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********* Hagar's Secret...

By Mrs. M. J. Holmes...

"It is enough. I must tell her," whispered Hagar; while Maggie asked, "Tell me what?". For a moment the wild eyes fas-

For a moment the wild eyes fastened themselves upon her with a look of yearning anguish, and then Hagar answered slowly: "Tell you what you've often wished to knowny secret!" the last word dropping from her lips more like a warning hiss than like a human sound. It was long since Mag had tassed for the secret, so absorbed had she been in other matters, but now that there was a prospect of knowing it, her curiosity was reawakened, and while her eyes glistened with expectation, she said: "Yes, tell it to me. Hagar, and then I'll tell you mine;" and all over her beautiful face there shone a joyous light as she thought and all over her beautiful face there shone a joyous light as she thought how Hagar, who had once pronounc-ed Henry Warner unworthy, would rejoice in her new love. "Not here, Maggio—not here in

.com can I tell you," said old r; "but out in the open air, here my breath will come more recely." and leading the way, she holbied to the more year. where Mag had sat with Arthur Carroll-

Mag had sat with Arthur Carrollton on the morning of his departure for Montreal.

Here she sat down, while Maggie three herself upon the damp ground at her feet, her face lighted with eager curiosity, and her lustrous eyes bright as stars with the excitement. For a moment Hagar bent forward, and folding her hands one above the other, laid them upon the brad of the young girl as if to head of the young girl as if to gather strength for what she was to say. But all in vain; for when she essayed to speak, her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth, and lips gave forth unmeaning

It must be something terrible to

"It must be something terrible to affect her so," thought Mag, and taking the bony hands between her own, she said, "I would not tell it, Hagar: I do not wish to hear."

The voice aroused the half-fainting woman, and withdrawing her hand from Maggie's grasp, she replied, "Turn away your face, Margaret Miller, so I cannot see the hatred settling over it, when I tell you what I must."

I must."
"Certainly; my back if you prefer it," answered Mag, half 'playfully; and turning around, she leaned her head against the feeble knees of Ha-

"Maggie, Maggie," began the poor old woman, lingering long and lovingly over that dear name, "nineteen years ago, next December, I took upon my soul the secret sin which has worn my life away, but I did it for the love I had for you. Oh, Margaret, believe it, for the love I had for you, more than for my own ambition;" and the long fingers slid nervously over the bands of shining hair just within her reach.

At the touch of those fingers, Mag shuddered involuntarily. There was a vague, undefined terror stealing over

shuddered involuntarily. There was a vague, undefined terror stealing over her, and impatient to know the worst, she said, "Go on. Tell me what you did?"

"I can't—I can't—and yet I must," cried Hagar. "You were a beautiful baby, Mag, and the other one was sickly, pinched and blue. I had you both in my room the night after Hester died; and the devil will creep into the heart and whisper, whisper till the brain is all on fire? This thing he did to me, Maggie, nineteen years ago; he whispered—whispered dreadful things, and ered-whispered dreadful things, and his whisperings were of you."
"Horrible! Hagar!" exclaimed
Maggie. "Leave the devil, and tell

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me of yourself."
"That's it," answered Hagar.
I had but left him then, this I had but left him then, this hour would never have come to me; but I listence, and when he told me that a hamsome, healthy child would be more acceptable to the Conways than a weakly, fretful one—when he said that Hager Warren's grand-child had far better be a lady than a dridge—that no one would ever know it, for none had noticed either—I did it, Maggie Miller; I took you from the pine board cradle, where you lay—I dressed you in the other baby'c clothes—I laid you on her pillow—I wrapped her in your coarse white frock—I said that she was mine, and Margaret—oh, Heaven't can't you see it? Don't you know that I, the shrivelled, skinny hag, who tells you this, am your own grandmother!"

There was no need for Maggie Miller to answer that appeal. The

There was no need for Maggie Miller to answer that appeal. The words had burned into her soul—scorching her very life-blood and maddening her brain. It was a fearful blow—crushing her at once. She saw it all, and knew there was no hope. The family pride, at which she had often laughed, was strong vithin her and could not at once be rooted out. All the fond household memories, though descerated hold memories, though desecrated and trampled down, were not so soon to be forgotten. She could not own that half-crazed woman for her grandmother! As Hagar talked, she had risen to her feet, and now; tall and erect as the mountain ash which grew on her native hills, she tood before her, every vestige of color faded from her face, her eyes stood color faded from her face, her eyes dark as midnight and glowing like coals of living fire, while her hands, locked despairingly together, moved slowly toward Hagar, as if to thrust her aside. her aside

her aside.

