CHILDREN OF DESTINY.

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A Novel by William J. Fischer. hor of "Songs by the Wayside," "Winon Other Stories," "The Toiler," "The Years' Between." etc. etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CARDINAL'S CHOICE.

ing to me." "It is not so with me. During the act of creating I am happy. I fairly long to see the pictures of my fancy come to life on the canvas, and yet when the Two months later Sister Benita was again seated in the plain convent recep-tion-room, indulging in quiet conversation with two callers. They were Gracia Gravenor and Jerome Chelsea. Love had drawn the hearts of the latter so work is done I am exhausted and ambitionless. I have had a busy winter and spring of it and I long to get out into closely together that they were thinking of a not far distant day which was to the open, far away from my workshop or a little while." I am sure a holiday would do you : bring them the realization of all their most hopeful wishes — that day into which could be crowded all life's end world of good. inte "I know it, sister, and I intend going away. I have almost decided to leave

Mother over-the little imp! However I should be glad to be with both of you on that day of days."

mentary silence an

There was a momentary silence and she continued: "I suppose you find your work very trying, Mr. Chelsea. I tire of the brush frequently, and very often the smell of paint is really nauseat-

morrow." "So soon?"

less years of sorrow and suffering. Only the day before Jerome had sent Sister Benita a beautiful picture as a "Yes, you see, I intend remaining away three weeks. This will leave me a week to prepare for the wedding." "And pray may I ask where you in-tend to cre?" gift to St. Agatha's. It was a picture of Christ as a child of six, sitting in a far-

Christ as a child of six, sitting in a far-off eastern garden of flowers and shad-ows, His Mother bending over him ten-derly, book in hand, teaching Him some little, helpful lesson, a look of hopeful yearning upon her noble face. "Thanks very much, Mr. Chelsea for that beautiful picture," the Sister said after a few minutes. "It was very good of you. We are all in love with it and tend to go?" "I am going to the Place O'Pines They say it is a pretty place." "You will not be disappointed. It is garden of roses. Were you ever there, sister?" after a few minutes. "It was very good of you. We are all in love with it and "Yes, years before I entered the convent I went there with my brother my pupils fairly rave over it. It is so life-like and original. We have set it and enjoyed the stay immensely. The scenery is perfect—a rare delight to an up in the art room where everyone can see it. The Cardinal, too, admired it this morning after Mass. He thought the artist's eye. It is summer all the year round at the Place O'Pines. Do you intend doing any sketching or painting idea a pretty one and asked me the artist's name. I told him and he ex-pressed a desire to meet you, Mr. Chelthere? "I do not, Sister. It would not b much of a rest for me then. But I in

"The Cardinal saw the picture?" Jerome asked. "And he liked it? Well, I'm so glad-the dear, old man. tend to do some hunting." "The pine woods are full of game. I remember when I was there hunting "Are you going alone, Mr. Chelsea?" "No. My good friend, Dick Freer It was very good of him to say so much. Do you know, Sister, I too would like to

meet His Eminence." "That can be arranged very easily. "" "That will be very nice indeed." We expect him for Benediction at 3. and, if he is not hurried, I will arrange with Reverend Mother for a meeting."

Just then the door opened and Graci-ntered, her face beaming with smiles. Sister Benita knew the Cardinal was Tis all settled Auntie, dear," sh exclaimed taking the nun's hand in her own. "Just think of it Mother Bertille intending to have the whole interior of his cathedral decorated in oil. He had seen Jerome's work in the chapel and had praised it frequently. No wonder she was anxious then to arrange this meeting. The Cardinal had mentioned has granted permission and—" "Really ?" interrupted Sister Benita. I can hardly believe it. I consider it "And so do I," added Gracia. "I told several artists from amongst whom the fortunate man was to be selected. She you I would succeed. Remember, you are going to spend two whole days at Bleur House. Thank God for it! A

had never heard him mention Jerome name, yet in her heart she hoped he might yet be the Cardinal' choice. carriage will bring and take you back safely each night." "Mother Bertille is very gracious I appreciate your kindness very h, Sister," Jerome said gratefully, It is all very good of you, but I tremmuch.

