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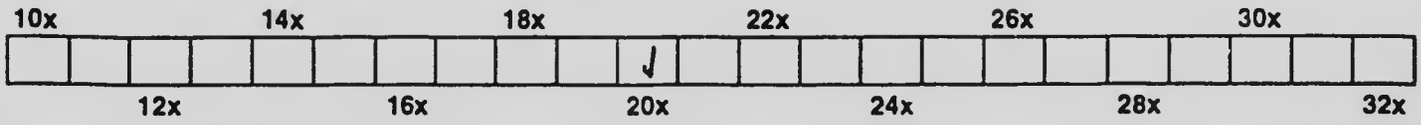

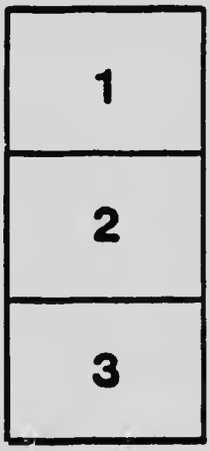

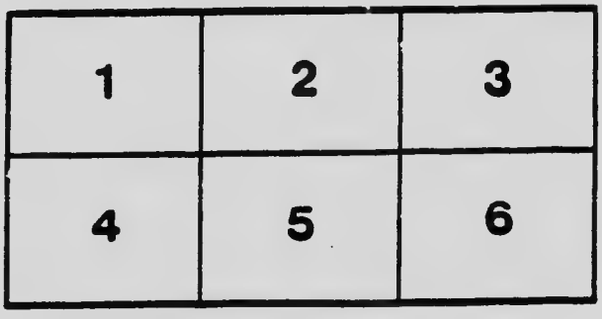


Maybelle Pratt

CECILIA OF THE PINK ROSES

KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR

CECILIA EVANGELINE AGNES MADDEN

CECILIA
OF THE PINK ROSES

BY

KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR

ILLUSTRATED BY

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TO

MY DEAR MOTHER

SOURCE OF MY INNER PINK ROSES

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Where Is Gawd?	13
II	The Vision of a Promised Land	26
III	The First Step into Canaan	33
IV	Learning	43
V	Disgrace	53
VI	A Hint of Pink	65
VII	Santa Claus	84
VIII	A Little Touch of the Man with the Hour Glass	100
IX	Home	126
X	My Best Friend	151
XI	Acceptance	160
XII	Pain	164
XIII	A Request	172
XIV	Pink	186
XV	Firelight	199
XVI	The Mystery	212
XVII	A Relapse	219
XVIII	Forgiveness	236
XIX	Spring	239
XX	Pulling Off the Thorns	249
XXI	Pink Roses	258

ILLUSTRATIONS

CECILIA EVANGELINE AGNES MADDEN . *Frontispiece*

PAGE

"NOW LAUGH! PAW'S COMING HOME AND HE NEEDS ALL OUR LAUGHS." 16

"MILK, AN' SUGAR IF YUH HAVE IT." . . . 40

"YOUR ENTRANCE HERE HAS BEEN MOST DIFFICULT FOR ME." 56

THE DINNER HAD BEEN WHAT SHE WANTED . 130

CECILIA STOPPED AND GASPED. IT WAS HARDER THAN SHE HAD DREAMED 254

CECILIA OF THE PINK ROSES

CECILIA OF THE PINK ROSES

CHAPTER I

WHERE IS GAWD?

The Madden flat was hot and the smell of frying potatoes filled it. Two or three flies buzzed tirelessly here and there, now and again landing with sticky clingingness on a small boy of four who screamed with their advent. When this happened a girl of seven stepped from the stove and shooed them away, saying: "Aw now, Johnny!" and Johnny would quiet.

The perspiration stood out on her upper lip and there were shadows, deeper than even Irish ones should be, beneath her eyes. The sun beat in cruelly at one window which was minus a shade. At another the shade was torn and run up crookedly.

In the hall there was the sound of a scuffle, then a smart slap, and a child's whimpering wail.

"What's—that?" came in a feeble voice from the bedroom off the kitchen.

"It's the new gent in the flat across whackin' his kid," answered the small girl.

"Oh," was the weak answer, and again there was quiet, broken by the sizzle of hot fat, the tireless buzz of the flies, and now and then the little boy's cry.

"Here, Johnny," commanded the small maiden, "come have your face washed off." Johnny objected. She picked him up with decision, and set him on the table with resounding emphasis, where he screamed loudly during the rite.

The door opened. A man in overalls came in. "Hello, Paw," said Cecilia Evangeline Agnes Madden. He answered her with a grunt and kicked off his heavy shoes.

"Gawd, it's hot!" he said with his first contribution to the conversation. "Two Dagos got sunstruck. One of 'em he just went like a goldfish outa water, keeled over, then flop,—flop. The Boss he up an'—"

"Supper, Paw," said Cecilia. She pushed a chair up to the oil-clothed table, and the man settled, beginning to eat loudly. He stopped and pointed with his knife to the bedroom

door. "How's *she?*" he asked in a grating whisper.

"She ain't so good," answered the small girl. Her eyes filled with tears and she turned away her face.

"Maw—Maw—Maw!" cried Johnny.

"Aw now!" said his sister while she picked up his hot little person to comfort him.

"Maw—Maw!" he echoed.

Cecilia looked up. Her eyes were like those of a small dog that has been whipped. "I ain't the same," she said across his brick-dust curls. "He wants *her,* I ain't the same. I do my best, but I ain't her."

The man laid aside his knife. He set his teeth on his lower lip, and then he asked a question as if afraid to.

"Has the doctor been here?"

"Yes," answered Cecilia.

"Whatud he say?"

"He sez she wasn't so good. He sez she wouldn't be no better 'til the weather was cooler an'—"

"Celie!" came in the voice from the bedroom. Cecilia put down Johnny.

"Yes, Maw," she answered gently.

"Celie!" came again in almost a scream.

Celie vanished. She reappeared in a few moments. She was whiter than before.

"She throwed up fierce," she said to her father; "something fierce, an' all black. Don't you want no coffee?" The man shook his head. He reached for his shoes.

"Where yuh goin'?" asked Cecilia.

"Doctor's," she was answered. He went into the bedroom. "Well, old woman," he said loudly, "how yuh feelin', better?" The thin creature on the bed nodded, and tried to smile. The smile was rather dreadful, for it pulled long lines instead of bringing dimples. Her blue lips stretched and the lower cracked. A drop of blood stood out on it.

"Gawd, it was hot to-day," said the man. He settled by her bed in a broken-backed chair. She stretched out a thin hand toward him.

"Mary—!" he said, then choked.

"Aw, Jerry!" said the woman. In her voice was little Cecilia's tone of patience, with the lilt removed by a too hard life.

"Do yuh feel *some* better?" he entreated.

"Sure—I do. Gimme that glass of water—" She drank a mouthful and again vomited rackingly.

"Oh, Gawd!" said Jeremiah Madden. He

"NOW LAUGH! PAW'S COMING HOME AND
HE NEEDS ALL OUR LAUGHS"

laid a rough hand on her forehead and she pulled it down against her cheek.

"Jerry," she said between long gasps, "I been happy. I want you should always remember that I been happy. Awful happy, Jerry."

"Oh, Gawd, Mary!" said the man. "If I'd a knew how hard you'd a had to work, I wouldn't have brung yuh!"

"Don't!" she begged. "Don't say that!" She looked at him, time faded, and with it a hot and smelling flat. She stood on a wind-swept moor. Jerry, only eighteen, stood by her. His arm was around her with that reverent touch that comes in Irish love. "I'll send fer yuh," he'd said, "after I make me fortune in America."

She had cried and clung to him. With her touch, reason and a rolling moor had faded for him. "I can't leave you," he had said, "I can't! Mary, you come with me." And Mary had come. Those days had been beautiful. . . . But fortunes in America did not come as advertised. Sometimes Mary thought of green turf, and the gentle drip-drip of fog, like rain. That rain that came so often. . . . Now she thought of it more than ever. She hoped that

the Virgin would allow her a little corner of Heaven that would look like an Irish moor. . . . The gold the priest talked of was "grand," but heresy or not, she wanted a bit of green, with the gentle drip of rain on it.

Jeremiah bent and kissed her. Then he rubbed the spot of blood of her lip from his. "It wasn't no mistake," he said. Her eyes grew moist.

"Jerry," she said, "Celie is a good kid. She kin do fer yuh. Ain't she, right along? She won't give yuh no trouble neither. But the kid—he ain't so easy. It's the kids growin' up in America better'n their folks, that go to the devil. Watch him, Jerry, watch him good. Won't yuh now?" The man nodded; she closed her eyes. After a few moments that throbbed with the heat of the flat, she spoke again.

"Jerry," she said.

"Darlin'?"

"It's this way, Jerry. I always wanted to be a lady—"

"Yuh are!" he interrupted hotly.

"No," she stated quietly, "I ain't, an' I always thought I could be. The Irish learns fast. It's this way, Jerry; if ever the time comes when you get money, you send Celie

to one of them schools that learns 'em French and drawin' and such, Jerry, will yuh?"

"Before Gawd, I will Mary. If I ever kin."

She closed her eyes and slept quietly, clinging to his hand.

The next day was Sunday so Jeremiah went to Mass and heard it with especial intention. If his thoughts were more on the gentle Saint slowly dying in a hot flat than on the Gentle Mother, who can blame him.

Jeremiah went from the baroqued church vastly comforted, and painfully aware of his Sunday collar, which had rough edges. Cecilia had rubbed soap on it, but it still scratched. Outside Jeremiah went, not in the direction of his home, but in the other. He passed a beggar's entreating wail, and then retraced his steps to bestow a penny,—and even pennies were not easily spared. Jerry was still a little child at heart. He was courting divine favour. He needed God and all the Saints on his side.

After a brisk walk of many blocks he turned into a house with a doctor's sign on it. The office was crowded; he sat, outwardly submissive, to wait his turn. "Blessed Mother," he prayed, "make him mak'er well. Mother of the

Saviour—" his thoughts were a chaos. "A gold heart!" he promised rashly, even while he remembered the unpaid grocer's bill. A woman with a pallid skin and hacking cough crept from the office. Across from him a boy exhibited a burn to an interested neighbour. "Blessed Mother,—" entreated Jeremiah, even while his eyes saw the burn and he wondered how it had happened.

A crisp young person in white, who gave an impression of great coolness, said, "Your turn next." Jerry jumped and got up. Two little girls, at the Sheraton period in legs, giggled loudly at his jump, but Jerry didn't notice. He stopped on the threshold of the inner office. He twirled his hat in his hands. "Mister," he said, "it's my wife I come about." The doctor had been up all night. Added to this fact was the fact that he was fitted, emotionally, to run a morgue.

"Name?" growled the doctor. Jeremiah Madden sank to a chair and told his name, of his wife, and how sick she was. He also interspersed a few facts about Irish moors, love and business in America. And he ended with: "An' my doc he sez' no one can save her but Doctor Van Dorn. He's the cancer man of

New York. The only one who can possibly save her! He sez that," repeated Jeremiah. "Oh fer Gawd's sake, Doc! I can't pay yuh now but—"

The doctor swung about in his swivel chair. "My time is entirely mortgaged," he stated curtly. "I can't keep up to my work. Your wife will probably die anyway; accept the inevitable. You couldn't pay me, and I haven't the time. All New York bothers me. Good morning."

He turned back to his desk. Jeremiah went toward the door. His step was a blind shuffle. Hand on the knob, he paused. "Doc," he said, "I love her so, an' the little kids, they need her. I feel like she'd live if you'd help her. I promise I'd pay. All my life I'd pay an' thank Gawd I could—" he stopped. The doctor moved his shoulders impatiently.

"The Virgin will reward yuh—" said Jeremiah. "Oh, Doc! Fer Gawd's sake!"

"Good morning," answered the doctor with another impatient move of his shoulders. Jeremiah left. A young person in crisp white said, "Your turn next, Madam." Madam went in. "Oh, Doctor, my heart—" she began. The

doctor got up to move her chair so that the light would not trouble her.

Jeremiah spent the morning in going from office to office. First he told the unfavourable report of his doctor. He met sympathy in some quarters, curt refusals in others, and worst of all he sometimes met: "Cancer of the stomach? Not much chance—"

At half after one, sick from the sunlight of the cruelly hot streets, he turned into an office for his last try. He felt numb. . . . His tongue was thick. He looked with resentment on a well-dressed woman who waited opposite him. "Flowers on her bunnit," he thought, "while my Mary—" He thought of his hard labour and, with bitterness, of the "Boss." He had never felt this way before. If he'd had money, he reflected, how quickly that first doctor would have helped him. . . . The other refusals had come from truer reasons. His own doctor's report, although Jeremiah didn't realise this, had stopped all efforts. If the doctor had said no one but Van Dorn could help her, Lord, what chance had they? This was their line of reason.

Jeremiah sat in the outer waiting room. At

last his turn came. The doctor looked tired; he was gruff in his questions. "I'll come with you and look at her," he said at last. Jeremiah felt a sob rise in his throat. The doctor rang a bell.

"Tell Miss Evelyn," he said to the maid who answered him, "that we'll have to give up our drive this afternoon. She's my little girl," he explained to Jeremiah. "Her mother's dead,—I don't see as much of her as I should. A doctor has no business with a family. I'm ready. Come on."

They went out by a back door, leaving an office full of patients. The sun was hot. Jeremiah prayed fervently even while he answered the doctor's questions and responded to his pleasantries. At last they came to the building which held Jeremiah's home. They mounted the long stairs. Two or three children, playing on them, stopped their squabbling and looked after the doctor with awe.

"He's got a baby in that case," said one, a fat little girl with aggressive pig-tails.

"There is too many now," said a boy. "They don't all get fed, and they're all beat up fierce. Our teacher in that there corner mission sez

as how Gawd is love. Why don't he come down here an' love?"

There was an awed silence after this. Outright heresy as it was, the immediate descent of a thunderbolt was expected.

Upstairs Jeremiah opened the door of the flat. The kitchen was full of women. Several of them sobbed loudly. . . . Johnny Madden sat on the table, eating a piece of bread thickly spread with molasses. On seeing Jeremiah the women were suddenly silent. Jeremiah swayed and leaned against the door.

The small Cecilia heard him and came from the bedroom.

"Paw," she said, "I'll do all I kin fer yuh. I always will. . . . She was happy. She sez as how she seen green fields an' rain." Jeremiah took her in his arms. He hid his face against her thin little shoulder. His shook. Cecilia was very quiet. She had not cried. She looked over her father's head at the roomful of gaping women. Something flashed across her face. Her teeth set.

"She always wanted a bunnit with pink roses on it," said Cecilia. "I don't see why Gawd didn't give her jest *one*."

The man sobbed convulsively and Cecilia remembered him. "She was happy," Cecilia said in a less assured tone. "She sez as how she seen green fields with rain on 'em like Ireland."

CHAPTER II

THE VISION OF A PROMISED LAND

As Mrs. Madden had said, "The kids that grow up better than their folks go to the devil." Cecilia felt this at eleven, for she was all of Johnny's mother, and the rôle was a difficult one. She had learned to spat him and kiss him judiciously, and at the proper times. She had learned to understand his marble games and to coax him into attendance at Catechism.

Cecilia had begun to understand a great many things at eleven that some of us never understand. One thing made learning easy for her,—she loved so greatly that she was often submerged into the loved, and so saw their viewpoint.

"Paw," said Cecilia. She had turned about on the piano stool, and Jeremiah looked up from his paper. "Well?" he questioned.

"I been thinking," she said, "that it would be genteel to ask the priest to supper. It ain't as though we hadn't a hired girl to do fer us, an' it would be polite."

"That's so, that's so," said Jeremiah. He laid aside his paper. "You're like your maw," he added. Cecilia knew he was pleased. She smiled happily.

"An' have ice-cream?" suggested the interested Jeremiah.

"Yes," said Cecilia, "an' chicken, an' fried potatoes, an' waffles, an' of course pie, an' biscuits, an' suchlike. I'd like to entertain Father McGowan, he's been good to us."

"Yes," answered Jeremiah. They were both silent. The vision of an overcrowded and smelling flat had come to sober them. Also the memory that always went with it. . . . "Play me 'The Shepherd Boy,'" said Jeremiah. He closed his eyes while Cecilia banged it out in very uneven tempo, owing to difficulties in the bass.

Johnny came in. He sat down on a lounge covered with a green and red striped cloth. He looked at Jeremiah with a supercilious expression.

"'The other fellahs' fathers wears their shoes in the house," he stated coldly. "The Shepherd Boy" stopped suddenly. Cecilia went toward the "parlor." "Johnny!" she called on reaching it. Johnny followed meekly. The

parlor was the torture chamber. When he went in Cecilia put her hands on his shoulders.

"Johnny," she said in her gentle little way.

"Um?" he answered, wriggling beneath her hands.

"Johnny," she repeated, "it ain't polite to call down your paw."

"But Celie," objected John, "he ain't like the other fellahs' fathers. They wears collars *an'* shoes, *all* the time."

"I know, dear," said Cecilia. "I know, but it ain't polite to call down your paw, an' nothing can make it so."

"Aw right," answered John sullenly. Cecilia leaned over and kissed him. John didn't mind, "none of the fellahs being around." He went back to the living room. Jeremiah had put on his shoes. He looked at Johnny, awaiting his approval.

"An' Norah," said Cecilia, excited to the point of hysteria, "you see that I get the plate with the crack in it, an' the glass with the piece outa it."

"Sure, I will," answered Norah. "Now go 'long."

Cecilia went to the dining room. They were

going to eat there, because they were going to have company. Norah was not going to sit down with them either. It was to be most formal and "elegant."

And now for the decorations. Cecilia put on two candlesticks, each at a corner of the table. They did not match, but why be particular? Then she took a bunch of peonies, and, removing all foliage, jammed them tightly in a vase that had the shape of a petrified fibroid growth, and had accumulated gilt, and a seascape for decoration.

"It looks bare," said Cecilia. She went to her room and brought out a new hair ribbon, worn only twice. She unearthed this from below a hat trimmed with pink roses. The hat was gorgeous and beautiful, but she could not wear it. . . . Looking on "bunnits with pink roses on 'em" always made her a little sick. The hair-ribbon was tied around the vase in a huge bow. Cecilia stood off to admire.

"Norah!" she called.

Norah appeared. "Ain't that grand?" she commented. "Now ain't it?"

"Well," answered Cecilia, "I don't care if I do say it, I think it's pretty swell! Norah, you use the blue glass butter dish, won't you?"

"Sure," answered Norah, and then with mutters of waffle batter, she disappeared. Cecilia stood a moment longer looking at the table in all its beauty. The plates were upside down. Napkins (that all matched) stood upright in tumblers. The knives and forks were crossed in what was to Cecilia the most artistic angle.

"It's grand!" she said with a little catch in her breath. "Just *swell!*" Then with a backward glance, she vanished. "I hope paw'll like it," she muttered as she went upstairs.

Father McGowan was a charming guest. He looked at the decorations and then on the small Cecilia with softened eyes: "Now I'll bet you fixed this beautiful table!" he said. Cecilia nodded, speechless. She drew a long, shaky breath. Life was *so* beautiful. . . . Father McGowan put his hand on her curls. (She sat next to him at the table.) His touch was very gentle.

"Good little woman?" inquired the priest of Jeremiah.

"She's maw and all to all of us," answered Jeremiah. There was a silence while they ate.

"This chicken," said Father McGowan, "is fine!"

"It's too brown, I'm afraid," answered Cecilia with the deprecatory attitude proper while speaking of one's own food. Her father looked at her with pride. The priest's eyes twinkled.

"Paw," said Cecilia, leaning across the table and putting her hand on her father's, "tell Father McGowan how yuh hit the boss on the ear with the brick." Jeremiah sat back in his chair, first laying his knife and fork with the eating ends on the plate and the others on the cloth. He drew a long breath and told a long tale, at which the priest laughed heartily. He ended it thus: "An' I sez, 'I ain't *dee*pendent on no man. Yuh can do yer own brick layin' an' here's one to start with!'" With that Jerry had hit him on the ear. It was a dramatic tale, and one which made Cecilia swell with pride over a wonderful paw!

The priest leaned across the table. "Have you a patent protection on those bricks?" he asked.

"Why, no," answered Jeremiah. The priest talked long and fast. Cecilia could not understand all of what he said, but he mentioned

unusual qualities of Jeremiah's product. His own knowledge of such things came through a brother in the same business. The necessity of a little risk and a big push. He talked loudly, and excitedly. He mentioned Cecilia and John as the incentive to gain. . . . He spoke of what he knew to be true of Jeremiah's product. Jeremiah sat very silent. If what the priest said were true! They went to the living room, where, over a pitcher of beer, there was more talk, incomprehensible to Cecilia.

Then the priest smiled, and said: "All right, Jerry. In five years you'll be a millionaire. Now, Cecilia, I want to hear a piece." Cecilia sat down to play "The Shepherd Boy." Her fingers trembled so that it wasn't as good as usual, but the priest was pleased. Then she left, and wiped the rest of the dishes for Norah. Norah said that the priest was a "swell talker" and that she hadn't minded the extra work.

Cecilia went up to bed very happy. She slipped out of her pink silk dress and hung it in the closet. As she reached up, a hat, all over bobbing roses, slid from the closet shelf to the floor. Cecilia's smile faded. She put it back, and shut the door.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST STEP INTO CANAAN

Cecilia stood in her bedroom in the new house. The paper in her bedroom was pink and hung in panels. At the top of each panel was a hip-diseased, and goitered cupid, who threw roses around,—roses that looked like frozen cabbages, and stuck in the air as if they'd been glued there. Father Madden had picked out the paper as a surprise for Celie. When she had seen it she had gasped and then kissed him very hard. He had said, "There, Celie, I knew you'd like it."

After he had gone Cecilia had looked around and said, "Oh, dear—Oh, dear!" Roses always had made her sick, and even to Cecilia, the paper was "pretty bad." And Cecilia had kissed him hard and said she loved it.

Some one tapped on the door.

"Come," said Cecilia.

"Father McGowan's down," said Norah with a point of her finger over her left shoulder. "An' the man's down with doughnuts, too."

Cecilia laughed. Norah's mode of announcement always made people sound diseased. Cecilia had a mental picture of a man in the throes of doughnuts—with them breaking out all over his person.

"You can take a dozen and a half," said Cecilia, referring to the doughnut-man, "because Johnny likes them so."

Norah didn't move, but stood in the doorway surveying the tumbled room. A trunk stood in the centre, lid thrown back. From it exuded frills and tails. The bed was piled high with more frilly garb. Norah sniffed loudly. Suddenly, there were sobs and then she dissolved into many tears. "I dunno how we *can* do without yuh!" she explained in gulps. "Me, and Johnny and your paw. Aw, *Celie!*" Cecilia put her arms around the troubled Norah. She looked very near tears herself.

"I would rather stay with you, but maw wanted me learned to be a lady," she said. Her chin set. "I gotta do it," she added. "Paw promised her." Norah sniffed and took the apron from her face. "I know yuh gotta, dearie," she answered. Celie put her arms around the damp Norah. "Norah," she said, "you will be very good to Johnny and paw?

When Johnny wants paw to wear collars all the time, you take him out and give him doughnuts to divert him, will yuh?" Norah nodded. She was sniffing again.

"And, Norah," went on Celie, "don't let the new cook use the blue glass butter dish everyday."

"N-no, dearie," answered Norah. She still stood irresolute by the door. "Celie," she said, "when they learn yuh to be a lady, don't let 'em learn yuh not to love us."

"I'll *always* love you all," answered Cecilia. Her eyes filled with tears, and she kissed Norah.

Downstairs Father McGowan sat looking at a gilt cabinet decorated with forget-me-nots, and a variety of chrysanthemums never seen on sea or land. On the top shelf of the cabinet was a brick, lying on a red velvet bed. Father McGowan smiled and then sobered. He remembered a night three years past when he had pointed out possibilities to Jeremiah Madden, possibilities in the manufacture of the humble brick. The possibilities had amounted to more than even he had anticipated. Sometimes he questioned what he had done. . . . His hope

lay in Cecilia. The boy, he was afraid, would not be helped by money. Perhaps he'd turn out well. Father McGowan hoped so. He'd bet on Cecilia anyway. She'd use money in the right way in a few more years.

There was a rustle at the door. Cecilia, in a new gown bought to wear at the "swell school," came in.

"Father McGowan, dear!" she said.

"Cecilia Madden, dear!" he answered. They both laughed, and then settled.

"Have you come to tell me to be a good girl at the swell school?" she questioned. The father was silent. He was looking at Cecilia's dress. The dress was of purple silk with a green velvet vest. There were ribbons looped carelessly on its gorgeousness too.

"Little Celie," said Father McGowan, "I want to tell you things and I can't. Now if you had a mother! Sometimes women do come in handy."

Cecilia nodded.

"I want to tell you," said Father McGowan, looking hard at the brick, "not to be hurt if at first the girls are stand-offish like. That's their way."

"Oh, no," said Cecilia. "I won't be, but I

think they'll be nice. Mrs. De Pui says they're all of the best families with wonderful home advantages."

"Hum—" grunted Father McGowan. He did not seem much impressed. He still gave the brick his undivided attention. "And," he went on, "if you should get lonely, remember that there's one Lady you can always tell your troubles to. She won't laugh, and she always listens."

"Oh, *yes!*" said Cecilia, and she crossed herself.

Father McGowan drew a long breath. "Now," he said, "remember that if your clothes are different from theirs that your father has plenty of money to buy new ones for you. Remember that. A penance is all right, but not at fourteen."

"Why, my clothes are beautiful!" said Cecilia. She looked bewildered. "They're all silk and lace and velvet, and I haven't a low heeled pair of shoes. *French* heels, Father McGowan, dear!"

"Cecilia Madden, dear," said Father McGowan. His look was inscrutable. He laid a hand on her hair. His touch was very gentle. "Most of all," he said, "remember never to be

ashamed of your people, and always to love them. Love those who love you. Reason the truth out in your heart, and don't accept the standards of little Miss Millionairess, because she is that. Understand?"

"Yes," replied Cecilia, "I understand, but Father McGowan, I would always love paw. Wearing shoes and collars in the house is just the trimmings," she stated bravely. "His heart is genteel."

"Saint Cecilia!" said Father McGowan in a low voice, and then he muttered a few words in Latin. Cecilia did not understand them, but she bowed her head and crossed herself, and felt strong.

After Father McGowan left she stood in front of a mirror admiring a purple silk dress with green velvet trimmings. "Holy Mary," she said with quickly closed eyes, "help me not to be too stuck on my clothes!" When she opened her eyes she looked into the mirror. "Oh, it's grand!" she whispered. "I *am* almost pretty in it!" She drew a long, shaking breath.

The room in which Cecilia waited, while not at all like her home, impressed her. Most of the furniture looked old, and some of it

showed a cracking veneer. The clock especially needed repair. It was a grandfather one, and had inlaid figures of white wood on the dark. Cecilia wondered vaguely if it couldn't be repaired and shone up? Dilapidated as she thought the furnishing, yet it left an impress. Two girls entered the room, they looked at Cecilia and tried not to smile. Cecilia wondered uncomfortably if her hat were on crooked, or whether her red silk petticoat hung out.

They selected books from a low case with leisure, then left. Outside the door Cecilia heard them giggle. One of them said, "Some one's cook."

"Every one has trouble with cooks," thought Cecilia. Then she looked down and forgot cooks. Her shoes were *so* beautiful! Pointed toes and high of heels. And her suit now, all over braid and buttons, with a touch of red here and there!

Even those giggling girls must have been impressed. Their clothes had been so *plain.* Cecilia pitied them. She decided to give them a "tasty" hair-ribbon now and then. . . . The waiting was so long. She wished Mrs. De Pui

would come. She thought of paw and Johnny and her eyes filled with hot tears.

"Oh," she thought miserably, "if Johnny just won't reform paw! People are *so* happy when they aren't reforming or being reformed!"

Again she saw the station at which she'd started for Boston, her father and Johnny both sniffing. She was so glad she hadn't cried. She had so wanted to! Her breath caught in her throat. "Please, Gawd," she made mental appeal, "make them learn me to be a lady quick!"

Weren't they *ever* coming?

The shabby clock tick-tick-ticked. The sun lowered and made more slanting rays on the floor. A maid, very smart in uniform, came in. She gave Cecilia a guilty look, then said: "This way. Mrs. De Pui will see you upstairs."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Cecilia. She followed humbly. The maid decided that her forgetfulness hadn't made much difference. She didn't think that *that* would report her. . . . Cecilia went upstairs after the slender black figure. Her heart beat sickeningly. There were voices from the door at

"MILK, AN' SUGAR IF YUH HAVE IT"

which the maid paused. Cecilia saw some girls sitting around a table at which a white-haired woman was pouring tea.

"Oh," said Cecilia impulsively, "I'm interrupting yuh at yer supper."

"No," answered Mrs. De Pui, faintly smiling; "come in. You are Cecilia?"

Cecilia nodded. Somehow the sobs that had been kept in all day, were, at the first kind voice, very near the surface. The girls smiled at each other. Cecilia wondered about her hat, or perhaps her petticoat hung out below her skirt? Mrs. De Pui motioned her to a chair.

"Annette," she said, "give our new friend some tea."

"How do you take your tea?" questioned Annette crisply.

"Milk," answered Cecilia, "an' sugar if yuh have it." She reddened. Of course they would have it. She wished she hadn't said that! She stared in acute embarrassment at her feet. Some one gave her a cup of tea, some one else a sandwich. She dipped it in the tea, then she remembered that that was not proper and reddened again. At that move the young person called Annette had suddenly choked and held her handkerchief over her mouth. The

other girls looked into their cups, with the corners of their lips twitching.

A fat and dumpy-looking girl seated a little out of the group looked at Cecilia with sympathy. Mrs. De Pui spoke of a recent exhibition of water colours, with her well-bred tones trickling over the inanities she uttered, and making them sound like a reflection of thought. . . . Even the sun looked cold to Cecilia.

"I wish I was back in the flat," she thought, and then: "I wonder if I *can* bear it!"

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING

A month had passed. Cecilia quite understood what Father McGowan had meant about clothes. Cecilia wore no more French heels. She had taken down her hair and discarded her beautiful rhinestone hair-pins. Father McGowan too, it seemed, had been responsible for her admittance to the school. Cecilia had found out from Mrs. De Pui that he had written a book! This astounding fact had been divulged after Mrs. De Pui, more than usually tried by Cecilia, had said: "Your entrance here has been rather difficult for me. You see, of course, that the other girls' advantages have not been yours?"

"Oh, yes, Mrs. De Pui," answered Cecilia, and swallowed hard.

"Realising that, my dear," continued Mrs. De Pui, "I hope that you will do your utmost to develop a womanly sympathy, and broaden your character."

Cecilia said somewhat breathlessly that she

would try to, very, very hard! "And," went on Mrs. De Pui, then coughed, "desist from the use of such words as 'elegant,'—'refined' (which, when used at all, is re*fin*ed, not 'r*ee*fined'), and 'grand.' Such words, my dear Cecilia, are not used in——" (Mrs. De Pui nearly said polite society, but swallowed it with a horrified gulp) "are not used by persons of cultivation," she finished weakly.

Cecilia vanished. She went to her lonely room. (There were no room-mates.) She settled on the bed. By the bed, on a chair, was a pink silk dress. It had been her star play, and after a month of boarding school she was going to give it to the maid. The maid was *so* friendly!

There were two letters on the small dressing table. Cecilia got them and read:

"Celie girl, we miss you. It ain't like it was in the house. I hope they are learning you good and the board is good. I hope they treat you good. Father McGowan was here last night. He sez he will go to see you soon. Johnny is well. Norah sez your cat is lonely too. Your father with love,

"J. MADDEN."

The other was a line from John. A petulant line, full of querulous complaint of a collarless father, redeemed to Cecilia by a word or two at the end.

"You were so good to me, Celie. I know it now." She threw herself down on the bed. Her shoulders shook miserably. Tears wet a once loved pink silk dress, "all over beads and lace."

Upstairs in another room, a group of girls were laughing uncontrollably. "You know she actually invited Annie to *sit* down!" said one. (Annie was the slender maid.)

"That is not r*ee*fined," answered Annette. There was more wild laughter.

"*Do* ask her up to-night," suggested a tawny haired maiden with cat-green eyes. "*Do!* It would be simply *screamingly* funny!"

Annette, although one of the most unkind, objected. "It doesn't seem quite nice," she said. However, as the idea promised fun, the majority ruled.

Cecilia answered the tap on her door. "Come up to your room to-night?" she echoed after the invitation. "Oh, Miss Annette, I'd be that glad to come!" she smiled, and her smile was like sunshine after rain.

"I *do* thank you!" she said. "I do!"

Annette turned away. Cecilia closed the door, then she covered her eyes. "Gawd, thank you ever so much!" she whispered, "thank you! I *have* been so lonely! Make them love me. Please make them love me, Gawd." Then she lifted her head. Her face shone. "I wonder what I shall wear?" she said.

To meet the ideal of one's dreams while carrying a sick cat is humiliating. And that is what happened to Cecilia Evangeline Agnes Madden. Her shadowy dream-knight had materialised into human shape through a photograph. And she met him while chaperoning a sick cat.

Two weeks before she had gone to a party in Annette Twombly's room. She'd not enjoyed the party very much, in fact she'd been rather unhappy until she saw the photograph. After that she didn't care what happened. All the romance of the Celt had leaped. . . . Her shadowy dreams took form. The ideal lover developed a body.

"Oh, your *heavenly* cousin, Annette!" said the green-eyed. "I *adore* his hair!" She stood

before a large photograph, framed elaborately.

"He *is* a sweet boy," Annette had responded, "but so particular! I never knew any one quite so fastidious. It is *fearfully* hard to please him!"

"Does he get crushes?" asked the green-eyed.

"My dear," said Annette, "it would be im-*poss*ible. He's terribly intellectual and all that, and girls so easily offend him. He doesn't say so, but he simply stops paying them any attention."

The group gathered about the picture to admire. It showed a rather nice looking boy, with an outdoor flavour, and eyes that questioned. . . . The face was too young to have character.

"He's had on long trousers for six years!" said Annette. There was a hushed silence. "Isn't he *divine!*" gurgled the young person at length. Cecilia had only looked. The shadowy dream man vanished. The picture boy took his place.

This day Cecilia walked alone as usual. Mrs. De Pui was an advocate of trust as a developer of "womanly instinct," so on a stipu-

lated number of streets, the girls were allowed to walk unchaperoned. They went in little groups, all except Cecilia. She was her own small group.

To-day she walked alone, at least it seemed so, but by her Cecilia felt K. Stuyvesant Twombly. "I admire art," he was saying. His voice, curiously enough, was Mrs. De Pui's.

"So do I," agreed Cecilia. "Beauty develops us, the best of us, and brings a shining light into the soul." Cecilia stopped. Then because she was very truthful she went on: "That is not original. The man who lectures us on Art said it. He has whiskers and false teeth, I believe, for they click when he says, 'Renaissance.'" . . . "Oh, Heavens!" thought Cecilia, "I will never be a lady. That would not be the way to talk to the ideal man. About teeth!—false ones!"

Then the cat had appeared. Rather Cecilia had nearly walked on it. It was a limp little grey and white heap, its fur half wet from the gutter, and eyes half closed.

"Poor pussy," said Cecilia. "You look like I feel when I'm with them what have social advantages. Poor pussy!" She was very

tender toward it. She leaned above it, then picked it up. "I will bribe Annie, with dresses, to feed it," she thought. The cat began to be violently ill. Cecilia put it down.

"I say!" came in a rather husky voice, "Pussy needs some Mothersill's, doesn't she?"

Cecilia didn't understand the allusion, but she looked up smiling. The voice had been attractively hearty. After she looked up, she gasped.

"What are you going to do with it?" went on the young man.

"I thought I'd take it to my school and get the hired girl,—I mean maid,—to feed it."

"No," objected K. Stuyvesant; "it's poisoned. We'll take it to a drug store and get them to kill it."

"Oh, *no!*" said Cecilia.

"See here," said the boy, "the cat will die. I've had dogs of mine poisoned. It's the most merciful thing to have it killed. It'll only suffer and drag its life out if you take it home."

"I see," said Cecilia. "I suppose you know. It's just as you say."

"Good kid," he commented. His comment called forth an agony and elation. Cecilia

wished for the longer dresses with which she'd come to school. The boy picked up the cat gently and wrapped his handkerchief about it.

"Come on," he said. "Drug store around the corner."

Cecilia followed. She could not keep up to him. Half the time she ran. The whole affair was humiliating.

"Thank the Lord no one saw me!" said the boy when they got inside the drug store. He looked at Cecilia. They both laughed.

"Sit down," he said. "I'm going to buy you a soda." Cecilia sat down. "Choclut," she ordered. He sat down opposite her, and put his arms on the sticky little table. He thought he looked on the prettiest child he'd ever seen. . . . She seemed entirely and only a child.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Cecilia Evangeline Agnes Madden," she answered.

"Well, Cecilia Evangeline," he said, "don't try to eat the bottom of the glass; I'm wealthy to-day. I'm going to buy you another soda!"

"Oh," answered Cecilia, "I really oughtn't." At a motion the clerk bent above her. "C-could

I have a sundae?" asked Cecilia. The boy laughed and nodded.

"Peach," said Cecilia, "with a good deal of whipped cream on top, if you please!" She smiled frankly on K. Stuyvesant. "I'm having a *fine* time!" she said. Her sentimental dreams of him had vanished. He didn't talk a bit like the phantom, but he was *nicer!*

"What's your name, please?" she asked. She knew, but little Cecilia at fourteen was a woman.

"Keefer Stuyvesant Twombly," he answered. "Rotten name. Imagine being hailed as 'Keefer'! It sounds like some one's butler. It isn't a nice name, is it, Evangeline Cecilia?"

"No," said Cecilia. "But then, you are nice. Names and things are just trimmings. *You* are nice," she repeated.

"So are you," returned the boy, "and I'll *bet* you're Irish!"

"*How* did you know?" asked Cecilia, wide-eyed. "How did you know?"

"And there she sat," said the green-eyed, "laughing with him in the most brazen way, and he bought her *two* sodas!"

"How vulgar," said Annette. "Was he good looking?"

"Ravishing, my dear. Alice thought that he looked like your cousin."

"That, of course, is impossible," said Annette coldly. "He *does* happen to be here. He and his mother are at the Touraine. But as for his looking at any one like that Madden girl—! How she got in here, I can't imagine. I think that it is an imposition to be asked to meet her."

Annette surveyed her hair, and picked up a mirror. "Did you tell Mrs. De Pui?" she asked.

"Yes," answered the green-eyed; "I thought that it was my *duty*. It hurt me to do it, but I thought I *ought* to. We watched them for the longest time. We pretended to be looking at a window full of hot water bottles."

Alice came in. She picked up the photograph of K. Stuyvesant Twombly. She nodded at the green-eyed after she looked long. . . . Annette saw this in the glass and glared.

CHAPTER V

DISGRACE

The day had been terrible for Cecilia. She had learned from Mrs. De Pui that she had hopelessly offended. . . . What she had done, Mrs. De Pui said, was an act suitable for one of the maids. Mrs. De Pui was pained. She could not believe that one of her pupils, with the womanly inspiration of the school set before her, could have so offended. It was unthinkable!

Cecilia wriggled, and swallowed with difficulty.

"Cultivate repose," ordered Mrs. De Pui coldly. Cecilia stood so rigidly that she looked like a wooden Indian. One of the girls entered. She said, "Excuse me," and backed away, plainly much interested.

"What was the boy's name, Cecilia?" asked Mrs. De Pui. Cecilia swallowed so hard that she shook. "I don't know," she answered loudly.

Then what Mrs. De Pui said was very ter-

rible. Cecilia crawled off at last, white and shaking. She groped for her door knob. Things before her were not very clear. What Mrs. De Pui had said was very terrible, but, —but the other, her first lie, uttered with that brazen assurance. . . . She went in and threw herself across the bed. . . . She didn't cry. The hurt was too big. So her dear father and the fact that she was born in poverty made her an outcast? If so, she would stay so. "Learn her to be a lady," the breeze that came in through an inch opened window whispered. Cecilia felt it, and set her chin.

And Mrs. De Pui hadn't believed her story. Hadn't believed her. . . . "One more try, Cecilia, although you are a great trial both to me and my pupils," echoed through her brain in Mrs. De Pui's cold tones. Cecilia sat upright on the bed. "My heart's right," she said aloud. "I believe it's better than Annette's. Don't that count for nothing? Ain't being kind being a lady?" She stared sullenly across the room. The white furniture glittered coldly. From between the flutter of scrim curtains she saw a painfully well arranged park. Even the trees were smugly superior.

"Gawd *was* in that [illegible]," she said, and again aloud. A sentence came to her mind. A sentence that is shopworn and has been on the top shelf for many years. "I guess Gawd is what I feel fer paw,—" she said, half musingly,—"Love. An' fer Johnny, even when he's bad, an' Father McGowan, dear, an' Norah. Just that." . . . She looked out of the window and saw the painfully well regulated trees again. "Them trees ain't so bad," she stated; "at least they ain't when I remember that they love me at home." Her face changed, for she remembered some of Mrs. De Pui's well-aimed truths. Her father,—his difference. It should always be hers, too, she decided.

Her first touch of hate came. "Gawd, make me a lady quick!" she implored. Some one tapped on the door. Cecilia opened it. Annie was there, beaming. She held a long box with stems sticking out of one end of it. "Fer you, dearie," said Annie. Cecilia opened the box with trembling hands. The box held pink roses, very, very pink roses. . . . On the top lay a card. On it was written in a loose, boy-hand: "For little 'A-good-deal-of-whipped-

cream-on-top.'" Cecilia stared at the card, breathless.

"Annie," she said at last, "*ain't* they lovely?"

"Aren't, dearie," corrected Annie, and then added, "You bet they are! You bet!" Cecilia lifted them reverently. There were three dozens of them. Her years were such that numbers and prices still counted.

"Who shall I tell *her* they're from?" asked Annie. "Yuh got her goat, yuh know."

"Father McGowan," answered Cecilia. Suddenly the guilt of the other lie, her shame over the act unthinkable, and her new realisation of the standing of those she loved, slid from her soul. She was wildly happy. She hugged Annie.

The white furniture didn't glitter coldly. It smiled. A crowded flat was far away. The trees in a smug park were beautiful.

"One new frock," read Father McGowan, "twenty-five dollars. Hat, fifteen. 'Madam Girard's skin food, and wrinkle remover,' two dollars and fifty cents. Flat-heeled shoes, seven dollars. Taxi, one dollar and fifty-two cents. Church offering, ten cents."

Father McGowan threw back his head, and

"YOUR ENTRANCE HERE HAS BEEN MOST DIFFICULT FOR ME"

laughed loudly. Jeremiah Madden looked on him, bewildered.

"It's her cash account, yuh know. Twenty-five dollars fer one dress," he mused, with a pleased smile. "*Ain't* she learnin' quick? But the letter," he added, with a perplexed frown appearing, "it sounds *too* happy. The happiness is a little *too* thick. Smells like she put it on with a paint brush jest fer show."

"Hum——" grunted Father McGowan. He opened a pink letter sheet. At the top of it a daisy was engraved. "I give her that paper," said Jeremiah proudly. "She *was* tickled. She sez as how none of the girls in school had nothing like it."

"I believe it," replied Father McGowan. There were heavy lines in his face. Cecilia's heart-ache lay on his shoulders, he felt, for he had made the "Brick King."

"Darling Papa:" read Father McGowan, "I was so happy to hear from you. I read your letters over and over. I love you very much. I am learning that that is the biggest thing in the world, loving people, and having them love you. I miss you, but of course I am happy.

"The School is elegant very nice, and I get

enough to eat. The view from the front windows is swell beautiful. It looks right out on the Park, all over fancy foliage and rich people walking around. I sometimes walk there, and one little girl, awfully cute, with bare legs and a nurse, likes me. Yesterday she threw a kiss to me. She looked like Johnny when he was little, and we lived in the flat. It made me want to cry.

"I am very happy. You do so much for me. I will be very happy when I can come home to you and Johnny, and we can have Father McGowan to supper dinner every Saturday night. I am sending some things that look like fruit knives, but which are butter spreaders, and are used to apply butter to bread, etc. (i.e., not to eat off of).

"I am very happy. I went to one party in an exclusive girl's room. It was kind of her to ask me. I love you so much, Papa. Please kiss Johnny for me, and Norah. Tell her to use the butter spreaders daily. (*All* the time.)

"She need not cherish the blue glass butter dish any more.

"I do love you, dear Papa. Your,

"CECILIA."

"P. S.: I send my respectful regards to Father McGowan, and thanks for getting me into this exclusive School, which caters only to sophisticated people with money.

"C."

"Well?" asked Jeremiah, after Father McGowan had laid down a pink sheet of paper with an engraved daisy at the top. "Well?"

"Hum," grunted Father McGowan, "Hum!" He stared long at a brick which lay on the top shelf of a gilt cabinet. "I'm going up to Boston," he said at length. "I'll look in on our little Cecilia."

"Will yuh, now?" asked Jeremiah. "It's kept me awake nights, thinkin' that mebbe in spite of all the expense, she wasn't happy. I wanted to go up, but Johnny sez I wasn't suitable fer a girls' school, being as I remove my collar absent-minded like (having always did it)."

"You're suitable, all right," said Father McGowan, "but since I *am* going up, I might as well attend to it. