

HOW MRS. JANE STOOD OUT.

BY MAUDE MORRISON HUEY.

"There, I guess you can carry them out now, Edwin!" Mrs. Jane Ellis stooped for the last anxious touch to the boxes of huckleberries that sat on the floor, distributing the few extra large ones on the top of the baskets. Then she tucked the newspaper cover in at the edges.

"There's an even bushel, and Barker's paying 5 cents." Then she looked at Edwin who stood with his back toward her, drumming his fingers with irritating noise against the front window pane and kicking the toe of his newly-polished boot along the mopboard—polish obtained by not a few minutes of labor from Mrs. Jane the night before, while the rest of the family were enjoying the comfortable unconcern of sleep.

"Edwin!" Her voice had a little touch of sternness in it that was unusual.

Edwin turned around. It was unusual Mrs. Jane ever "spoke out." He looked at her curiously, but her pale gray eyes looked out unwavering from under the light lashes. He frowned at her, but for once she stood and met his frown without a quaver.

"They're ready, Edwin," she repeated, quietly. "There's a bushel of them." Then she began taking the pins from her thin hair. "Aren't you going to hitch up now, Edwin?" she said, and looked up at the clock. It was 7:30.

Edwin grunted and scuffed out into the middle of the room. "Guess he'll be ready as soon as the rest of 'em!" he said grudgingly. He looked around for his hat.

"Aren't you going to change your clothes, Edwin?" Mrs. Jane took the hairpins from her mouth and stood with folded hands before her husband.

"Your shirt's fresh ironed, and I've got the buttons on it. Your clothes have been sponged and pressed; they're in there on the bed. The children are most ready. 'Twaunt take me long to dress."

"I never see a woman yet that could get ready to go any place," he began, but paused. Mrs. Jane had gathered up her hairpins and gone into the other room and closed the door decisively.

Her husband stood and looked after her with aggrieved wonderment. Never before had Mrs. Jane ventured to speak out so boldly. She had closed the door against his last word. He picked up his hat sullenly from the corner and went out.

Mrs. Jane, standing before the cracked mirror in the kitchen, heard the door slam and her thin face drew itself into more rigid lines. She smoothed her hair down with hard, steady fingers and fastened it into a secure little knot behind. Then she went into the bedroom and began to dress.

She had "held out" against Edwin. She took off her every-day calico and hung it behind the door, and then buttoned on her best black cashmere and fastened it at the throat with the cameo brooch that had been her mother's.

She tied fresh ribbons on little Marlon's hair and buttoned clean blouses on the twin boys. She did all this with steady, determined fingers. There was an air of victory about her. It had been gradually taking possession of her for a week.

A week ago they had first heard about the circus, and this was the day it was to be held at Georgetown, and they were going. She had asked and Edwin had refused. She had pleaded and Edwin had frowned; but she, Mrs. Jane Ellis, had persisted. After fifteen years of silence she had dared to stand out against Edwin—and they were going. Her hunger for some small bit of pleasure and excitement after all her dull, starved, obedient, slavish years frightened her.

She looked up into her own face as she stood before the looking glass, putting the last finishing touches to her neck gear with a sort of bewildering feeling. Had Edwin really given up to her? A flush crept into her hollow cheeks.

She watched him drive the horses around to the front gate, and her heart fluttered wildly as she saw him coming up the path. Her husband, Edwin Ellis, giving up to her! There was a little quiver about her mouth, and she turned away to hide it as he came in. With not a little consternation in her eyes, she watched him silently putting on his best clothes.

Was it really right for her to stand out against Edwin? Her conscience gave her uneasy qualms. She, a puny, under-sized woman and Edwin—a brawny husband. Grandma Lewis said a body had only "to look once at Edwin Ellis to see who was head of the house." Really, wasn't it her place to submit, after all?

Little Marlon touched her gown. She looked down into the child's face, and that decided her. Little Marlon, in her best blue frock that she had worn so few times, with a look of unchildish patience upon her face, waiting meekly as she, Mrs. Jane, had waited so many weary years! When she looked at Edwin again her face had regained its firmness.

She had picked the bushel of huckleberries that was to buy their tickets, walking away on past the cedar swamp after the dinner dishes had been washed, carrying them home in time to get Edwin's supper, bending over the low bushes till her shoulders ached and her head swam. Three afternoons she had picked berries, in order that going to the circus wouldn't be any expense to Edwin.

