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**A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE; OR, WHO WAS GUILTY?**

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

**CHAPTER XXIII.**

There was not even the shadow of an obstruction in the way of the marriage of Hubert and Margaret now, and preparations for that event pressed hastily and happily forward.

Louise Delmar at her brother's solicitation accepted the invitation to be Margaret's bridesmaid, and after a few meetings she grew to encounter Hubert without experiencing that strange, undefinable thrill which the very mention of his name had been wont to arouse.

Mrs. Delmar tried to drown in the vanity and gossip of her own select set, the fact that both son and daughter were beyond the reach of her worldly designs, and she schooled herself to look upon them with a sort of quiet scorn which she imagined to be more effective than a perpetual storm of words, and when Louise informed her of her intention to be Margaret's bridesmaid, she shrugged her shoulders, and laughed contemptuously; but when Eugene told her that he had planned a quiet European tour with his sister, directly after the marriage of their friends, in which tour she would be obliged to join, she raved once more in her olden way. She had just gathered about her the society she wished: she had no desire to accompany a couple of straight-laced, Puritanical hypocrites in a solemn expedition round the world. But neither had Eugene any desire to permit her to remain after them, to indulge without restraint the follies in which she delighted; so he firmly, but respectfully informed her of his intention to withdraw all financial support from her should she refuse to make the tour, and the baffled, disappointed woman sunk down into her usual miserable position of tears.

Happy Margaret! Never had days passed so sweetly and delightfully, never had love bestowed such meed of joy before.

The wedding was to be quiet and simple; the ceremony to be performed by Father Germain at their own residence, directly after which the young couple were to take a trip to their old Louisiana home. Madame Bernot was so well that they could leave her without anxiety for a few days.

The case of Clare, alias Plowden, which no one looked for more eagerly than Miss Lydia Lounes, never appeared on any calendar of the city courts, and that lady considered herself especially disappointed and aggrieved by the bungling and mysterious manner in which the press after a long silence spoke of that interesting gentleman. The truth was that "Roquelare" had ways of its own for hoodwinking even such a potent body as the Press, and for causing a belief to become current that "Roquelare" itself had dealt summary vengeance on the true murderer of Cecil Clare.

When Miss Lounes heard that report she recorded it in her journal, while she dropped a few secret, very secret tears.

"They have killed him at last—that dear, distinguished lawyer who won my tender affections, and in whose grave my poor, weary heart longs to repose."

On one of the happy days of preparation for the wedding, Hugh Marburd



**BANKRUPTCY**

—of the physical being is the result of drawing incessantly upon the reserve capital of nerve force. The wear, tear and strain of modern life are concentrated upon the nervous system. The young men of our day become sufferers from nervous debility or exhaustion, nervous prostration or weakness. This may be the result of too much mental worry and excitement, or the result of bad practices and excesses, or pernicious habits, contracted in youth, through ignorance. They feel irritable, weak and nervous with such distressing symptoms as headache, dizziness, shooting pains in head or chest, sometimes indigestion. The middle-aged men, as well, suffer from exhaustion, loss of mainly power, low spirits, impaired memory, and many derangements of mind and body. The ill-used brain is morbidly wide awake when the overworked business man attempts to find rest in bed.

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and his mother were announced, and a joyful meeting followed.

The poor old lady was much enfeebled as if from long suffering, but she was garrulous with all the privilege of her age. She would recount minutely all that she had suffered during the time that she had been kept from her son, how that enforced separation was the cause of the painful, tedious illness which had attacked her directly that she had been permitted to join Hugh, and owing to which illness, neither she nor her son had been able to call sooner on the Bernots as they had desired and intended to do.

Then she would have Hugh repeat to Hubert what he had told herself after he knew that Hubert was not guilty—how, when the young men were traveling together, and sometimes in crowded hotels were obliged to occupy the same bed, Hubert had spoken in his sleep of a crime which stained his soul—how Hugh remembered that, when he saw Bernot's name appear in the first investigation of Cecil Clare's murder, and the suspicion which these two facts aroused, led him to preserve and bring home the papers which his mother had found, and which had caused her such perplexity—how, when the pretended Mr. Conyer came with his strange inquiries, and stranger communications, Hugh fancied he understood it all—that Hubert was guilty of some crime, and that Mr. Conyer was a detective on his track. Hugh would not write to Hubert lest his friend should become startled, and if he had committed a crime, betray himself by his very fears, and Hugh had not answered satisfactorily the inquiries his mother used to make, because he deemed it best to keep very secret everything he himself knew, or suspected, lest it might come to the detective's knowledge.