indeed to grant me such an unexpected pleasure. I shall live the past all over ble at the thought of meeting the great again. To me it was a cold, cheerless country. Now it is alive with the song country. Now it is alive with the song of birds and warm with memory's sun-You need have no fear, Mr. Chelsea,'

"You need have no fear, Mr. Chelsea, she replied. "His Eminence is the plainest and humblest of men. Every-body loves him. He is so good and kind. He is a father to all." "And has the heart of a child," Grashine

you there. Poor Aunt Hawkins and Matt Pensy will not close their eyes in expectation for nights when I tell them cia interrupted. "I met him frequen He always takes such an interest in he good news. everything I do."

"Then you will have news for him to-day, I am sure," Sister Benita added smilingly.

the good news." Presently a little silver-toned gong sounded in the hall outside. "It is time for Benediction," Sister Benita remarked. "Come, we have special music this evening. Some of the pupils are going to sing. I shall see, Mr. Chelsea, that you meet the Cardinal after service." "Certainly, Auntie," the girl and swered, " and he shall know all, even to the ringing of the wedding bells. I in-tend asking him to marry us. Do you think he will refuse ?" after service.

Thirty minutes later His Eminence joined the little group in the waiting-room. He was a man in the eighties, distinguished and benign looking. Tall and full of majesty and graceful of motion, 'No, child," the nun spoke tenderly. "He could never refuse a Gravenor. The Cardinal and my father were the best of friends. He called daily to see him when he was ill. They were like he looked like a ruler amongst men two brothers almost — partners of a friendship that was strong and abiding. The son of a distinguished diplomat e was an able and cultured man. His But when are the wedding bells to ring, face had a thoughtful almost a serior Gracia ?'

look upon it, and he possessed piercing black eyes. His snowy hair glistened a silvery white from in under his little Gracia's eyes stole over to Jerome and for an instant the two exchanged red cap. "Well, Gracia, child," he exclaimed smiles. Presently the latter came to girl's rescue.

tenderly as he came across the room and took her by the hand, "I am glad to A month from to-day, Sister," he re marked gladly. We are to be married the twenty-third of June." see you. You look as cheerful as even

"The month of roses and true lover's bliss," interrupted Gracia. "The twenty-third of June," thought-Then Sister Benita introduced Jerome

to the distinguished dignitary. A slight blush stole to the artist's face as fully repeated the nun-" the day follow-ing your birth-day, child." "Yes I shall be twenty then." he stepped forward. 'Twenty years !" repeated Sister nita, a shadow creeping silently over her face. " How time flies ! sat down Then for a few minutes her thoughts dwelled upon the mysterious letter in the iron casket. "I am sure it will bring gladness to young girl's heart." she mused. "On his deathbed Arthur asked me be good to the child for his sake. For his sake? I wonder why?" Sister Benita seemed troubled yet she I have been impressed more than was not anxious to show her present feelings, therefore she said in the sweet "I rejoice with you both est voice : "I rejoice with you both that the day is near at hand. Love, when sanctified by grace and blessed by God, is a great and noble gift and I am have met until now. glad' to know you are both poss Cardinal said th the priceless jewel. She came near telling them about her your work is earning such favorable criticisms. I often come across your brother's letter, but decided that it was criticisms. I often come across your name in the art journals from the contibest not to do so for the present. "I have a favor to ask of Mother Ber nent. tille, Auntie," Gracia exclaimed. you think she will grant it ?" The Cardinal was a deep student of art and an admirer of the lofty artistic I hardly know. It all depends upor spirit which makes for the uplift of what it is umanity. "Well, I am going to ask her to let me "I am intending " he continued "t take you home. I want you to be with me on my birthday and on my wedding have the cathedral decorated in oil. I have thought of a color scheme, and I day. You have not seen Bleur Hou think you are the man to give expression to the idea. Are you willing to under-take such a task? " he asked kindly. for years. would like to see the old place again," the nun spoke gladly, "the blessed home with its tender and cling-Gracia and Sister Benita exchanged again,' glances, expressions of intense joy ing memories, but you know, dear, we written upon their faces. seldom leave these convent walls." "With all my heart, your Eminence," " I know, but I must have you-and] the artist answered gladly. "Then, Mr. Chelsea, you may call at the Palace, and we will talk the matter am going to succeed. Can I see Rever end Mother now ? she pleaded. Yes, child. I shall ring for her.' over. I suppose you will be able to tart shortly. No, never mind. I shall find her Where is she ?" Well-well, " the artist stammered In the community room, I believe. nervously. He hardly knew what to say, but in that moment of mortification "Then I shall go to her. Cardinal Richelieu once said: 'In all the bright Sister Benita came to his rescue and lexicon of youth there is no such wo as fail.' I am going to succeed." "Your Eminence, Mr. Chelsea leaves hope so.' to-morrow for a three weeks' trip to the Place O'Pines and on his return he is When she was gone, Sister Benita " Do you know, Mr. Chelsea," she be-gan. "I really believe Gracia will win to be married.' "To be married?" interrupted the Cardinal. "And pray to whom ?"

