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

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

CHAPTER XIX.

While the slenderous conference was going on, its innocent victim was attending to her usual duties...

"You are looking very ill, my child!" said Madame Bernot, when Margaret was bathing the poor helpless hands.

"No, no!" protested Margaret, trying immediately to infuse more animation into her countenance...

"You have not been out to day," continued the invalid, "take a walk for my sake."

In obedience to the request Margaret put on her outdoor garments and went listlessly forth...

In the middle of a crossing which she was about to pass, a small crowd was collected—some accident had happened to the driver of a vehicle...

A handsome carriage, stopped by the mishap, was drawn up, and the heads of two ladies were thrust from one of its windows.

Margaret perceived a slight opening in the swaying throng, and hurrying across found herself directly in front of the occupants of the carriage.

She looked up to meet Mrs. Delmar and her daughter, who were only then returning from the charitable conference...

"I am quite well, Margaret, but you annoy me by these constant attentions. I desire to be alone—alone—to have no one watching, or tracking me..."

But, alas! her very presence, the touch of her hand, the sound of her voice, roused with new ardor the love he sought to kill.

Margaret, far from interpreting aright his rude treatment of her, attributed it solely to the fear of arrest under which she fancied he labored.

She did not censure him: her sorrowful heart accused him of no ingratitude, it only bled for him and longed to comfort him...

"Poor fellow! his suffering is so sharp he does not know what he does."

tion of that solemn quietness seemed to promise something which would soothe her troubled soul.

The iron gate stood ajar as it had done on the previous occasion, and the church door was open, but there was no service going on.

Margaret knelt also, and buried her face in her hands, not through devotion, not even to murmur a wildly distracted prayer...

Hard, weather-beaten countenances, some of them were, but the lines of sin and care were softened in the peace with which they shone...

She turned her eyes to the life size picture of the Crucifixion above the altar. The waning daylight seemed to have concentrated all its fading beams on the painting.

One person alone remained to be heard, and Margaret, fearing that she too might be considered a penitent, rose to depart.

The last penitent was heard, and the priest, lifting his curtain, discerned the outlines of another kneeling form.

He dropped it quickly, and Margaret knew that he waited for her. On the sharp, sharp struggle of that minute—

The secret which had been kept so long was told at last: the burden that had pressed so sore and heavily was flung down...

When her whirling mind recovered its balance her first thought was that Hubert had been arrested, and that the Delmars had refused to recognize her because of her connection with such a criminal...

"What can it be?" she asked herself: not certainly the decision to withdraw from society, which she had announced to them that morning...

She was too much of a novice in the world's ways to know that the votaries of fashion will tolerate nothing among them which appears in a better mould than themselves...

But Margaret's sudden and unexpected withdrawal had demolished her plans—further, she even feared now that Margaret might influence her cousin against Louise...

Margaret, little dreaming of such an under-current of malice, sought vainly to explain the matter by a charitable course of reasoning with herself.

These were the thoughts which brought her such peace as she had not known for eighteen long months, and which so transfigured her face as to bring forth from Madame Bernot:

"You seem much better, child; I think your walk did you good."

"Much good," answered Margaret, and she busied herself in arranging the invalid's slight evening robes.

"Did ye ever see the like o' that, Father?" whispered Mrs. Brophy in deeply scandalized tones...

"Ah, ye young villain," began his mother, but Father Shehan checked her.

"Hush, now hush, my good woman. Tell me, Pat, do you think it is right to make fun of holy things?"

"Well done, Biddy! I hope you won't be often lonesome," said the priest with a smile...

"I wish ye could make a priest of him," said Father Shehan as he retraced his steps...

"Why, then, he is, yer reverence, he is," agreed the mother with the delightful inconsistency of her kind.

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with subdued eagerness, and his eyes looked wild and troubled.

"I have made your cousin my confidant," he said, in conclusion, "and I have his sanction, nay, his wish, expressed even this evening, to speak as I have done."

Margaret's heart gave a throb of pain—it was like a cruel shock for a moment to learn that Hubert could thus coolly dispose of her...

She answered Plowden kindly, even tenderly, but with a frankness which told him at once that his suit was fruitless.

"I understand you, Miss Calvert, and had I known before what I think I know now, I should not have subjected either of us to this ordeal."

"No, you have told me nothing; but I understand now, much that before this was unintelligible to me," and he looked gloomily at the floor.

Margaret's face blanched. Had he been all along suspecting Hubert's guilt, and had she unconsciously supplied a clew...

"Do not fear, I shall be the same to him that I have been—for the present, farewell!"

He caught her hands and held them so tightly for a moment that they ached from the pressure...

TO BE CONTINUED. FATHER PAT.

"I wish yer reverence 'ud spake to my little boy. Me heart's broke with him, so it is, an' I can't get any good of him at all."

"What has he been doing?" "Oh, I declare I'm ashamed to tell ye, sir, but he's always at it, an' he doesn't mind me a bit, though I do be tellin' him the earth'll maybe open some day an' swallow him up for his impudence."

"Dear, dear, this is a sad case. Where is the little rogue?" And Father Shehan swung himself off his big bony horse...

"I'd be loth to trouble yer reverence, but if ye'd step as far as the lane beyant, jerkin' yer thumb over her shoulder, 'ye'd see him at it."

She led the way, an odd little squat figure of a woman, the frill of her white cap flapping in the breeze...

Where a hole in the middle, through which he passed his curly head, supplemented his ordinary attire...

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an' sayin' Mass as well as I could."

"Well, well, don't cry, that's a good boy. Maybe you really will be saying Mass some day. Who knows? But you must be a very good boy—and you must not think you are a priest yet..."

Pat grinned gratefully through his tears, wrenched himself from his mother's grasp, and surrounded by his ragged followers, disappeared over the hedge.

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