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MOTHER'S SACRIFICE; OR, WHO WAS GUILTY?

By Christine Faber, Authoress of "Carroll O'Donoghue.'

CHAPTER IV.

Hubert Bernot began the study of the law, and as he had said to Margaret, he applied himself to it with a the salmost as great I am, and I have fancise that you were suffering—

The girl bent low over the salmost as great in the salmost as great the salmost as great in vigor of heart and mind which alarmed his mother for the effect of so many hours of close study upon his health; but he laughed at her fears, said Margaret had exaggerated her account of his diligence, and, kissing her, returned to his room to drown in study his ceaseless remorse.

It had been Margaret's custom to use the carriage in going to church on Sundays, but on the Sunday suc-ceeding her cousin's return he re-quested her to walk, saying: "I shall tell you why when we

reach the church. Great was the surprise of John the coachman, when the usual Sunday morning order for the carriage was countermanded, and he scratched his head in a perplexed way and said to

the cook : " Faith, its a queer way the world has; them that has carriages not want ing to use them, and them that can't have them not content because they

have to use their feet at all !" But a half hour after, when he caught sight of Hubert — tall! lithe, handsome fellow that he was — and pale, lovely Margaret arrayed in her plain, dark, but charmingly becoming ostume, he declared to Annie Corbin that it would be a pity to shut such

a pretty sight in a carriage.
When near the church, to which treams of people were hurrying, Habert bent and whispered :-

The reason why I would not have he carriage is, I shall not enter with ou-I feel as if I were banned by God for my crime, and I dare not enter His temple. But do you go in, largaret, and pray for us both. hall wait for you somewhere here. stopped short, looking at him

horrified affright. He drew her arm through his own, and forced her on. "You will at-

act notice," he whispered. When she recovered herself she beought him to alter his determination ; out he was as flint to her passionate appeals. Mournfully and with many a sad, lingering look after his re-treating form, she at last ascended the

teps of the church.

Poor Margaret! She drew little comfort from the Mass. Pray! she could not. What had she to do with prayer who held a murderer's secret, and who refused to denounce the murderer?

Oh, that unhappy secret! — if she could only lay its miserable burden somewhere! But her love for Hubert Bernot bound her to its weight with a strength that her will could not conquer, and she could only bury her face in her open prayer-book, and let her scalding tears wet the leaves the agony that is in my own soul."
through and through.

She did not answer him; her e

Hubert was waiting for her, after Mass, at the door of the church. The homeward walk was silent and

dreary. Every Sunday the same course was pursued, even on stormy ones; Hubert giving out that it was but proper, mething should be endured in the ervice of the Lord; at which the oachman and the cook held up their hands and praised God there was so

witerance.

"You are ill, Hubert;" she said, wildly; and she was about to rush to the bell to summon aid, but he interher own remorse of conscience was so the bell to summon aid, but he interher own removed from the bell to summon aid, but he interher own removed from the bell to summon aid, but he interher was saying:

"You are ill, Hubert;" she said, wildly; and she was about to rush to the bell to summon aid, but he interher was saying:

"You are ill, Hubert;" she said, wildly; and she was about to rush to the bell to summon aid, but he interher was saying:

starp. He answered:
"To avert the suspicion of the

ervan's—they are very sharp some-imes." And she silently acquiesced. The patient, long-suffering invalid, whose eyes had turned so often and gazed so long on the sacred picture near ner, that they had acquired something the expression which the painte nad depicted, worried in her gentle way about the monotonous existence

ed by her son and niece. I am afraid I have been very



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when her niece was tenderly bathing the helpless hands. "I have kept the helpless hands. you so long attending to an old woman's whims. I thought that when Hubert came home to remain, he would be your passport to society: but he is almost as great a recluse as I am, and I have fancied, Margaret,

The girl bent low over the vessel she held, that her sudden start might not be noticed.

The invalid continued:

"That you are not well, and fear to tell me lest it may make me anxious. You look pale and sad, my poor child you have looked so for a lor Is there anything the matter?"

Margaret forced herself to look up and to meet those calm, passionate Oh! how she yearned to be eyes. ble to tell that there was something which was eating her very life awayto lean her head against that tender breast and sob out the grief with which her heart was breaking. As it was, it required a mighty effort to the tears from bursting forth. She looked sadly into the face before

her.
"I am not ill," she said, "but do not feel quite as well as I used to feel—I am unaccountably depressed in spirits

"Ah! I see how it is. You have associated so long with suffering, my poor child, that you have grown to suffer yourself. But I must remedy this in some way. Tell Hubert to come to me, and you return with him. No : call Kreble to remove that as Margaret was about to remove the vessel she had been using.