"Oh, speak agaln," she said, "but pot the dreadful words you said to me just now. Tell me they are false—say that my father perished in the —say that my father perished in the storm, that my mother was she who held me on her bosom when she died that I—oh, Hagar, I am not—I will not be the creature you say I am. Speak to me," she continued; "tell me, is it true?" and in her voice there was not the olden sound.

Hoarse—hollow—full of reproachful anguish it seemed, and bowing her head in very shame, old Hagar made

head in very shame, old Hagar made her answer; "Would to Heaven 'twere head in very sname, of Hagar made her answer: "Would to Heaven 'twere not true—but 'tis—it is! Kill me, Maggie,' she continued: "strike me dead, if you will, but take your eyes away. You must not look thus at away. You must not look thus a me, a heartbroken wretch." But not of Hagar Warren wan Maggie thinking then. The past, the

present, and the future were all em-bodied in her thoughts. She had been an intruder all her life; had rul-ed with a high hand people on whom she had no claim, and who, had they known her parentage, would have spurned her from them. Theo, whom she had held in her arms so oft, calling her sister and loving her as such, was hers no longer; nor yet the fond woman who had cherished her so tenderly—neither was hers; and in fancy she saw the look of scorn upon that woman's face when she should hear the tale, for it must she should near the tack, to he told, and she must tell it, too. She would not be an impostor; and then there flashed upon her the agonizing thought, before which all else seemed as naught—in the proud heart of Arthur Carrollton was there a place for Hagar Warren's grand-child? "No. no. no!" she moaned; and the next moment she lay at Hagar's feet, white, rigid and in-

"She's dead!" cried Hagar; and for one brief instant she hoped that it was so.

But not then and there was Margaret to die; and slowly she came back to life, shrinking from the touch of Hagar's hand when she felt

it on her brow.

"There may be some mistake," she
whispered; but Hagar answered,
"There is none;" at the same time
relating so minutely the particulars
of the deception that Maggie was convinced, and covering her face with her hands, sobbed aloud, while Ha-

relating so minutely the particulars of the deception that Maggie was convinced, and covering her face with her hands, sobbed aloud, while Hagar, sitting by in silence, was nerving herself to tell the rest.

The sun had set, and the twilight shadows were stealing down upon them, when, creeping abjectly upon her knees toward the wretched girl, she said: "There is more, Maggie, more—I have not told you all."

But Maggie had heard enough, and exerting all her strength, she sprang to her feet, while Hagar clutched eagerly at her dress, which was wrested from her grasp, as Maggie fied away—away—she knew not, cared not whither, so that she were beyond the reach of the trembling voice which called after her to return. Alone in the deep woods, with the darkness falling around her, she gave way to the mighty sorrow which had come so suddenly upon her. She could not doubt what she had heard. She knew that it was true, and as proof after proof crowded upon her until the chain of evidence was complete, she laid her head upon the rain-wet grass, and shidderingly stopped her ears, to shut out, if possible, the memory of the dreadful words, "I, the shriveled, skinny hag who tells you this, am your grandmother." For a long time she lay there thus, weeping till the fountain of her tears seemed dry; then weary, faint and sick, she started for her home. Opening cautiously the outer door, she was gliding up the stairs, when Madam Conway, entering the hall with a lamp, discovered her, and uttered an exclamation of surprise at the strangeness of her appearance. Her dress, bedraggled and wet, was torn in several places by the briery bushes she had passed, her hair, loosened from its confinement, hung down her back, while her face was so white and ghastly that Madam Conway in much alarm followed her up the stairs, asking what had happend.

"Something dreadful came to me in the woods," said Maggie, "but I can't tell you to-night. To-morrow if it is hall be better—or dead—oh, I wish I could be dead—belore you hate me so; dear grand—No,

Conway's dress

Unable to understand what she meant, Madam Conway divested her of her damp clothing, and placing her in bed, sat down beside her, saying gently, "Can you tell me now what frightened you?"

S! MICHEL

A faint cry was Maggie's only answer, and taking the lady's hand, she laid it upon her forehead, where swer, and taking the lady's hand, she laid it upon her forehead, where the drops of perspiration were standing thickly. All night long Madam Conway sat by her, going once to communicate with Arthur Carrollton, who, anxious and alarmed, came often to the door, asking if she slept. She did sleep at last—a fitful feverish sleep; but ever at the sound of Mr. Carrollton's voice a spasm of pain distorted her features, and a low moan came from her lips. Maggie had been terribly excited, and when next morning she awoke, she was parched with burning fever, while her mind at intervals seemed wandering; and ere two days were passed, she was raving with delirium brought on, the physician said, by some sudden shock, the nature of which no one could even guess.

(To Be Continued.)

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