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A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE: OR, WHO WAS GUILTY?

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

CHAPTER XXII.

"Roquelare" did resign Hubert Bernot's case; and men, whom fear of that society had deterred from offering their aid before, now volunteered their influence in the young man's behalf. There was not wanting even high judicial power to effect Hubert's speedy release, so that in a few days there was a brief trial on which it was shown that Hubert Bernot was in no way the cause of Cecil Clare's death; that the cut he had given was done in self defence, the murdered man having recognized Hubert because of his strong resemblance to his deceased brother, Maurice, and the prisoner was acquitted, on which a storm of applause burst forth, and congratulations, and handshaking were administered to young man in a very promiscuous and democratic fashion.

His mother and Margaret accompanied by Dr. Darant who might insist still that his services might be needed, waited for him in a private room, and fond and ardent were their embraces and congratulations.

At last Madame Bernot, leaning on her son's arm, and accompanied by Margaret, descended to visit the servants, and tears of joy were shed by those good souls as in turn they courted, and took her proffered hand, and offered their simple and heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Hubert. Then the three took their way to the dining-room, where it was so strange, and so happy to have Madame presiding at the table, and where the heart of each was so full, that but a pretence was made of eating.

Their ignorance of Plowden's fate was the only cloud upon their happiness. Father Germain had made constant and persistent inquiries, but he elicited only very vague and varying information.

The press, particularly the sensational press—which had devoted columns to the trial of Hubert Bernot, now pretended to inform the public that Frederick Clare, alias Charles Plowden, was in a certain prison awaiting his trial, but those who bore the insignia of "Roquelare," knew that it was no ordinary prisoner which confined the murderer of Cecil Clare.

Later in the day Eugene Dolmar came to testify his honest joy, and to Margaret's inquiry, why his sister had not accompanied him, he gave some faltering and insufficient excuse, which Miss Calvert charitably construed into meaning that Louise still hesitated to meet one to whom she had made such a frank confession.

But Margaret was mistaken. Louise, owing to the unmistakable assurance of welcome in Margaret's reply to her own penitent note, had no hesitation to meet Hubert—she had not yet succeeded in quite dislodging his image from her heart; the mere mention of his name still had power to make her thrill, and when her brother had rather insisted that she should accompany him on his visit to the Bernots, she put her hand in his and said coaxingly:

"You understand it all, Eugene: make some excuse for me."

Eugene and Hubert together detailed every practical plan for the discovery and the aiding of Plowden, and when the young men separated it was

MOTHERS

recovering from the illness attending child-birth, or who suffer from the effects of disorders, derangements and displacements of the woman's organs, will find relief and a permanent cure in Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription. Taken during pregnancy, the "Prescription" makes CHILD BIRTH EASY by preparing the system for parturition, thus assisting Nature and shortening "labor." The painful ordeal of child-birth is robbed of its terrors, and the dangers thereof greatly lessened, to both mother and child. The period of confinement is also greatly shortened, the mother strengthened and built up, and an abundant secretion of nourishment for the child promoted. If

THE MARRIED WOMAN

be delicate, run-down, or overworked, it worries her husband as well as herself. This is the proper time to build up her strength and cure those weaknesses, or ailments, which are the cause of her trouble. Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription dispels aches and pains, melancholy and nervousness, brings refreshing sleep and makes a new woman of her.

Mrs. ABRAHAM LYON, of Lawrence, Jefferson Co., N. Y., writes: "I had been suffering from ulceration and fulling of the womb, for several years, or since the birth of my youngest child. I consulted all the physicians around here and they gave me no help for me. At last, almost discouraged, I began taking Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription and took five bottles. It is three years since and I have not had any return of the trouble. I feel very grateful, and in fact, owe my life for I do not think I should have been alive now if I had not taken your medicine."

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with the mutually avowed determination to leave no means untried which should ensure their success.

Weeks passed, and the search was as fruitless as when it first began. The marriage of Hubert and Margaret was delayed until something definite could be learned of the lawyer, for the lovers thought it would be somewhat heartless to consummate their own happy union while his fate remained so uncertain, and apparently so dark.