THE CATHOLIC RECORD

" To Gracia, " came the nun's quick

"Well, well. This is a surprise, " the Cardinal remarked. "I thought I read a secret in Gracia's eyes when I entered, ready, eh?' a secret in Gracia seyes when I cherred, but after all what does a poor old Cardinal know of such things. However I rejoice with you, children, and I will gladly hold over the decorating of the cathedral until you, two, are settled in your own house." leaving."

your own house." "Will your Eminence grant a request?"

Gracia pleaded earnestly. "Pardon me if I appear bold, but will your Eminence officiate at the ceremony? We should be the proudest people in the world." There was silence for a few moments Then the Cardinal said: "I canno Then the Cardinal said: "I cannot refuse you, my children. For the sake of my old departed friend, William Gravenor and the strong abiding mem-ories which that friendship still gives me, I shall be only tooglad to pronounce the words which will bless your union. Then he shook hands with the two

lovers. "God bless you both !" he said as he left the room, gathering his red cloak about him

Sister Benita was elated. The posed work at the cathedral would hel the young artist materially. It would add another jewel to his crown of suc-

Gracia, too, in her heart of hearts felt glad that Jerome had received this idden recognition. "He is the Cardinal's choice.

of it " Sister Benita whispered to her as she kissed her good-bye at the con-vent door. " I am glad for both your sakes.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE PINE WOODS. Jerome Chelsea and his chum, Dic reer, arrived at the Place O' eagerly longing for the pleasures which the famous resort was to afford them They had been friends tried and true

for many years, and this holiday trip, previous to Jerome's intended marriage, would give both a much needed relaxation from sterner and more strenuou duties. They had met several years b fore in Paris where Jerome was pursu ing his studies in art. By mere had met Dick in one of the cafe chant ants. Dick had come to the French capital in order to study the banking

systems in vogue on the continent, pre ious to taking over his father's instit tion at Kempton. Afterwards lettersgentle breathers of a strong friendship -travelled to and fro continually fro Kempton to Paris and before very low

me opened a studio in Kempt Dick Freer, who had already lived wenty-three years of his life, was one twenty-three years of his life, was one of the rising young men of Kempton. Manager of one of the largest banks in the city his name was highly respected in commercial circles. His father, too, was considered one of the wealthiest men in the place, and some day Dick was to become heir to all his wealth, for he was an only child. A week passed quickly at the Place "They will all be delighted to have