"If it was going to cost him any—"

THE CATHOLIC RECORD

AURELIA; OR, THE JEWS OF CAPENA GATE.

PART THIRD—THE VESTAL. CHAPTER VIII. ILLUSIONS OF A CONSPIRATOR.

We have stated that on Gellia's arrival home, she had found Misticus, who had just returned from his mysterious journey.

"At last, Misticus!" said the young woman, "we must have an explanation." "An explanation? Concerning what?" asked Misticus gloomily.

"Misticus, you conspire!" exclaimed Gellia, amidst a flood of tears. "And as Misticus made a gesture of denial, she repeated in a peremptory tone, 'I know it now. I have the proof of it.'"

"How do you know it?" asked Misticus uneasily.

"For the past three months Misticus has scarcely ever at home; Misticus neglects his wife; Misticus has dealings with suspicious people who hide; Misticus is silent, peevish, anxious, in prey to continual fear; Misticus copies sedulous writings, one of which fell into my hands yesterday, and Misticus asks how I know that he conspires!" replied the little woman with great volubility.

"Oh! gods!" sighed Misticus, and he looked at his wife, with unbridled wonder. "You are working your ruin, Misticus, and mine also."

"And Gellia, falling on a seat, hid her face in her hands and sobbed violently.

"Gellia," whispered Misticus in her ear, "in a few days we shall enjoy the greatest honors and all the blessings of wealth. . . . Yes, I conspire; but it is for you, my Gellia, for you alone, do you hear? They have promised me the sacerdotal rank. You will be the Marital Flaminia."

"For!" cried Gellia in a tone that stopped the flow of words of her too conceited husband. "How," she proceeded, "can you, a simple flute-player at the sacrifices, believe that they will confer upon you dignity which in former times was the prerogative of patricians?"

"Why not?" asked Misticus, "if it is given as the reward of great services rendered Rome by the overthrow of her tyrant."

"That's it! That's it!" repeated Gellia, stamping the floor in a nervous manner. "The tribune Misticus is going to overthrow the emperor! . . . unless the emperor should make a month of this Misticus! . . . Indeed, I don't know what keeps me from weeping my resentment on you, as I did this morning on the sacred gander of the Archigallus!"

The name of the Archigallus caused Misticus to start; but as a husband will not give up so easily the point contested by his wife, he remained in an animated and solemn tone.

"But you are not aware that an army will soon march upon Rome . . . that the general commanding that army waits my signal . . . that it is I who have fixed the day for the uprising."

Gellia, notwithstanding her fear, looked compassionately at her husband.

"Misticus, my poor Misticus," said she, interrupting him, and there was a great tenderness in her voice, "are you insane? What is it that has distracted your mind so? Poor man, where have you picked up these visions?"

"Vision! Gellia . . . they are realities!"

"So much the worse, then! . . . You are a poor fool whom wicked people have caught in a snare. . . . They make use of you, Misticus! . . . But you will be the victim!"

"Impossible, Gellia!"

"Tell me, Misticus," asked the young woman, "when you are in the theatre and you blow in your flute to accompany the actor, is it you the audience applauds?"

"Of course not . . . but . . ."

"And when you are in the temple," continued Gellia, "during the assembly with the sedulous sounds of your instrument, is it you, or to the sacrificers the offerings are brought?"

"But, Gellia, what connection is there . . ."

"This one, dear Misticus: you are again playing for the benefit of others . . . The general triumphing will reap the ovations and honors, and Misticus will be forgotten. The general failing, . . . I will not say what will happen to Misticus."

"What shall I say? Gellia, the die is cast," muttered Misticus, finding the argument unanswerable.

"But, fortunately," continued the little woman, "Misticus has a wife who watches over him and will save him. . . . The Archigallus promises me . . ."

"Does the Archigallus know?" asked the tribune with terror.

"The Archigallus has in his possession the document I picked up yesterday, and which, he told me, is a proclamation.

"But the young woman stopped in her turn, terrified by the sudden change in her husband's features. The poor flute-player had become ashy pale and was trembling in all his limbs.

"Gellia," he muttered, "you have ruined me! All will be discovered now!"

"The Archigallus is an honest man!" faltered the little woman uneasily.

"Oh! the women, the women!" said Misticus dolefully. "They cannot be kept from going to those wretched Gallii! Gellia, you are not aware that I have had this proclamation distributed in Rome last night . . . and that the Archigallus is the bosom friend of the infamous Regulus."

"I am lost," he do you understand now what you have done?"

"Oh!" cried Gellia, throwing herself in her husband's arms, "can this be true? dear Misticus!"

The two young people held each other in a long embrace, mingling their sobs and sobs during to communicate to each other their thoughts.

"Misticus and Gellia had only been married two years. Their story is simple and touching. Both belonged to that numerous class of individuals whom the Roman law pronounced sui generis at their birth, because they were considered as having no father.

Misticus' mother, who died when he was twenty years old, was a freed woman proscribed by the King of the Sacrifices. Formerly, the Roman Kings presided in person the immolation of victims. When the republic succeeded the monarchy, this title was given to a priest, in order to preserve the ancient rite. But the name "King," was so odious, that the

Sacrificer fled from the forum as soon as this ceremony was ended.

"During the invocations and prayers, a flute-player accompanied the voice of the priests with the sound of his ivory instrument. The King of the Sacrifices gave this position to Misticus, who obtained a similar employment at the theatre. He guided and sustained the voice of the actors by playing on a flute."

Young Misticus earned thereby enough to live comfortably; but he felt very lonely in the midst of that immense city of Rome, where, since his mother's death, there was no one to care for him. One evening, as he was returning home, Misticus heard some one groaning in the recess of a private portico. He approached and found, crouching in the dark, a poor young girl, who seemed in prey to the most bitter grief.

This young girl was Gellia. She told him that on that same day her mother's corpse had been consumed on the funeral pile, and she was now without friends or shelter, having been driven from the house by pitiless creditors.

Misticus, who had been deeply moved by this sorrowful tale, he tried to find words of comfort for a grief so much like his own, and taking her by the hand, raised the girl from her recumbent position; but hunger and sorrow had worn out her strength, and she fell senseless. The humane flute-player was not far from home; taking Gellia in his arms, he carried her into the house, and having succeeded in reviving her, offered her some food, and gave up to her the little room he occupied.

At the end of the year, Misticus and Gellia went to the Pretor and made a public declaration that they were united by simple usage, an easy but legal form of marriage, the validity of which was never brought in question. The poor people knew no other mode of legitimate union; the wealthy alone could afford to claim the expensive and solemn forms of confederation and coemption.

No married pair were more dissimilar in disposition, although closely united by mutual affection.

Gellia was quick tempered and thoughtless; Misticus was slow and vacillating, except when his imagination was seduced by fanciful appearances, for then he ceased to see illusions with childish eagerness, and clung to them with all the obstinacy of conviction. Gellia was superstitious; Misticus, initiated into the secrets of the temple, despised the vain sciences of the priests, and laughed at the faith put in the oracles. Gellia was impatient and capricious; Misticus was a simpleton. Gellia's mother had brought her up in luxury, and developed her coquetry; Misticus had learned from his mother to be contented with little. Whilst Gellia had but very vague desires of wealth, Misticus had his mind on the most ambitious hopes, not for himself, but for Gellia, who frequently made thoughtless remarks about the happiness of the rich.

These two young people sited each other precisely, because they differed so completely, each having the qualities or defects which were wanting in the other. Everybody liked them; the neighbors compared Gellia to Calia, the Roman heroine of marriage; they said that Misticus loved her as Philon loved Baucis, and the Pretor should cut their thread of life on the same day. Alas! these kind wishes were not written in the book of Fate.

One evening, a stranger called and had a long conversation with Misticus. From his tone and manner he was a nobleman. We must explain in a few words how this was brought about.

The senators and others implicated in the conspiracy, wanted a trustworthy agent in Rome, who would be their means of communication with the General, commanding the army in Germany.

This agent should be so obscure as not to attract attention, and yet so compromised as to give assurance of his fidelity. The King of the Sacrifices, who was intimate with the General, recommended his flute-player, Misticus.