But Hubert grew impatient at last, and Margaret urged:

"Only a few weeks longer."

The Bernot servants had their customary social evening assemblies, and they had celebrated Mr. Hubert's release with full Irish fervor; but Hannah Moore had neither taken part with her wonted spirit, nor did she perform her daily tasks with her wonted cheerfulness. "Little Sam," as if by that means alone he could testify his gratitude for past kindness, tried to imitate the melancholy of the cook; and he succeeded so well that not even the complimentary allusions which the help still occasionally made to his assistance in court, seemed to rouse him from his sad and somber mien.

Warm-hearted Hannah Moore was sorrowful with thoughts of "Mr. Frederick." She summoned courage to ask Miss Calvert about the lawyer, and emboldened by the kind, sympathetic manner in which Margaret replied, she poured forth the tale which already she had told her fellow servants, adding:

"His mother was so fond of me that it seems as if I ought to be near him for her sake when he is in such trouble. Maybe he's sick and wants nursing, and has only the hand of the cold stranger about him."

"Maybe he is, Hannah," was the troubled reply, "and that is why we are all so anxious, and trying so hard to find out where he is; and just so soon as we learn anything about him, you shall know."

"God bless you, Miss," was the grateful response.

But the weeks wore on: even the "few weeks more," for which Margaret had urged, without gaining any tidings, and even Madame Bernot, whose wonderfully-restored health still continued, advocated the uselessness of a longer delay of Hubert and Margaret's marriage.

"One more month," Margaret coaxed. "Strange as it may seem, I have a stronger feeling than ever, that we shall see him soon; and the postponement of our marriage until we shall have learned definite news of him, will seem as a proof of our regard."

The pleading girl won her way, though Hubert with a sort of tender sternness, stipulated that it should be the very last postponement.

The press had ceased to have even a desultory word concerning the lawyer, and morning after morning the lady who had envied Margaret because of Plowden's attentions, threw down the paper in bitter disappointment. Why was there not something about the lawyer's impending trial, as there used to be about that of Hubert Bernot?

Now that Miss Calvert was known to be betrothed to Hubert—Mrs. Dolmar had long since scornfully promulgated that fact in fashionable circles—this silly creature of uncertain age vainly would storm the citadel of the handsome lawyer's heart with her own faded charms. Murderer though he was, Miss Lydia Lounes felt that she could magnanimously lay her heart and fortune at his feet, providing that horrid "Roquelare," did not secretly assassinate him, or the laws of the country put a rope about his neck before the performance of the marriage ceremony.

On the last of the chill autumnal evenings, just four months after sighing about the house in true, dishevelled fashion, when the wind wanted gusts of rain poured down at intervals, a quick, sharp ring sounded at the street door. Margaret, who was crossing the hall, answered the summons, and admitted a tall, manly figure, so muffled up—either as protection from the weather, or to serve as a disguise—that but little of his features could be seen, and that seemed quite unknown to her.

He spoke, and she recognized with a glad cry which brought both Hubert and his mother from the parlor, Plowden, or rather Frederick Clare.

They drew him further into the light of the hall, Hubert and she, and they joyfully pulled the muffler from his face.

"Not hated, then, after all," he said huskily, and for an answer Margaret pressed one of his hands, while Hubert warmly shook the other.

They drew him into the parlor, and when he had shaken hands with Madame Bernot—who immediately retired, ostensibly to order a repast, but really to give the young people an opportunity for any secret confidence they might desire to impart—and was seated, they noted more closely, and with new surprise, the sad changes which had been wrought in his appearance: he was pale and emaciated to a pitiful degree, with deep lines in his forehead and about his mouth, that never had been there before. Margaret could have wept at the too apparent evidence of his suffering, and even Hubert's face wore a grave, sad look, and his voice took a tender tone, as he said:

"Answer one question first—have you escaped from prison?"

Clare faintly smiled.

"No; they have let me go," shuddering as if some terrible memory was connected with the words, and then he pulled out his watch and said he had not long to stay.

"Not long to stay," echoed Margaret in dismay, while Hubert in surprise

asked the reason; but Clare, without answering, turned to Margaret:

"Your happiness has been completed long before this, so that my congratulations come late; but still, accept them Mrs. Bernot."