pines A week passed quickly at the Place O' Pines for the two friends. It had been a week of genuine comfort and rest. Jerome revelled in the riotous changes of color that moved slowly along the distant wide range of hills from dawn until sunset. His eyes glad-ly drank in the majestic glory that lay peacefully upon the miles of wild, em-bracing sea and the acres of lordly pine forests. He really beheld June at her oveliest—the breath of sighing winds on her lips, the glimmer of roses in her checks and the sudden glory of long, langurous moonlit nights beaming in her eyes. How his artist-soul longed to give expression to the pictures that loomed continually before him! But no ! e had left brush and palette behind in Kempton and had promised himself not to indulge in his favorite occupation until sometime after his marriage. The enchantinglingering beauty of the scenes his eyeswitr essed would not so soon beforgotten. The clear solemn dawns, the warn

golden afternoons, the peaceful, crimson lusks and the bewitching, starry nights in all their dazzling display of color and atmosphere—the vision of all of these would some day be transferred to canvas

some day when Gracia and he would gloriously together as man and

romise. A whole week had passed ow, and there were no signs of a letter "There has been foul play here, Dick," remarked Jerome. "Here is the Dick. "Come, Jerome. Stop your dream ing!" said Dick. "I shall get the rifle He bent over and lift d it from

ground. It was stained with blood. "I am sure the woman has been mur-dered," cried Dick. "She has been "Very well then, but I would like to look over my morning's mail before dered," lone to death with that axe.' "Then I shall get it for you dow The woman pened her eyes. She struggled to gain her speech, but seemed

nd the blood came.'

'Do you live near here ?" "Yes, in a little cottage, a half mile of

She raised her hand as if to ward them ff. "No you must not," she said. "I

"The end is not far off." the

sure on the wound. "I am so glad you came, gentlemen,"

" Friends ?" questioned the old wo-

The world about the Place O'Pines

shame," she said again, her speech com-ing interruptedly, "and now I know my

ninutes are numbered. I beg God's

ing woman's words. At last she began in a faint, trembling

entlemen, I wish to unravel the mystery

as puzz'ed the dwellers about here for

"This strange man," the woman con-

urrounding the Lescot tragedy

nows

me well. I am a companion of

mercy the right

struggied to gain her speech, but seemed unable to collect her thoughts. Pre-sently her lips moved. A lucid interval had come, her mind was clear and she spoke with difficulty in the faintest whisper, slowly but distinctly : "Murdered? Ah, no. Do not say that There has been no murder "Thanks."

"Thanks." Ten minutes later Dick arrived with a bundle of papers and letters. "See here, Jerome," he exclaimed glad-ly, "this is all for you. The office clerk, within the minute scheme the set in home noticing my awkwardness in housing the mail, laughingly offered the services of a mail bag and the elevator. So you that. There has been no murder. I came to cut down some small trees for wood. I gather my own fuel in these woods. There is my axe in your hand, I stumbled and fell and hurt my head, of a mail bag and the elevator. So you see you are getting to be quite a man of importance, receiving letters and papers by the armful. Surely you are not going to wade through all those papers. It will be night before you finish, and our day's sport in the woods will be only an unrealized desire." "Have patience just a few minutes: I merely want to see the letters. Here's

"How long have you been lying here?" questioned Jerome. "Not very long. I do not know. I eel so strange ! o from here." "Then we shall carry you home.

I merely want to see the letters. Here's one from Paris, a few from London and here's the Cardinal's handwriting." His fingers moved on hurriedly and when he read the post mark on the last letter a look of disappointment stole into his free. am going to die here." "But you are not going to die," Dick spoke kindly.

go shooting to-day, Dick. I am sorry but I am down and out. I feel disgusted with myself."

"The end is not far on, the woman answered trembling. "The blood flowed too freely, and I am so weak." Jerome lifted her head slightly from the grass. It was cold and clammy. Then with the other hand ke kept prespirits, Jerome," Dick said smilingly as e drew forth a letter from his pocket spirits, Jero

she continued, the tears flowing down her cheek. "I am so glad—so glad !" "Pray," questioned Jerome, "will you tell us who you are? Perhaps we can find your friends." knew the handwriting too well to mistaken. "You wretch—you sly fox!" cried

can find your friends." Jerome. "And you dared be so cruel as to keep it from me?" Eagerly his eyes scanned the hand writing. A smile came to his eyes and he exclaimed in the fullness of joy. man. "I have none. I am all alone in the world. My life has been a record of crime and degradation." She halted a moment as if to catch her breath. "Thank God ! it has come at last-from Gracia ! Dick I'll hunt with you thieves and murderers." She moved about uneasily. The two

"You poor, love-sick boy," Dick re-marked teasingly. "I am glad for your sake, that the letter has again put your heart in its right place. I think you heart in its right place. I think you got over the dislocation mighty quickly, and that too without the aid of surgeon

minutes are numbered. I beg God's forgiveness for all my sins. I am sorry, heartily sorry, for all the wrongs I have done. If, O God, it is not too late, cleanse this soul of its guilt by washing it in the fountains of Thy mercy! and that too whole the and of surgeon or chloroform." "Love, my dear fellow, overcomes every difficulty," Jerome answered with a smile. "In my case you see she was it in the fountains of Thy merce; ! Gentlemen, you have come at the right hour. I am dying—I know, I feel it. Before I go I would like to make a con-fession to you which will startle the people around here. Publish it in all the corners of the island; I am sorry for my share in the crime. It has been a mystery to the people long enough nurse, surgeon, anæsthetist, all in one Some day, Dick, you will be the victin Then it will be my turn to laugh." Just then the clock struck the hour o

ten. "Come let's off to the woods," Jeron

mystery to the people long enough. Friends, one of you, take down every word on paper. Hurry ! I would like to exclaimed with an outburst of enthus iasm, "I long for the breat's of the wild speak while my memory is yet clear." Jerome, pencil in hand, sank on his knees and waited breathlessly for the Soon they were off, their rifles on the

Soon they were off, their rines on their shoulders, eager for a day's sport. An hour later they stood in the very midst of the pine woods—that vast cathedral of green and shadow. "See here, Dick," cried Jerome, somewhat nervously, "there's blood trickling down this large rock. I wonder what it means 2" dving voice: "On my death-bed here in the pine woods, in the presence of you two

what it means ? In a moment Dick was at his side, and nearly seventeen years. Mazie Lescot's three-year-old child was not murdered but stolen, and I, God forgive me, did

together they watched the little stream of blood trickling slowly into the valley where they were standing. "Some animal or bird must be lying

the act at the instigation of a certain wealthy man from Kempton who paid me on top somewhere," said Dick, " bleed well for my trouble." ing to death-a victim of a sportman Jerome and Dick exchanged glances or a moment, roused to the highest pitch bullet. "Very likely," rejoined Jerome, "but of excitement.

"Very likely, rejonce Jerome, "but it seems to me a bird would hardly lose so much blood. See ! the stream is running faster now. Let's climb the rock and trace it to its source. What do you say, Dick ?" "It will be interesting to do

Here's rather a strong tree. It will carry us, and from some of its branches shrieked we will be able to swing to the top of the rock. The next moment the two men's bodies were swaying on the tree's branche They mounted higher and higher, slow

Kempto

for all my crimes-

'I wish that I had lived a better life

She paused for a moment, lingering

upon the sentences her cold lips had

ing coldly out of her cheerless eyes. With trembling fingers she signed the

CHAPTER XXVII.

DARK CLOUDS IN CLEAR SKIES.

The

sorrow.

just uttered.

written document.

struggle was over.

NOVEMBER 7, 1908.

eyes when she breathed her last-the

eyes when she breathed her last—the peace that comes when the heart is sud-denly released from all its cares." Jerome looked troubled. The strange document he held in his hands which bore the dead woman's signature, fairly set his mind ablaze with burning thoughts. He decided, however, not to ear very much to his commanion at the

say very much to his companion at the present time. What after all was there to be said? They had come upon the dying woman, providentially it seemed, yet the mention of Arthur Gravenor's name in connection with the stealing of the Lescot child brought Kempton and he descot child brought Kempton and the occupants of Bleur House very near -Gracia especially. However the present moments were not to be utilized in the exploiting of the strange mystery which hung for the present over the memory of the departed mill-owner at

Kempton. "This is a strange predicament," remarked Jerome nervously. "What sl we do with the dead woman? Sur Surely people will not judge us rashly and im-plicate us say, for, perhaps, murder, How shall we get out of the difficulty? he woman should be taken away." "Yes, that is certain, Jerome. Let

me see. I shall hurry to town and notify the chief of police and acquaint him with the circumstances of the case. He probably bring the coroner with him. will "Go at once and come back quickly, I shall keep watch over the dead until you return." The minutes passed slowly for Jerome

as he sat on the stump of an old pine tree awaiting Dick's return. And what lonely, long minutes they were for him, leading his thoughts down deeper into the strange, vague problem that had been forced so suddenly upon his mind, His fingers stole nervously to his pocket and, taking therefrom the signed document, he read it again. A look of terror crept into his eyes. Slowly and carefully, word for word he studi lines. They seemed to haunt him and conjure up the dead. They brought a sense of weariness and uneasiness into his heart, such as he had never experienced. Disgusted and disappoin wished that he had never seen the Place Pines. Instead of reaping pleas from his vacation a wild spirit of unrest had settled over him. Something seemen saw that she was growing weaker. "I have lived an awful life of sin and ed to be pulling continually at heart's strings; he hardly knew what it was. The man whom Mad Nance had mentioned as her tempter could be no other than the young mill-owner of Kempton. There had been only one man by that name in the history place as far as he knew. Besides had he not often heard Sister Benita refer to that trip years ago to the Place O' P when her brother was "so poorly?" ight seemed to dawn on the darkn

and sunny. "I am sure," he argued, "the master of I am sure, he argues, the master of Bleur House was guilty of the stealing of the Lescot child, but what motive could he have had for the strange no-tion? I cannot understand it at all. I wonder what became of the child? It cannot be Gracia. The stolen child's name was Constance. But then he might have changed it for obvious reasons. Gracia, I know, was an adopt-ed child. She knows nothing of her parents. I have often heard Aunt have often heard Aunt Hawkins say that she came to them when a little child. Let me see. The Lescot child was three years old. Seventeen years have elapsed since then. Great heavens! Gracia's very age. Only two more weeks and then she will be twenty. God forbid that my surmises are correct! Gracia a stoler. surmises are correct! Gracia a stolen child, her mother done to death by the very deed itself, and Arthur Gravenor, the girl's best and greatest benefactor the instigator of the crime-horrible the instigator of the crime—horrible! horrible! I cannot believe it. What will Sister Benita say when she knows all? Gracia must hear nothing of it, it will only help to darken the brightness of hear work in the brightness. horrible! fect woman on earth. She shall go through life without knowing anything

Jerome's face had grown deadly pale. He looked sorely troubled. His med to be battling with a mighty

NOVEMBI

thoughtfully hardly believe told such a see it cannot be ot " If the aut

we were the fo facts that wo mystery they had forced the

they shall nev It is bette " Was it no

we came upon we did. It see to the spot. other ears her not remain a struth would da that she was

the very ma fashioned a ho the cause of h Gracia !" "Then, Jeron prised, " you stance spoken "I am afrai answered son God might wo is too late. It

cannot drive

'If such i brother is pr where on this "It is to be fully answere heard Gracia had never kn of a brother." When the both seemed v passed and ne bled in Jeron startle him o moved about 1 Dick had b n's face fo the tears star in the artist's which would r "What is asked kindly well, are you "No," he a but well. have totally

nothing but oh, how I lor from here an say you, Dick "I shall be ever you are twenty-four h 'Then let that I could

Gracia !'