The vanity and secret aspirations of the unfortunate tribune made him an easy prey. A considerable sum of money was paid him and he was promised the rank of centurion. Besides, the General was in direct communication with him, and apparently, at least, depended on him for all necessary information and for the signal of action. It is true that Misticus did not know the names of the conspirators; that he was but an intermediary, placed between two points, one luminous and tangible—Lucius Antonius, whom he knew; the other—the conspirators, surrounded by impenetrable darkness. But the flute-player believed himself the true head and prime mover of the conspiracy. He devoted himself, body and soul, to his secret task.

We know what followed, and how Gellia innocently betrayed her husband. The poor little woman now wept over the cause of her imprudence; Misticus was thinking how he should excuse Gellia and save himself. They remained until night plunged into this intolerable anguish, and trembling at every noise.

Suddenly, a knock was heard at the door. Gellia hesitated. The knock was repeated, and at a voice cried out from the Archigallus!

"Ah!" said Gellia, "I remember he promised to come to our assistance ere the day ended." And she hastened to open the door.

Apollo's messenger entered, and said simply to Misticus: "Follow me."

"Is it the Archigallus who sends you?" asked the flute-player.

The Archigallus wishes to see you concerning the writing your wife gave him this morning."

"I am ready," said Misticus, somewhat comforted by the thought that the Archigallus still had the proclamation in his possession.

Gellia felt confident. She told him as she kissed him good by: "You will see that Apollo did not deceive me."

Misticus had not walked very far when three men reached upon him, threw him down, and secretly tied his hands.

The messenger then gave the order to proceed.

"Where are you taking me?" asked Misticus.

"You will soon know," replied the stranger.

They walked on silently, down the deserted streets, and reaching the Tiber, crossed the Palatine bridge. They were then going to Regulus' house? Doubtless, the Archigallus had betrayed Gellia's confidence.

"I am lost," thought the unfortunate Misticus, as the truth broke upon him. "May the gods grant, at least, that I may protect Gellia."

The tribune was introduced into the

exedra, where we have witnessed the interview between the wily lawyer and poor old Ceclius. Regulus was seated at a table upon which were placed conspicuously a bronze bust of Domitian and a pile of gold.

"You see," said he, when he was alone with Misticus—and he unrolled the copy of the proclamation, "that you are discovered. It would be useless to deny it. Who is the author of this?"

"And without waiting for an answer, he added, pointing at the pile of austeri,— 'You have the choice . . . This or the emperor . . . do you understand?'"

Misticus made signs that he comprehended the informer's meaning. The money meant shame; the tribune would not sell himself. The emperor—that was death. Misticus did not want to die. He was thinking of Gellia.

"No say," he said resolutely to Regulus. "No money, but a guarantee."

"Of what nature?"

"Write an acknowledgment that I have divulged the plot voluntarily. Otherwise Misticus will be nothing."

"Not bad," remarked the informer, as he proceeded to write the acknowledgment. "You are a cunning fellow. Now," he added, as he handed him the paper. "What are the names?"

"Lucius Antonius," said the tribune, after reading the document and securing it under his tunic.

"What! Lucius Antonius, the general of the army of Germany?" exclaimed Regulus. "Is it then a rebellion?"

"Who are his accomplices in Rome?"

"I do not know," replied Misticus; and he explained his singular position as the agent of an unknown body.

"This is a skillful arrangement," remarked Regulus; "in this way one may conspire without danger. But we shall manage to find them out. However, how do I know that you tell the truth about this revolt? I must have a proof."

"You will have one to-morrow night."

"If you will be at the twelfth hour on the Flaminia way, near Garden Hill. A courier from Germany will bring me dispatches."

"I shall be there," exclaimed Regulus. "Am I free to go?" asked Misticus.

"Certainly so. Good-by till to-morrow night."

"Good-by, my lord, till to-morrow night."

An hour later, Misticus was in Gellia's arms.

"We are saved," he said to her; "but your Archigallus is an infamous rascal! He had betrayed me to Regulus. . . . Finding it impossible to deny, I have been compelled to avow all. . . . This, take good care of this declaration signed by Regulus, which he knows but we may want it at some later day."

On the following night, Regulus, concealed on the Flaminia way, received from Misticus the package of dispatches from Germany. With what joyal surprise he read the contents of these important documents, the letter written by Metellus Celer to the Grand Vestal, which, while it gave a proof of their intimacy, revealed, moreover, the object of Antonius' conspiracy.