Margaret put her mouth to a speak ing-tube which led from her aunt's apartment to the attendant's room, and a few moments a large formed, coarse-featured, but kindly-mannered German woman appeared to take her

place by the invalid. The breakfast bell had not yet rung, and the busy happy clatter of the servants below came faintly up to Margaret as she stood for an instant in the great hall to steady her trembling limbs. A pang of envy shot through her heart, and as she leaned her burn ing brow on the baluster, she though bitterly how cheerfully she would exchange with the lowest menial in the house if so doing would break the heavy chain that bound herwould free her from the weight of the murderer's secret.

There was no immediate response to her timid knock at Hubert's door but she heard a hurried movement inside as if he had been startled from some occupation; after a little, he asked hoarsely, "Who is there?"
"Only I-Margaret! your mother

vishes to see you."

He opened the door and stood before her, his face frightfully pale and

drawn up into an appalling expression of suffering.
"It's a relief to look at you," he

said; "to find some one who reflects

She did not answer him; her eyes were looking past him to the lighted astral on the table; he followed her look and attempted to laugh, but he only produced a hoarse, discordant gurgle

" Ah ! Margaret ! noticing the evidence of my vigil, I see; it was a ghastly one, as they all are—" He stopped abruptly and gasped

as if a sudden pain prevented his utterance.

'Do not call any one," he whispered,

and go down to the library. I will oin you there. He turned back to his room, and

Margaret, faint and suffering herself, escended to wait for him. She heard his heavy, uncertain step descending the stair, and she could not help contrasting it with the buoyant

spring of his old-time gait. He did not take the precaution to close the door when he entered, only sank into the nearest chair, as if his weakness eft him no alternative.

Margaret softly shut the door and tood before him.

"I frighten you," he said, looking at her; "but the torture of this ceret crime is getting to be more than can bear. Oh, Margaret! rather han endure it, rather than face the chantom which so frequently rises efore me, I would gladly, nay, exultngly, fling my guilty secret far-prolaim it from the housetop and then lie - die anywhere, die anyhow, so hat I had flung my burden off; but I cannot while my mother lives-I cannot destroy her with such a fell blow as that would be, -she who has suffered so long, I cannot bring such dishonor upon our name. So there is nothing left for me but to bear life as I may. I have forsworn every tie. No wife shall ever clasp my red hand, and if a thousand years of such torture as I am enduring now could restore the life I have taken, or could cleanse my soul of its bloody stain, I should unflinchingly bear it all. Pity me, Margaret, and pray for me !--

"And yet, what do I ask?" he continued, moodily; "you to pray for me, when I am not willing to make the atonement which alone will satisfy my conscience! This it is which keeps me from the sacraments, from church, from prayer — of what avail would all be when I cannot, when I will not, give myself up to justice. Oh! that one crime should so blight soul and body - would that I were

She could not answer him-for, was not her soul also blighted by that one

selfish," she said to Margaret one day her duty, how could she exhort, or comfort him-and of what should her exhortation consist, but a plea to give with a couple of jovial fellows the ring himself up, and that would be to lose him, and crush his poor invalid mother. She could not do it, and she was

RECORD.

silent. He resumed:

"Prove your regard for me, Margaret, by bearing with me, and by guarding faithfully all the wretched things you know about me. Now, tell my mother that you found me a little unwell, but that I shall be with her

But Margaret could not go immediately to deliver his message to Madam Bernot; she felt that she must relieve her own wild, maddened feelings first; so she went in a bewildered way to her room, and walked the floor, and wrung her hands, and sitting down at last before her dressing table rested her head upon it, and burst into violent weeping; but they were tears that brought no relief, and she dashed them aside at length in a desperate, lefiant way, and sat looking sullenly before her.

A little fancy-basket was on the table, and a white embossed card shone through the meshes of its silken lining. She took it idly out and read again

the peculiar inscription, "Roquelare. This time the letters seemed to assume fantastic shapes, and the word itself to conjure up frightful images of her cousin brought to justice by some mysterious means.
"I believe that I am going mad,

she said, and she dropped the card back to its place with a shudder. Then, rising, she hurriedly bathed her face and descended slowly to her aunt's room. The patient invalid had evinced neither surprise nor impatience at the tardiness of her son and niece in obeying her request. She thought they had waited to fulfil some duty, and when Margaret told her that Hubert was slightly unwell she destred that he should not come to her until he

The breakfast bell had rung a second time and the cook was slightly indignant, and the waiter impatient, be cause no one had appeared in breakfast room; but Hubert and Mar garet came down at last. Both were so absorbed in painful thought, and both made so poor a pretence of eating that even to the waiter their men tal suffering was visible. He attrib uted it to physical illness, and spoke of it as such to his fellow-servants who thought it probable from their knowledge of Hubert's studious habits and Margaret's unremitting care in the sick

But when Hannah Moore was alone she shook her head, and muttered: "I know me own know. Its no bodily sickness that ails them. God'

help them!"
When the silent, scarcely tasted meal was ended, they went together to Madame Bernot's room, and Hubert was obliged to kneel and lift his face to his mother that she might discover in his features the extent of his illness. He met her gaze calmly enough, only when her hands rested on his should ers, placed there at her own request by Margaret, he winced like one in pain but he lowered his face at that particu lar moment, and his mother little dreamed that she had been pressing on raw wounds which were being con-

stantly opened afresh before they were permitted to heal. Margaret, by whom no motion was unobserved, suspected his suffering and its cause, and she averted her face

"Dear boy ! I have a request, which is very near my heart, to ask of you to-

day." Speak, mother; whatever it is, it

"It is that you will go more into society; that you will bring gay, young companions to the house for Margaret's sake. We owe it to her or her long and devoted care of me. I have made her too much of a recluse.

A strange look came into Hubert's face-a sudden brightening of every feature for a second, but it was imme diately succeeded by the appalling ex pression with which he had met Mar garet on her entrance to his room that morning, and he bowed his head that his mother might not see. raised it he wore his usual look and he answered calmly

"You are right ; we owe her much, (with an emphasis on the word we Margaret alone understood) and I shall begin this week to do as you desire. I shall renew the acquaintance of my college mates.

He rose, standing erect, and poising his head with the manner of one int whom some new hope has been suddenly infused. A sudden hope had also filled Margaret's heart—a hope that society would wean him from his dreadful ideas of self-torture, and eventually would bring quiet, if not happiness, to his troubled spirit. But no such thought had entered Hubert's mind. He had hailed his mother's proposition because it seemed to afford a prespect of lightening for Margaret the burden which he had imposed on her - the hope that eventually her happiness might be secured in the love of some good man. Yet at that thought his own heart throbbed with exquisite torture, for wound about every fibre of his being was a passionate love for Margaret Calvert.

The gentle invalid, unsuspicious of what was passing in the minds of the young people, smilingly responded:
"Thank you, my dear boy, and God

place, and Hubert, kissing her, went softly out, while Margaret began her usual daily duties in the sick-rape crime, and unwilling, nay, positively softly out, while Margaret began herefusing, to do what she deemed to be usual daily duties in the sick-room.

of whose mirth could be heard through the house. He had taken them to his own room first, and had despatched a message to Margaret to meet them in the parlor. She was in her aunt's apartment when the request was brought, and Madame Bernot, smil-

ing, said:
"And I insist that you will change your dress, and make yourself as pretty as possible. Come, I want obed-

Margaret went slowly to her room, donned as plain but a less sombre cost ume than the one she wore, and gave careless brush to the curls which clus tered so thickly round her head and neck. She cared very little for the impression she might make. Her one thought, her sole care, was for the miserable creature whose image was shrined in her heart. It made little difference to her that this was an unusual way of being introduced to fashionable society-that Madame Bernot in her life of suffering and retirement, and Hubert, in his little knowledge of the conventionalities of fashionable ife, had waived the usual mode of introduction. She only knew that the one object of her life was Hubert's wel-

fare, Hubert's happiness.

The grand state parlor which had never been used for the reception of company since it had been in the possession of the Bernots, looked grim, and in a slight measure awful to Margaret when she entered it—she had so rarely visited it, and the two last occasions on which she had done so were intimately connected with the gaunt secret that she carried.

She paused a moment to remember more distinctly the features of the man who had given her the card with the strange inscription, and then with a shudder she tried to dismiss the painful thoughts which the memory caused

An indistinct sound of the merriment in Hubert's room was wafted to her ears, and once she fancied that his voice was raised in mirthful tones. She bent forward, clasping her hands in her eagerness, and murmured:
"Already they are doing him

good. She was not mistaken, for his door just then opened and his voice sounded in loud and mirthful protest against some proposition urged by one of his companions, as the three began to de-

A sudden color dved her cheeks, and never, perhaps did she look lovelier than at the moment that her cousin entered with his friends; but the color flitted as suddenly as it had appeared, and she stood as motionless as marble image just in her rear, for she had recognized in one of the strangers Mr. Charles Plowden, the young lawyer who had held so prominent a position in the recent murder case.

He too, seemed embarrassed, looked appealingly at Hubert; but

Hubert said, gaily : "My cousin is slightly startled, gentlemen, at meeting again one to whom she became known under very peculiar circumstances; but there nothing very strange about it, Margaret. I was introduced to Mr. Plow-den in Mr. Delmar's office," placing his hand familiarly on the shoulder of the other of his companions, a tall, rather delicate-looking young manand we have found out each other's good qualities in a marvelously short of time, clasped hands in right good fellowship, and I now present him o you as my friend."

He caught Margaret's cold, listless fingers and placed them in Mr. Plowden's warm grasp.

She strove to return the hearty pressure of his hand, and to respond pleas-antly to his few low words of regret for having first met her under such distressing circumstances, and his thanks for the favor of this introduction; but she experienced a nameless terror which did not leave her during the whole of he visit.

For Hubert, he seemed indeed to have cast aside his wretched burden. and to have entered into the spirit of the hour with all the abandon of a youth just released from the trammels of college - reminiscences of college days at which Margaret forced herself to laugh, and interesting items per-taining to the fashionable world, and old with a masculine gusto by the lelicate-looking Delmar, were intermingled with the deeper but more charming conversation of the hand

Before they departed Delmar ar ranged for the introduction of Mar garet to his mother and sister-by whom, he said, she would be properly chaperoned into society; and on the exchange of a few more friendly

speeches they took their leave. Annie Corbin, descending from Madame Bernot's room, met them in the great hall-standing face to face for a second with Mr. Plowden; if he itius the condolence in her seven sorremembered her as one of the witnesses whom he had examined, he did the Church the "Hail Mary "has been not evince it by either sign or look, but she started slightly, and hurried to acquaint her fellow-servants.
"What odds, as long as they're

good friends?" said John McNamee, though its queer that Mr. Hubert would receive one that was trying to cause his arrest. But Hannah Moore looked puzzled,

and seemed in deep thought for the rest of the day, saying to herself when assured that she was alone. "It can't be that he's doing this to

get on the scent—God help them, if he is!—for he's sharp and cruel."

Hubert kept his promise. He went He saw her, there white and motion abroad that very day, and returned less when, having closed the street door, he turned to ascend to his room; he changed his course and went into the library instead, motioning her to follow. She did so, and he did not speak till he had closed and locked the door; then he turned to her, his face wearing that same appaling expression of suffering.
"The mask is off now, Margaret.
I wore it well did I not? And now I can be myself-the murderer that

> He clenched his hands and set his teeth together, while great drops of perspiration stood on his forehead.

Margaret was helpless; she could only look at him in that dumb agony that found no vent even in tears. pitiful expression of her face seemed to touch him at last, and he said, sorrowfully:

"For the future I must not permit you to witness my agonies; and life will be brighter for you henceforward, so that in time you can forget you have been the murderer's confidant." "Never, never," she moaned; "and since I cannot relieve your suffering I

shall at least try to share it. He said, sadly: "I believe you, Margaret; and know this, that but for you I think I should have gone mad, he chains I wear are eating so into my vitals-but, knowing that I have dragged you down, I know also that I must undo, as far as I can, what I have done in your life, I must in some way secure your happiness before I go to meet my eternal doom; but seek not after this to know things about me which I would conceal even from your eyes—things which must be known only to my Maker. Be patient, Mar-garet, and God, if He has no pity on

me, will have pity on you." "But," she burst out almost inco-herently, "why inflict so much torture on yourself? Why bring home that man to-day when you accounts in the papers how important

a part he played on the trial?"

"Ah, Margaret! that was one of my policy strokes. He was in young Delmar's office when I called, and Delmar introduced him to me as his particular friend. Every circumstance of that inquest was revived by Delmar himself, who of course knew of Plowden's connection with it, and the part which my name bore in it; he vived the facts more minutely, I suppose, because it was the first time Delnar had met me since my return from college, and he had but recently made Plowden's acquaintance; but the friendship between the two was thus varm because of some valuable service which the lawyer had rendered Del-

mar.
"I had already assumed my mask, and I had so steeled every nerve, that I even entered into close and critical discussions regarding the unknown criminal; I sifted the evidence which had been given at the inquest, and which Delmar with an astonishing memory recalled; I balanced with nice precision the verdict of the astute men who had not penetration enough to discover that they had the murderer just within their grasp, and I concluded by clasping hands with Plowden over Delmar's 'old port,' and vowing a friendship for him as warm as that evinced by my friend. I fancied I was acting grandly-it was, it would be, for me admirable training to be often in the presence of this man

who was so near to discovery of my secret crime - who would probably ever yet weigh my words, and construe my actions. In order to compel his ac ceptance of my invitation to return home with me, I accompanied him to his hotel, while Delmar went home promising to wait there until we repined him. Immediately that Delmar left us I resumed our conversation about the strange murder. thing impelled me to it, to see to what limits I dared go of a subject which was so full of danger for me; but he sought to get away from the topic and as often as I returned to it he began to talk of something else. I found him pleasant and genial, with a charm about his company which I could not resist.

"Oh, Hubert!" Margaret broke forth, "he will charm you to your ruin ; that very fascination will make you betray yourself."

"There is no danger, for when my mask is on I have perfect self-control; and now, Margaret, I shall go to my room, for I am tired and need rest."

He opened the door for her, and she went heavily forth to change her dress again and to descend to Madame Bernot.

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