BY I

In what is

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tive quarte crowded and old church c the general a pervades a b of means to k In one of it after noon on priest and a vere teachi classes of squirmed re efforts to "b -always an Father Bou taking advan

between the sessions which schools to pr

First Com The priest band and er "So this class he said pleas The boys at their tea smiled enc smile which strong, but s bright and n Father Be

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The others "God wi

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she begged

pulsively-

"This strange man, the woman con-tinued, "came to my cottage one night, wearing a red wig. I saw it was a dis-guise. He did not tell me his name, but on his purse I read—" Arthur Gravenor, of her wedding morn. Stolen or not stolen, to me she is still the most per-Arthur Gravenor, Kempton ?'

shrieked Jerome, almost wildly. "Gracia's uncle—Sister Benita's brother. What does it all mean ?" There was a look of terror in his eyes. The dying woman did not notice

Alas! fresh shadows were falling over the path which he had pictured as bright

portant que saying appr "They ar

into his face. "Pshaw! confound it anyway! I'll no

"Perhaps this then will liven

"I think it is the one you have bee waiting for, the one with the scent of many the only one from."

He did not finish the sentence, but he

"And yo Jerome.

all day if you like. Gracia is well ar

happy." He gave a sigh of relief and all hi heavy thoughts and feelings disappeared

"Your Eminence-Mr. Jerome Chelsea the artist!" the nun spoke calmly. wife He could not forget Gracia, girl of his

The two shook hands and the Cardina fections. Beautiful and pure, she wa the priestess who kept his heart's fires ever bright. He wandered in imagina-Sit down, Mr. Chelsea," His Emin-

ence said thoughtfully. "I am pleased to make your acquaintance. I understand you decorated the chapel here at St. Agatha's. I have often admired your artistic skill. Only this morning

some white-robed angel, and each tim he thought her more lovable, more beau-tiful. And in many a careless, singing Sister Benita showed me "The Garden and the Child," which you so kindly brook he caught the music of her voice, lonated to the institution. Since the lear, and soft, and consoling.

"Ah, my pretty one-my little sing-g bird!" he would often exclaim to with the promise of your work. Have you been in Kempton long?" ing bird!' himself. "Soon I will take you home to About a year, your Eminence.' your own nest. I cannot understand

"It seems strange we should never ave met until now," the red-robed Cardinal said thoughtfully. "However, at all. Thousands and thousands of miles divide us, and yet I never feel lonely. Your presence always t is better late than never. I am glad

One morning after breakfast he sat or ne of the balconies of the Clarendon, eading his morning paper.

Dick soon appeared on the sce "What's new to-day?" Dick asked sinking into the chair beside him.

seem

"Nothing much," he answered "These foreign papers do not interes me. I wish the Kempton Chronicle were here. Some how or other I feel just a little lonely this morning. I

seem to long for the old place." "Cheer up, Jerome-don't grow morbid ! It's very unbecoming of you. Let's shoulder our rifles and make for the pine woods. They tell me there is fine shooting."

"Has the morning mail arrived Dick?" he asked absent-mindedly "Yes, I think it must be distributed But what about going hunting ? now. This is a fine, clear morning.'

"No one is finding fault with the weather, Dick, but some how or other I don't feel exactly right here," pointing to his heart. "Everything seems to b out of place."

He had been waiting almost daily for a letter from Gracia, but alas! the long-ed-for missive had not arrived. His heart was beginning to have strange misgivings. Gracia had promised him faithfully to write the day after he left Kempton, but she had not fulfilled her

Presently Jero and cautiously. stepped unto the top. "At last! at last!" he exclaimed

Come, give me your hands and I'll pull you up Dick. If you should slip or the branch should break it would mean certain death. So come, I'll pull hard." Then with the strength of ten Jerom ion with her continually through leafy avenues of sunshine and shadow. Go where he might she rose before him like landed Dick who was struggling to gai his breath.

See here," cried Jerome, "this Constance. Mrs. Lescot died within blood seems to be running from the little stream yonder. Let's trace it to its source."

For a moment they stood gazing in the stream that flowed on lazily. "B Jove!" exclaimed Dick, "I swear th "By late, what it means to tear heart's asunder. And now, O God, I am sorry water is the color of blood."

What can it mean ?" asked Jerom puzzled. " Let us follow it up farther They felt something stirring in the tall grass ahead of them.

There was once a Magdalen and Thou, my Creator, didst bless her. This gives "At last we have reached the spot Dick said with satisfaction. "Th me courage—and hope—Lord—forgive-me! My heart is—breaking—with-"I seem to hear sighing—the sound of living breath," Jerome whispered

trembling. "Come on, Dick !" They saw something dark stirring i the grass.

"Raise — my — head — quickly," she gasped. "I—can—hardly—catch — my breath. The—pencil—Let me—sign. Quick !—before—it iş—too—late !" She breathed heavily, the death star-ing goldu, ant of the star-"It must be some wounded animal, said Dick, "that cannot leave the spot for the loss of blood."

Slowly and with strange misgivings they drew closer. "Great heavens !" shricked .leron

"It is a human being-a woman. Come Dick quick, for goodness sake !'

The woman was kneeling beside the brook bathing her head in the water. The blood oozed out of several wounds in her scalp and she seemed very weak. Quickly they lifted her back and instantly Dick made pressure over the scalp wounds with his handkerchie The woman's face was thin and pale Its many wrinkles seemed to indicate either suffering or crime. Her gray hair testified that she was well up in

and her shabby clothes years general appearance proved plainly that she lived in poverty. She stirred for a moment and then stretched herself full length upon the grass. Her lips were bloodless and her eyes were She seemed to be unconscious.

Jerome's interruption. She seemed anxious to finish her story and con-tinued: "I entered Mazie Lescot's house, stole her little daugher, Constance, and carried her to the bend of the river

seened to be batting with a mighty problem. Unknown to himself the signed document slipped out of his fingers and fell to the grass. Then his head sank into his hands, and for some time he was busy with his thoughts. where Gravenor met me. He chloro formed the child, embarked on the steamer and left the Place O' Pines that Presently footsteps sounded several

yards away. Jerome caught the ring of Dick's cheerful voice. "I am glad they have come at last," he said to himself. "I shall not tell

same evening, taking the child with him. I heard of his death soon after. I have ften wondered since what became of them anything of the old woman's contwenty-four hours of a broken heart, thinking her child had been murdered. fession. It would only get into the papers and Arthur Gravenor's good So you see Mazie Lescot's child was not murdered — murdered, I repeat — but name would be forever blackened. murdered — murdered, I repeat — but stolen by this wretch who realized too Such publicity would be very distasteful and humiliating to his near relatives at Kempton. Besides what would it accomplish? The two leading figures in the crime are dead. What could the came slower and fainter : law do?"

In a few moments, the chief of police, the coroner and Dick appeared. The latter related briefly what he knew of the strange death of the woman. Jerome told the same story. "There is no need for an inquest,"

said the coroner.

"It's a perfectly clear case," said the chief. "There's been no murder here. No one would have harmed Mad Nance. She's not been dangerous these many years, but she had a pretty bad record at one time. I understand she had re-formed greatly."

Then his eyes fell upon a sheet of paper at his feet. "Ho! ho—what's this?" he exclaimed,

picking it up. Jerome trembled. He realized too "There—" she gasped, "it-is-finished. Thank God !-- Mad Nancedies happy." Her head sank on Jerome's arm. Her late that the paper the chief disco was no other than Mad Nance's ca Somewhat confused he excla eyes opened staringly. There was a slight twitching at the lips and then the ion. "Ah, the paper? It is only a part letter I scribbled here whilst wai for Mr. Freer's return from the I must have dropped it accidentally. Thank you!" he added as the clief handed it back to him.

Jerome said later as the two Just traced their footsteps to the city. think if that document would have, fallen into the chief's hands how morti-

"I am sure God has forgiven the poor fying the results would have been." "It seems a pity that Mr. Gravenor woman her crimes," said Dick tenderly. | "It seems a pity that Mr. Gravenol "There was such a look of peace in her should ever have stooped to this,"

"Poor creature!" Jerome remarked "That was a lucky move of mine Dick, eh?" Jerome said later as the ty "It seems strange that they should have called her Mad Nance, for in death her face looks even beautiful."

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