By Regulus' letter, Antonius, giving "the gods protect me!" This letter gives me a new hold upon the Vestal and those Christians who might have escaped. The emperor may send for me, now. . . . I no longer fear having to remain silent before a man who knows me."

We have seen that Domitian sent for Regulus, and what use the latter made of the documents received from Misticus. We shall now seek Garges, whom we have left much embarrassed with Misticus' letter, which he had undertaken to deliver to Cornelius.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FUNERAL OF A CHRISTIAN VIRGIN.

When perchance an idea saw the light in the brain of our friend Garges, one could affirm that it was an original and remarkable idea. Here is the reasoning by which Garges got rid of his dilemma.

"If," he thought, "I get Gellia to carry this papirus to the Capena Vestal, I plunge her into the greatest dangers."

"Now, I love Gellia too much, not to understand that she is the wife of Olinthus, to expose her again to persecution. . . . What shall I do?"

Here Garges paused and scratched his head.

"Ah!" he suddenly exclaimed, "I've got it! . . . Yes, that's it! . . . I like this pontiff of the Christians! I have seen him at work! . . . It seemed to me that he felt an interest in the Roman festival. . . . There is, besides, in this letter, something that concerns the young Caesars, to whom he is said to be related. Suppose I were to intrust him with this delicate mission?"

Upon this, Garges, who seldom wasted more time in reflection, cut a joyful cap, and called aloud to his vespiilus, who presented themselves forthwith, bearing torches.

"Forward to the Capena Gate," cried Garges.

Two men preceded him to light the way, and the party set out briskly. They passed the Capena Gate, and entered the Applan way, which they were to follow some distance to reach the ancient grove of the Muses where the wretched hute of the Christians was built.

Here Garges had a bad fright. The torches of an escort coming from the opposite direction, suddenly illumined the darkness, and in the silence of the night, this challenge resounded,— "Triumph! Triumph! Capital! . . . Who goes there?"

It was the triumvir, going his rounds who, perceiving the light of torches at this unreasonable hour, had ordered the party to be challenged. Now, Garges had had more than once dealings with the Triumvir Capital. In his nocturnal expeditions, during the time he was a vespiilus, he had often been stopped by this chief of the urban police, and searched for such prohibited articles as human hair and the vespiilus. But never had the encounter caused him so much uneasiness.

"If this triumvir proceeds to search my person as usual," thought Garges, with a certain tremor, "what will become of me?"

What will become of me? The danger became imminent, for the triumvir, obtaining no reply, was galloping towards the suspicious party.

"Who goes there?" he repeated, when he was about twenty steps from them.

"Garges," replied the son of Tongilius, almost faintly.

"Garges, the designator?" asked the triumvir. Ah! now I understand. . . .

They are waiting for you over yonder! . . . Pasyon!"

Garges hastened to avail himself of this permission, but he could not get over his astonishment at the facility of his escape, and at the words spoken by the triumvir.

"This triumvir understands," he muttered; "that is very well! . . . but what is it that he understands? . . . They wait for me yonder! . . . That is not likely! . . . By Venus Libitina! my intellect is at fault. . . . Well, never mind, that is of no importance. . . . let us make haste, lest this night should change his mind."

Another cause of astonishment awaited Garges and his men. As they came in sight of the sacred grove of the Muses, they perceived that the base of the dark mass scarcely visible in the gloom of the night, was illuminated by thousands of lights, some stationary and some moving in the direction of that part of the woods consecrated to Libitina.

"What are those Christians about?" exclaimed Garges, "that they are not asleep, but wandering out at this late hour, with torches? . . . Could it be that they really expect me? . . . This would be curious! . . . But let us go on, we will soon find out!"

When the party left the Applan way to enter the grove of the Muses, they were again stopped. With the chance, "Who goes there?" by two Christians, placed as sentries on the outskirts of the woods.

"Garges!" replied the designator, in a much firmer tone than he had answered the triumvir's challenge.

"You are welcome," said the voices.

"This is well! what are you doing, Garges?" said one of the Christians, coming forward and grasping the designator's hand. . . . "But we should have expected to meet from your friendship and devotion. Thanks, in the name of our brethren. . . . You will find them all in tears!"

"But what has happened?" inquired Garges, completely bewildered. "I cannot understand what you say! . . . You can know nothing of the business which brings me here."

"You ask what has happened?" replied the Christian; "we have lost our mother. . . . Petronilla, the sainted virgin, fell asleep in the Lord, day before yesterday, and we are watching here to welcome the Christians who will attend her funeral at daybreak. . . . I thought you had been informed of this great misfortune."

"No," said Garges, "I had not heard of it." Petronilla, the poor old woman, whom I loved so much for the affection she bore Cecilia, is dead," he added, with emotion, returning the pressure of the Christian's hand. "This, Garges, is the reason why the triumvir told me I was expected here. . . . Let your mind be easy, everything will be done in a suitable manner. . . . Only, I should not have been advised so late."

It was the Christian's turn to wonder. "Are Olinthus and Cecilia here?" asked Garges.

"They closed Petronilla's eyes. . . . But they returned to Rome yesterday, to bring back Flavia Domitilla and our other brethren. We are expecting them."

"And the pontiff Clemens?" inquired Garges, remembering the mission he had undertaken, "is he not here?"

"Clemens has not left Petronilla. . . . He is praying for her at this moment before the altars of God."

"Very well," said Garges. "I shall go and see how matters stand, and give my orders without delay."

Garges and his vespiilus penetrated into the grove. The worthy designator had never done so much thinking as on this eventful night.

"Let us see," he reasoned, as he walked on, "these Christians are poor. . . . This is evidently why they did not send for me. . . . I understand this. But Garges knows the truth, and the occasion of his coming here. . . . I liked Petronilla; I shall take care of her funeral, and I want people to speak of it! Let us organize the ceremony. First, I walk at the head of the cortege with my litara dressed in black, this is understood. Next come the images of the ancestors. Did Petronilla have any? Ah! yes, one Peter, a very celebrated man, I have heard! . . . Besides, I have in my store rooms any quantity of images of ancestors for families. Very well! We shall want twenty monuments. I shall see to this! I shall say a word to the woman who acted as chief mourner at funerals. . . . and they will utter lamentable cries! There will be no lack of relations. I imagine all those Christians will follow Petronilla. The funeral will be the pyre? That's my lookout. Ah! the funeral discourse? It is rather late to get somebody to prepare it. But I shall ask the Pontiff Clemens for a delay of twenty-four hours to organize my ceremony. He cannot object to that."

The meditations of the designator were interrupted by the sound of pure voices ascending to heaven in pious concert. Looking up, he stopped in a respectful attitude. The corpse was before him.

Petronilla, the octogenary virgin, was placed in a reclining position, on a bed of leaves. Her eyes turned to heaven. She was clad in white garments, studded with flowers—emblems of the purity of her life; a wreath of white roses encircled her brow. One would have scarcely realized that she was dead, such was the serenity of her features, which retained an angust expression very different from the rigidity of death. Around her burned torches of resin, emitting an aromatic odor, and perfume that filled the atmosphere with their fragrant emanations.

On each side of the funeral bed was a choir of women and young girls who watched and sung alternately, sacred hymns or passages from the holy canticles. These were the voices Garges had heard.

The women sang: "Blessed be the Lord! She died in His grace; the betrothed came she held her light lamp before her."

The young girls replied: "She has flown to Heaven like the dove of the desert; her soul is as white as the lily in the field; her pure breath has tarminated her virginal body."

All repeated together, three times: "Glory be to God! Glory be to God! Glory be to God!"

The designator looked at these arrangements with a critic's eye, and commended, in an undertone, to his vespiilus his condemnation of such things as did not appear to him in harmony with the established usages.

"Where are the embalmers," he whispered, "to wash the body of the body of this respectable matron? Where are the faces which should surround that bed? By-the-by, it should have been decorated

with better taste. I don't see the black hangings; nor the cypress trees, clipped into a mournful shape, nor the flute-players who should accompany these funeral songs. If I had been advised to mark, nothing would have wanted in the marks of respect due this old Petronilla."

A hand laid on the designator's shoulder interrupted the expression of his regrets.

"Ah!" said he, turning round, "Olinthus and Cecilia! Why," he added reproachfully, "did you not inform me of this sad event?"

"Dear friend," said Olinthus, "since two days we have not left our mother one moment. She passed away in our arms."

Olinthus exclaimed Garges, "I must take charge of the funeral. . . . I only ask for a few hours' delay in order to prepare it with becoming solemnity!"