Margaret drew back, blushing hotly, while Hubert rising, said hurriedly:

"We waited to know your fate—: you who have been the cause of the happiness Margaret would not accept until we should learn something definite about you—she is not Mrs. Bernot yet."

"It is enough," he said. "I am strong now for the future since I know that not only am I not hated, but that I have been regarded by you both with something like affection."

"When I came to-night it was for the purpose of assuring myself that you had forgiven me the wrong which kept you two so long apart, to beg your prayers, and then without saying more, to bid you a long farewell. But I owe it now to your regard for me, to tell you, as much as I may, of a life which has only begun to pursue a right course; and I owe it to the kindness of one who has helped to place me on that course, to tell how her influence, unconsciously to herself, has performed a good work."

"You heard, in common with the charitable public," there was a little of the old sarcasm in his tones—"the tale of my birth, and the desire for revenge with which my boyish years were filled. My mother—his voice changed suddenly to touching tenderness—could only look on and weep that her influence was powerless to subdue that determination in my character which was to prove so fatal to myself and to others. From my first meeting with Cecil Clare, when he cast foul aspersions on my gentle mother, my desire for revenge—for vengeance for her wrongs—grew until it would yield to no power. From that time I dropped the name of Frederick Clare, and adopted that of Charles Plowden. Plowden had been once a much venerated name in my mother's family, and she had caused it to be added to Frederick in baptism, so that I was christened Frederick Plowden Clare. But I would have no name of my father's, and neither my mother nor uncle made much opposition when I declared my determination to sign myself in future, Charles Plowden. Only my mother would call me Frederick Clare at home. Clare was her name she said, and I would not seem her son if she could not call me by my own name. I did not oppose her, for it made little difference as I had no friends to come to the house."

"My uncle's constant companionship left me little wish for other associates, so that I was almost completely unknown, and at liberty to change my name without question or remark. Once I was offered a position that would help me to the pinnacle my ambition desired, but there were terms annexed to the voluntary gift which would require a renunciation of the practice of my Faith. I promised to accept in defiance of my mother's frantic entreaties. I did not deny that I was a Catholic. I even promptly avowed my religion when occasion required, but I went no more to Mass, and for the sacraments, I had ceased to frequent those from the time of my first meeting with Cecil Clare.

"My uncle was a member of "Roquelare." His natural and acquired intellectual gifts, his superior talent in his profession, his wise judgment, his keen penetration into human motives, all had conspired to raise him to the very highest degree of that society. Unmarried himself, my mother, several years his junior, was the only creature he loved, and for her sake his love for me became the one passionate, absorbing affection of his life. When she died, and he accompanied me on my search for the Clares, it was for the purpose of preventing any rash act of mine, not of permitting me to commit one. But when the deed was done, and under his own eye, and he knew that as a member of "Roquelare" he was bound to surrender me to justice, he fell into a pitiable state of remorse and terror. His terror was augmented by the thought that if he failed to give me up, some other member of "Roquelare" might discover my crime, set the society on my track, and because of his near relation to me, might even ferret him out, and compel him to bear witness against me.

"I was exultant—the revenge which had been my sole thought for years, was now accomplished, the man who had heaped such foul aspersions on my mother was lying dead by my hand. I thought of nothing else, and I felt neither terror nor remorse until we turned from the spot—then, the dead body seemed to pursue me. I drank brandy when we reached home, and I plied my uncle with the same, until we both fell into a heavy, drunken sleep.

"The next day I looked steadily at my position, and I had to acknowledge to myself, that, brave as I had been in the attainment of my revenge, I was not brave enough to face the consequences—I, who had taken a human life, shattered at the thought of death for myself.

