime among our poor population and rising generation."

For the defense came numerous witnesses as to character, tradesmen who declared their bills were paid regularly, and that Mr. Murphy owed nothing; and the prisoner's counsel commented on these, and showed there could be no possible motive for committing the crime, while there was every motive for deterring him from it. He pointed out that the prisoner, if guilty, must have known a speedy discovery of the crime would follow, yet he took no steps to avoid it. He declared it to be one of those cases where circumstantial evidence is strong against an innocent man; he pointed out that some other person must have been mixed up in the affair, because one note had been taken to Father O'Donnell. Nobody could suppose that if the prisoner had committed this crime he would have brought his own brother-in-law into the matter. The real thief and villain had evidently contrived so far to escape punishment and conviction; but he doubted not, in His own good time, the God of justice would bring the truth to light, and he implored the jury to have mercy on an innocent and unjustly accused man.

The speech was eloquent, but every one in court felt the arguments were weak; and no one was surprised when the jury, after a very brief absence, returned into court and gave a verdict of "guilty," it was unaccompanied by any recommendation to mercy. The sentence passed was ten years' penal servitude. Frank stood up to receive it, and then fell fainting into the arms of his jailors, and was carried by them from the dock.

CHAPTER X.—CONCLUSION.

On the following morning Richard Dunne went, according to custom, to inquire after Ellen, and to call on Margaret. On the door-step he again encountered Father O'Donnell in the act of leaving the house; but he turned back when he saw Richard. "Come in, Mr. Dunne," he said, as the latter was about to make an excuse; "I want to say a word to you." Richard obeyed, and followed his conductor up stairs into the back drawing-room, where the writing-table, which has borne so prominent a part in the story, was still standing. Something large and long was placed on the table, covered with white.

Willie drew back the covering, and pushed Richard gently forward, for there, in her coffin, lay the fair form of her he had once so madly loved; there—pale, and still, and white, the features wasted by sickness, the cheeks furrowed by so many tears, but with a smile of ineffable peace on her lips—lay the young wife and mother whose life he had blighted, whose death he had caused. He stood rooted to the spot; he looked at her, and the words uttered in his ears a few weeks before came back to his memory: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that *have no more that they can do.*" No, no more! No more from the hand of man; she is in the bosom of God; and surely that long and bitter suffering had purified her soul from the few stains contracted in a holy and innocent life. No more pain, no more suspense, or oppression, or injustice for her. Well, there she was; he had done his worst—he had killed her—she whom he had once worshiped. He had had his way, and what comfort had it brought him? Was the cup sweet to his taste? He turned away, and saw Father O'Donnell gazing on the corpse with a look full of love, and also of such deep peace. The twin-brother and sister—they who had seen the light on the same day, who had been one in heart and soul, whose love and trust in each other had never been broken for an instant—were parted now. His glance seemed to follow her whither she had gone before, as if, now that she were there, he, too, should not linger long behind; or if he could catch a glimpse of the radiant shore on which she had now safely set her foot. Richard looked, or rather glared, at him, and said, in low, hoarse tones:

"You have *not* conquered me! Better to see her dead than *his* wife! Expect no mercy from me, for you will find none!"

"She thought of you in her last hours," said Father O'Donnell.

"When did she die?" demanded the other, sternly. "She *was* better?"

"Yes; she was buoyed up with hope till after the trial. When we told her the result, she grew very white, but still quite calm, and begged to be taken to Frank at once. We took her; she was with him an hour, and came away as calm as before. When we got home I had to carry her in, and she whispered to me not to leave her. She grew rapidly worse. I gave her the last sacraments, and she died at daybreak—just as the sun rose." Richard was standing in the shadow of the door, and his face was hidden. The priest went on: "She was quite conscious to the last, and most peaceful and happy. All the anguish of the last few weeks had passed away. She had accepted her cross, and looking into eternity, she saw of how little worth are the judgments of men. Just before she went, she drew me close to her, and said: 'If that poor being, whoever it may be—man or woman—who brought you that note, comes to you again, tell him or her that I freely forgave and prayed for them.'"

Richard came forward. His face was pale, but a look of determined rage was painted on it. "You will never have need to give the message," he muttered, through his closed teeth.

"God grant I may!" said the priest. Before he could add more, Richard had quitted the room and the house.

From the time in which he parted from his wife, a great change came over Frank. He received the news of her death quietly, saying that he had never expected to see her again. All suspense was now over, and he accepted his lot meekly as coming from the hand of God. He saw all his children, and took leave of them, as well as of his almost broken-hearted father and mother, with resignation and hope. The bright things of life had been his, but were now gone forever; he would bear his suffering bravely till he won his crown of rest.

Very soon after his sentence he set sail for the colonies, for the events of our story took place when it was still the custom to send convicts abroad. Willie went to see him the day before he sailed, and the two sat together, hand in hand, within the walls of a felon's cell, and spoke of the past, their happy, careless boyhood, their college days, their peaceful after lives till this mysterious cloud had overshadowed them. Frank told Willie how often his wife came to visit him in dreams; how at night his poor cell seemed to be radiantly lit up, and his wife, all clothed like an angel, would smile upon him, and whisper to him to be of good cheer, life would soon be over, and joy was at hand; and sometimes she brought with her a baby angel, the little Mary whom he had never seen in life. It seemed very uncertain whether the two friends and brothers would ever meet again; but they looked forward to another meeting when all life's troubles would be ended.

"There is one person," said Frank, after a pause, "whom I pity far more than I do myself—the man, whoever it was, that did this thing."

"Yes," said Willie, "that is true."

"I can't *think* who he can be," continued Frank. "I cannot imagine. I never knew any one to have a grudge against me, except Richard Dunne, for those few years, and you know how entirely he got over that. Sometimes I think I *must* have dropped the notes, and some one have picked them up, been tempted to steal them, and then had not courage to tell the truth. However, it's no use speculating further on it; but the man must be miserable, and I pity him from my heart."

"And forgive him?" said the priest.

"O, yes, Willie, long ago, before Ellen died, when it *was* hard to do so; but I never can imagine how one can dare to ask forgiveness of God, and refuse it to another."

And when, next day, the ship spread her sails, and Frank saw Ireland receding from his view—his own loved country, which held the grave of his wife, and knew that his parents were left alone in their old age, and his children deprived of a father and mother's care, and with the ban of disgrace resting on them—his heart was ready to break. Yet, even then he had peace in his soul, and pitied still more the man who had wrought the evil.

Margaret and her husband took the poor children back to their own home, to bring them up as best they could on their narrow means.

Willie devoted himself more assiduously than ever to his parish duties. But those who watched him closely—and there were many of his people who, loving him well, did so—perceived that a great change had passed over him since the sorrow that had fallen on his family. He grew paler and thinner than ever, and seemed, as his people said, to be wasting away. Margaret saw it, too, when he came to see her and the children, and yet she felt that he was not mourning for Ellen, but rather rejoicing she had so early gained her crown.

Frank's letters were cheering, for he was so patient and resigned. The children were too young to cause much anxiety, and Margaret herself had begun to lift up her head again. What, then, she questioned herself, was the secret sorrow that seemed to be wearing Willie out? Ah, if she had known the constant vigils, the frequent fasts, the terrible penances that he went through, she would have wondered still more. So, he had passed through the world, and went up and down the streets of the city—a saint, whom no one knew of, whom the busy nineteenth century cared not for. The end came suddenly at last. He became too ill to leave his room, and a fellow-priest was sent to live with him and attend to the work of the parish.

Meanwhile, Richard Dunne went on his way, rich, prosperous, and admired. People wondered he did not marry, and fair ladies smiled on him and gave sundry tokens of their favor. Every now and again he would pay such attentions to some great beauty, or unusually fascinating girl, that the world thought he was going to settle at last; but just when matters seemed coming to the point he would rush off as if some spirit of restlessness possessed him. And he *was* restless. He plunged into a round of gaiety, and it palled on his taste. He went abroad, but no change seemed to give him pleasure. He tried to immerse himself in business, but it became intolerably wearisome. And so the years went on. At last Margaret, who corresponded with him from time to time, wrote to ask him to go and see Willie. She was anxious about the report of his health which had reached her, and wanted to know the exact truth about him. At first Richard dashed the letter aside, and said he would not go; but day by day the thought haunted him, and at last, impelled by a mingled curiosity and defiance, he set out for the distant quarter of the city where Father O'Donnell spent his day. He reached the house, in a close, narrow street, amidst a thick population of extremely poor people. The street door was open, and no one came to answer his knock. Impatient of delay, he walked in, and looked into the room on the ground-floor, but it was empty. He faucied he heard a murmur proceeding from an upper room, and went up stairs. He opened the door of the room on the first floor, and started back, for on the bed was lying the form of Father O'Donnell, apparently dying. Candles were burning on a table near, and a priest was kneeling beside the bed, praying aloud. No one else was in the room. Richard stood irresolute, but neither the priest nor sick man seemed conscious he was there, and after a few moments he stole into the room, and near the bed. He could see the face plainly now, the face of the man whom he had pursued with deadly hatred; whom he had, as he thought, conquered; whom he had crushed under the weight of his vengeance—that face, worn and emaciated with labor, sickness, and penance, with the dews of death upon it, but yet lit up with celestial joy. His hands were clasping his crucifix close to his breast. The priest was leaning over him.

"All is peace, dear friend, is it not?"

"Yes," breathed forth the failing voice; "peace, perfect peace."

Richard made an involuntary movement, which at last attracted their attention. The priest looked at him with surprise; but the dying man knew him.

"Richard," he said, "Richard, have you come to see me die?"

At last, *at last*, a pang of remorse shot across the hardened heart. He leaned towards the sufferer, and said, "Willie, forgive me!"

"I have nothing to forgive," answered the dying lips. "May God bless you, and bring you to His service!"

"Forgive the injury I did you," pursued Richard; "the crime I told you of that night."

"I know of no injury to me," said the priest, and his voice was growing very faint. "Whatever you may have said is, as it were, unspoken."

His eyes closed, and his lips could no longer form a sound—they had been silent to the end. His breath came in short thick gasps, but on his features was written still, ineffable peace, unspeakable joy; earth was passing from him; he had forgotten all round him save his Lord.

"Go forth, O Christian soul," said the priest in a loud voice, "in the name of the Holy Ghost, who was poured out upon thee: may thy place be this day in peace, and thine abode in holy Sion; may the white-robed Martyrs come out to welcome thee; and mayest thou gaze with blessed eyes on the open vision of truth."

Richard heard these words as in a dream; then a moment's pause, and the voice went on: "May Christ receive thee, who hath called thee."

[CONTINUED ON THE EIGHTH PAGE]