
CHILD OF DESTINY

At dinner a feeling of rare good cheer prevailed. The Cardinal was in his element, and his fine witty sayings kept everyone in good humor. Poor Matt Pency laughed so heartily that he could scarcely perform his duties at the table. Aunt Hawkins confessed that she had not heard such genuine laughter for many a day. Sister Benita tried hard to throw a cloak over her feelings, and succeeded. She could not help thinking of her dead brother. How she wished that he might suddenly come to life and explain in person all the strange mystery! Her thoughts stole to Mad Nance and her startling confession, and she grew faint. Jerome, with Gracia at his side, felt that he was the richest man in all the world. He chatted briskly and his face beamed with smiles. To-morrow was to bring him the realization of all his fondest hopes; to-morrow he was to take Gracia to himself as wife. How his heart longed for the hour in which he could call her his forever! For weeks he had waited for the day. He had something to live for after all, something beautiful and precious that no one would ever dare to take from him.

After dinner all withdrew to the drawing-room. When they were comfortably seated, the Cardinal rose from his chair somewhat nervously, and motioned Sister Benita to his side. The nun obeyed. His Eminence whis-