"We had assured ourselves that there were no earthly witness of my crime, and we watched for the comments of the press on the dastardly deed. I saw the account of Miss Calvert's visit to the morgue, how it was considered an important clue, and I at once formed my determination. I would announce myself as a friend of the murdered man—my knowledge of his antecedents would enable me easily to do so—and having been admitted previously to legal practice in the city, I would take up his case. I fancied

that such a course must be a sure means of averting every shadow of suspicion from myself. I did not know then how Miss Calvert was connected with the Hubert Bernot about whom the murdered man had drunkenly raved; but from her manner during the examination, I concluded that she had some fear, some anxiety, as it were, to conceal, and simply, to test her, and to prove the truth or falsity of my own suspicion, I charged her with a knowledge of Cecil Clare's murder. The result proved the truth of my conjecture; but it also somewhat puzzled me. I was the murderer, then why her fear, her anxiety for some one whom she evidently believed to be guilty.

"In order to ascertain as much as possible about her, my uncle, in the disguise of a beggar, called at this house, and was admitted, as he expected to be, for charity's sake. He recognized in one of the servants the attendant to whom my mother had been much attached, and she recognized him, despite his disguise; but she understood the secret motion he made for silence as to his identity, and she obeyed him. He asked sundry, and apparently, careless questions, which, however, drew from another of the servants many particulars about the family who occupied the house, and on his departure the domestic whom he had recognized, accompanied him to the door, probably for some explanation of his strange disguise. But he deemed it best to say nothing.

"When he detailed to me the particulars he had learned, and I heard the name of Hubert Bernot, we knew that it was the same Hubert Bernot mentioned by the murdered man, and, connecting all the circumstances, I arrived at what eventually proved to be the truth: that you—looking at Hubert—imagined yourself to be the murderer of Clare, and that you had made a confident of Miss Calvert. I exited at my discovery. I could now forever avert earthly suspicion from myself. I could work up the case on that knowledge, even though an innocent man should hang for my crime. Success would bring me honor, in my profession; and for any fear, for any remorse, save that of having my guilt discovered, I had none.

"I bared my plan to my uncle. Though, like myself, a Catholic only in name, he was appalled at my proposition, and he endeavored to make me forego at least my determination, to prosecute an innocent man. But I who had scorned a mother's entreaties, found little difficulty in contending his. He shut himself in his room, feigning illness, lest going abroad an accidental word, or look might betray anything to "Roquelare," and he remained thus secluded, until I told him I had dropped the case because of my recognition by Hannah Moore and her implied threat to tell something of other people which I alone understood. I feared that she might tell, notwithstanding her promise to my dead mother, all that she knew about me, and that my own tears might lead to the discovery of my crime.

"I became as anxious for the speedy termination of the case as I had been for its prosecution, and I described Madame Bernot's pitiable condition in order to foil Berton's efforts for her examination. The particulars which my uncle had learned during his visit in the guise of a beggar, enabled me to give that description, as well as other details which must have surprised Miss Calvert.

"I felt relieved when I found that no testimony of any value had been obtained from Madame Bernot, and that at last the case had been dropped. Then, my uncle told me of the resolution which he had formed: unable to endure longer his intense fear of "Roquelare," since he had made himself amenable to its utmost rigor, and loving me too well to betray me, he had determined to shut himself forever from the world. He had already an interview with the Superior of a religious house, during which he solicited an asylum in order to elude the vengeance of a secret society which he intended to abjure: if permitted a home with the Religious without being required to join the Order, he promised to endow the house with a considerable portion of his wealth. When assured that he was a Catholic and in need of their spiritual aid, his request was granted.

"On the last night that we spent together before he went to his new home, he disclosed to me as much about "Roquelare" as he dared to do, because that knowledge might help me should I ever be dogged by any member of the society. I would have become a member long before, but in that case I should have been obliged to forsake even the slightest intention of private revenge. My uncle gave me also certain details relating to one or two who occupied high place in the society, and who might, in the strange future, sit in judgment on my crime, should it ever be discovered. One of these was Berton, whose character my relative long before had thoroughly read; and when he described to me the ambition of that character, the desire to mount in the society at any cost, I treasured up his words.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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A Story of the Child Jesus.

Some children, all whose joy it is And bear what once, in days of faith, In England came to pass.

It chanced a priest was journeying Through dark and gloomy wood, And there, where few came passing by, A lonely chapel stood.

He stayed his feet, that pilgrim priest, His morning Mass to say; And out the sacred vestments on Which near the altar lay.

But who shall serve the holy Mass, For all is silent there? He kneels and there in patience waits The peasants' hour of prayer:

When, lo! a Child of wondrous grace For once to serve at holy Mass And down beside the lowly priest The Infant gently kneels.

He serves the Mass—His voice is sweet, Like distant music low With downcast eyes Mas' ready hand, And tuffal lushed and slow.

"Et carum caro factum est." He lingers till he hears, Then, turning round to Mary's shrine, In glory disappears.

So round the altar, children dear, Press gladly in God's name, For once to serve at holy Mass The Infant Jesus came.

ONE IN A MILLION.

A Christmas Tale.

John Patrick Brennan in the Catholic Universe.

"Seventy-five cents for Doc Jones' old nag,—seventy-five from four dollars—three and a quarter. Say, Gertrude, I've got three and quarter more," and Paul Gaiman strode into the cheery sitting-room, overcoat, cap, rubber boots, mud and all.

"For mercy's sake, Paul," exclaimed his sister, eyeing the mud, "just look at the carpet! I don't care—it's a shame!"

"Whew!" ejaculated the lad, glancing at the footprints much after the manner of Robinson Crusoe, "I forgot. That ridge road is an awful mudpuddle."

With this exculpatory remark, Paul retired somewhat crestfallen to the woodshed, and began to scrape his boots. A moment later Gertrude appeared, carrying his shoes, and looking penitent. The lad straightway felt that he was being badly used after his long, tiresome ride on horseback over a muddy country road, and he at once assumed an injured air.

"Say, Paul," began his sister, soft, "I didn't mean to scold you, but you know we want that carpet to look nice, and it's near Christmas time, too. I'm glad you did so well. Are you very tired?"

"Not very," granted Paul, struggling with the left boot.

"Did you have any trouble in collecting the money," she asked, drawing her shawl more tightly about her head, for the air was biting cold.

"None, he didn't 'kick' a bit," returned the messenger, laconically.

"Isn't he a brother of the Mr. Skilling here?"

"Yes, he said so. Say, Gertrude, I'm hungry."

"Come on, then," she said, smiling, happy to think that the cloud had disappeared, "and I'll get something in the kitchen."

Paul and Gertrude, aged respectively fourteen and sixteen, were two of a family of five children. Their father had died when the youngest was barely two years of age, leaving Mrs. Gaiman alone to face the toll of life.

The family could not by any stretch of the imagination be called wealthy. Yet they found means to enjoy some of the less common comforts of life. Paul was a sturdy, manly lad of resolute will, and more than average talent. He had quitted the parochial school a few months previous to the opening of this narrative, with the fixed determination of making something of himself: what that something was, or would be, he could not surmise. But he would make a start, and the only situation open to a boy in his village—the only one promising quick promotion and substantial rewards—was that of telegraph messenger. For in six or seven months a messenger was transformed into a telegrapher, and constant work was assured. He had now been studying the mysteries of the Morse alphabet for nearly four months and could "write" on the key with fair speed and accuracy. But "receiving" was quite a different thing. He found it extremely difficult to "take" more than fifteen words per minute. If he tried to break this record, he found to his dismay that he, nor the operator, nor the two hundred-pound agent, could read what he had written. The operator was wont to laugh at the result of these tests, while the fat, good natured agent would pat him on the head, and say: "Keep at it, Paul. You've time enough. When I was a student, and had been in the office two months, I couldn't distinguish one 'call' from another." But Paul refused to be comforted in every instance to be comforted, and it was only when his mother and sister, Gertrude and May, a miss of thirteen, talked him out of his repeated discouragements that he resumed his practice with renewed vigor. If he thought he could do anything, nothing could prevent him from doing it: if he imagined or felt convinced that a task was impossible, he gave it up at once. This was the key to his entire character, as it is, perhaps, to that of many men.

When he and Gertrude entered the kitchen they found May busily engaged in scouring the family set of silver knives and forks. She looked up in surprise, while Paul returned the look with interest. He was her ideal, and she doubted if any little girl in Weston had a more important and more promising brother.