And when everything had been explained to the old lady's satisfaction, even to the fact that the telegram desiring her presence in the city, and supposed to have been sent by Hugh, had been only another of Bernot's diabolical machinations, and when the young men had warmly grasped hands and had pledged each other's friendship over brimming glasses of rare old wine, and when Madame Bernot had spoken tearfully her thanks to stanch, true Hugh, and Margaret crying and smiling in the same minute was pressing the old lady's hands, then Mrs. Marburd leaned back in her chair and with high sobbed from excess of joyful emotion.

Madame Bernot and her son would have detained the Murburds until the wedding day, which was now hardly a week distant, but the old lady was anxious for her home, from which she had been absent so long; the utmost that pressing solicitation could effect was the prolongation of their visit until the next day, but Hugh promised to return for the ceremony.

Below stairs there were hearts no less happy than those above; there were preparations for a joyful event no less delightful than those making by Madame Bernot and Margaret.

Annie Corbin as Margaret's maid was to accompany the young lady on her bridal tour, and John McNamee with the anxiety of an ardent Irish lover as he was, fearing the effect of even that short absence on the affections of his sweetheart, importuned that their marriage should take place a day or two before, that appointed for Miss Calvert's. His request was warmly seconded by Hannah Moore, and the seething little maid unable to withstand so many entreaties, put her hand into John's great fist, and faltered "yes," and then ran away to hide her happy, blushing embarrassment.

Madame Bernot on learning that, ordered that everything should be done which could contribute to the festivity of the event, and the help were all in a state of delightful anticipation. Hannah Moore sighed only for twenty pairs of arms, that she might do twenty things at the same time; and "Little Sam" experienced constantly a most unaccountable inclination to cut a number of capers on the kitchen floor, but he did not permit the temptation to interfere with his duties, and he performed all the cook's errands in so satisfactory a manner that she invariably addressed him with:

"Sam, you're a jewel!"

On the day preceding the evening on which Annie Corbin was to become Mrs. McNamee, Sam was out on one of his numerous little commissions; and while his little slender legs did their duty in the way of quick, important steps, his head was no less busy. It constantly turned to assure itself that people were looking at Samuel Lewis, who was such an important person in the Bernot household, and it held itself attracted by this little specimen of frail humanity, how fully it was aware of its own importance.

But the little slender legs came to a sudden stop, and the elevated head held itself very stationary, for just in front was a small crowd of streeturchins in a cracked fiddle—a pale, thin, dirty, tattered man, who played some melancholy strain, and smiled—a very ghost of a smile—on the boys who seemed to listen admiringly.

The little under waiter drew nearer, and the man with the fiddle saw him; he stopped playing suddenly, while a faint color came into his face, and putting his instrument under his arched coat he was moving off. Then little Sam was sure that the poor fiddler was Magnus Liverspin, and his heart was touched at the apparent poverty and distress of the once traveling comedian. He walked after the tattered man, and touched him lightly on the shoulder, whereupon Liverspin turned, and the faint color in his face became a deep crimson.

"You're Liverspin—ain't you?"—said Sam, very softly and kindly.

The tattered man nodded, and then said, huskily:

"Go away—I don't want to see you. I never wanted to see you any more after I played that game on you."

"But you're poor," said little Sam, softer and kinder still, "and perhaps I can help you."

The tattered man turned away his head, and did not speak, and little Sam waited, repeating his last remark when he had waited a minute or more, but repeating it so softly and kindly that Liverspin broke down and wept like a child.

"It's the first word of kindness I've heard in many a day," he said; "and it's broken me down. I am poor. I haven't tasted food to-day yet."

Little Sam grasped the tattered man's arm. "Come home with me and we'll give you a good meal of victuals anyway, and after that we'll see what else we can do, forgetting everything but the present suffering of the object before him."

Liverspin shrank from the proffer. "I can't meet them—your fellow-servants—and they knowing the spy I was."

"Tut, tut, man; they'll forgive you when they know as you're sorry, and when they see your present poverty."

And linking within his own arm the tattered man, who made but little more, and that a feeble, resistance, the magnanimous under-waiter marched off, followed by a couple of the streeturchins, who begged for another of "Them 'ere tunes, Mister."

"Little Sam's" magnanimity extended to the length of not asking a single question calculated to discover how the once jolly Liverspin came to be in his present deplorable condition.

"For," argued Sam with himself, "he's weak and hungry, and I'll just let him be until he has one good feed."

That generous resolution however, did not prevent him from detailing in prosy length to his dirty companion all the good and wonderful luck which had befallen the Bernot family, and his own delightful anticipations of the happy time there would be at John McNamee's wedding that evening.

Arrived at the house, he stealthily ushered Liverspin into a waiting-room, while he undertook to acquaint Hannah Moore with all that had happened.

It was a little difficult at first to enlist the good woman's sympathies as readily as "Little Sam" desired to do, for her old indignation at "Divilspin," as she would persist in calling him, roused at the very mention of his name; but when the little under-waiter induced her to take a peep at the poor tattered creature warming his hands before the register, and when, after her introduction to him, he looked on the point of again breaking down as he had done under "Little Sam's" kindness, her compassion was as fully enlisted as that of the little under-waiter. And her kindness was not satisfied until it had imparted itself to her fellow-servants, so that Liverspin after partaking of, as Hannah expressed it, "Just a bit to keep the life in him until I get him a good meal," found himself taken to a bath room, and provided with such garments from the wardrobe of the male help as seemed most suitable, so that when he returned to the kitchen he looked, in the language of Miss Moore:

"At least sweet and clean."

He ate with a voracity which he vainly tried to conceal, the substantial meal Hannah had prepared for him, and when the last bit had disappeared down his eager throat, and he had washed it down with a copious draught of the servants' own table ale, he said, with a grateful air that went to the cook's heart:

"I don't deserve what you've all done for me, but I'm thankful for it, and I'll keep the remembrance of it here till my dying day," laying his hand on his heart with a pathetic motion.

"The one that ought to do it, in consideration of my services in his behalf, refused, when he found he wouldn't need me any more, and that was Bernot. When I left the court-room after giving my evidence, some strange man picked a quarrel with me and I was arrested; and after that came the things that left my health as broken down as you see it. I wish I could tell you what I went through while 'Roquelare' had me, but I can't, only it was horrible"—he shuddered, and his pale face seemed to grow still paler—"and they kept me, and made me go through frightful things till they'd be sure I'd never divulge what I witnessed when they were examining Bernot and me. They didn't make me a member; they didn't put any mark on me and that was the mischief of it; for if they had they'd be bound to help me then. When at last they let me go I was too ill from fright, and what I had undergone, to practice my old profession, and somehow, I failed to get employment at anything. I went to Bernot, but he wouldn't see me when I sent in my name, and so things went on from bad to worse till it came to the starving trifles I could earn with this," touching the cracked violin that lay on a chair near him.

The most incredulous could not have doubted his story, nor the most callous-hearted fail to have been touched by the pathos in his tones; so one and all hands of the sympathetic help were extended to him, and one and all were sincere in their offers to assist Magnus Liverspin to a future course of honest industry. Their kindness even went so far as to invite him to be present at the festivity of the evening, when he rose to depart, and he accepted the invitation.

That evening—the merry, delightful evening, when true Irish mirth, and genuine Irish wit shone forth in all their simple honesty; its memory could never be effaced from their minds even when the changes of years had found them other and separate homes.

There were ardent congratulations to pretty Mrs. McNamee, and toasts and songs, and songs and toasts, and then more ardent congratulations—there were pleasant tales, and pathetic tales told, the latter however, always with a happy ending, and there were witty anecdotes related, such as would have done credit to the best spirits of a much higher grade of society.

"Little Sam" was toasted for the manner in which he had "bamboozled" the great lawyer, and he was called upon to respond in a speech, and "Little Sam" rose, trying to assume an appearance of pompous dignity, but he was very shaky about the legs, and very watery about the eyes, and after a quavering:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm proud this night to have the honor—to have the honor—I say I'm proud this night to have the honor," sank into his seat being quite overcome by his feelings. But that was nothing, for everybody applauded, and the pompous head-waiter declared that Mr. Samuel Lewis was a "trump."

And Miss Moore sang, and then requested the company to drink the health of Mr. Plowden, or rather Mr. Frederick Clare, to show that everybody wished even the lawyer well; and then she told them how he had gone beyond the seas to be a holy monk, and for that reason alone everybody should wish him "God-speed;" and Miss Moore's heart was gladdened by the evident sincerity with which the toast was promptly drunk.

And Kreble, whom Madame Bernot still retained, though having no essential need of her services, sang in her own language a ballad of "Faderland" hoping when she had concluded—

"Das was agreeable to de company," upon which every one broke into renewed applause, and the broad, red face grew broader with good-natured smiles, and redder from happy blushes.

Then Liverspin performed on a violin which had been procured for him, and which was not cracked, Irish airs that alternately set the feet of his listeners into uncontrollable motion, and made their hearts thrill with the exquisite memories of loved Old Ireland.

But the last, last toast which was drunk, almost the last, last words that were spoken ere the happy party separated, was a repetition of the beloved names which had been the first mentioned that evening, and everybody stood up, and everybody drank with refreshing zest to the

"Long life, happiness, and prosperity of Mr. Bernot and Miss Calvert, soon to be Mrs. Bernot."

**A DARK DRAMATIST.**

"Gentleman to see you, sir."

"Who is it?"

"He won't give no name, sir, but he says his business is most pressin' and pertik'lar. I told him you was engaged, but he would take no denial."

"Confound the fellow," said Mr. Quillet, throwing down his pen. "I'm busy. I can't possibly see him. Where have you left him, Jane?"

"In the hall, sir."

"I say, you ought not to have done that. Ten to one he's some thieving fellow after the hats and umbrellas. But you girls from the country!"

Mr. Quillet did not complete his sentence, for at that minute a tall, dark man walked calmly into the room, and after bowing to the astonished owner of the house, with the blandest and most self-possessed of smiles, said, suavely:

"I wish to see you in private, sir."

Jane, the housemaid, seeing threatenings of a storm upon her master's face, and not caring to wait its outbreak, thought it discreet to take the visitor's hint. So she slipped hurriedly out of the room. Mr. Quillet and the intruder stood facing each other.

"Pray, sir, to what am I indebted for the honor of this call?" demanded Mr. Quillet, glaring at the stranger through his eyeglasses.

"Permit me to explain?" asked the other, with a smile and a bow.

"I will trouble you, sir, to be as brief as possible," said Mr. Quillet, impatiently. "My time is valuable, and I cannot afford to waste it. Now, then, what is it you want?"

"I see it stated in the *Referee*, Mr. Quillet, that you are writing a tragedy for production at the *Erectheum*. May I ask you, sir, if that statement is correct?"

"You may ask," replied Mr. Quillet, freezing, "but whether I give you an answer or not is another matter. I must first request that you have the goodness to explain in what way my literary engagements concern you, sir."

"They—or rather this particular one—concern me very nearly, as I shall soon show you. I wonder now, sir, whether this tragedy of yours is yet completed."

"Upon my word," retorted Mr. Quillet, drawing himself up, "I must really decline to gratify your curiosity."

"Well, it is of no great moment," said the other. "Let me put it to you in this way: You are writing, or have written—it does not matter which—a tragedy for the production at the *Erectheum*. It may be a strong tragedy; it may be a weak one. But, whatever its quality, I can put into

your hands a original work of my own, compared with which yours, sir, will read as weak as pap!"

"You are too flattering, sir, upon my word," gasped Mr. Quillet, astounded, as well he might be, by the fellow's brazen assurance.

The play of which I speak," continued the stranger, disregarding Mr. Quillet's sarcasm, and producing a roll of manuscript from his pocket, "is this. I wrote it myself from first to last. And I venture to assert that it is one of the most powerful tragedies that have ever been written in the English tongue."

The stranger spoke so earnestly, and with such a genuine conviction of the truth of his own words, that Mr. Quillet, who was a kind-hearted man as bottom, experienced a sort of revulsion in his feeling. His sense of anger at the fellow's presumption gave way to a sense of pity, mingled with contempt. It was evident that the man was one of that—alas! too numerous—band of amateurs who are bitten with the tragic muse, and cheat themselves into the belief that their miserable productions are something phenomenal. How many of this class there are—aye, and how impossible it is to disillusionize them!—only managers and dramatic authors really know.

Mr. Quillet therefore checked the withering retort that rose to his lips. Now that he realized the class of mortal he had to deal with, and saw that he was an object for pity rather than for anger, he adopted a more affable tone. No doubt a little judicious humoring would be the quickest way to get rid of him.

"Ah, well," he said, "you wish me to read your play, I gather? I am very busy and cannot attend to it now, but if you will leave your manuscript here, together with your name and address, I shall be pleased to glance through it at my leisure and return it to you with my opinion upon it."

The stranger smiled knowingly and shook his head.

"No, no!" he answered. "You must excuse me, Mr. Quillet, but really I know the time of day, sir. Would you look at it if I left it here? Not you. It has been returned by all six as unsuitable. But not one of them had read it. That I know very well, for I gummed the sheets together here and there as a test, and when the manuscript came back, the gum was still undisturbed."

"Well, look here," ejaculated Mr. Quillet, growing angry again, "what the devil do you want, sir? You don't expect me to read your confounded play here and now do you?"

"No, I do not," was the urbane reply.

"Then what in the name of heaven do you expect?"

"I expect you to listen while I read the play aloud to you," the stranger returned, folding his arms and regarding Mr. Quillet with the calmest of stares.

The latter's patience was utterly broken down by the cool impertinence of the demand.

"We have had enough of this, sir," said Mr. Quillet, wittingly. "I must wish you good day. There is the door."

The stranger drew himself up to his full height, his tall powerful frame quite dwarfing the insignificant proportions of Mr. Quillet.

"I shall decline to move, sir," he said, coolly, "until you have acceded to my request."

"This is monstrous—outrageous," gasped Mr. Quillet. "In my own house! I'll—I'll summon the police. I'll—"

"None of that, please," said the stranger, quickly interposing himself as the other made a movement toward the bell rope. "Don't provoke me. I am dangerous when aroused. In this matter I intend to have my way. Come Mr. Quillet, be reasonable. I offer you a compromise. Listen while I read the first act (it is very short), and if at the end you really wish to hear no more I'll take up my papers and leave the house without another word."

Mr. Quillet was speechless and stood panting with indignation. But the tall, devil-may-care looking stranger, with his flashing eyes and determined face, frightened our nervous little friend more than he would have cared to admit.

"Come," continued the other. "Is it a bargain?"

"It is absolutely scandalous," retorted Mr. Quillet, inwardly resolving to follow the stranger as soon as he left the house and give him in charge at once. "If you persist in this outrage, I'll take care that you regret it."

"I do persist," he answered with a careless laugh. "I'll chance the consequences. Pray take a seat while I am reading. Act the first!"

Glaring on the bold intruder, with glances of impotent wrath, Mr. Quillet sank back in his arm chair. He would have summoned assistance by shouting out, but he was deterred from this by two considerations—first, that the stranger looked every inch the man to resort to personal violence; second, that it would have made himself appear in a rather ridiculous light. No; the safer as well as the more dignified course was to remain quiet for the present and give him in charge the moment he left the house. On that course Mr. Quillet most firmly resolved.

The stranger unfolded his roll of manuscript and began to read, taking no notice at all of the other's sulky scowl. The fellow's voice was musical and expressive enough, Mr. Quillet was forced to admit to himself. And the tragedy—well, there was something in it, after all. At the end of five minutes the enforced listener had for-

gott... scowl. he was intent and end of thirty. minated, he was "Shall I leave the stranger, 'no ready, you know pact."

"Go on—go with a wave of of anger and re. It was evident fr his face and fro that he was a pr than those pro ordinary play.

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fully. "V I have long All I desire dued. In prout, I ca "But, res "I—" "Pish— but. Wit faith, I n while its s eous to yo to accept— less squea chance."

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"No look. partic I can learn the pr tity co He hurri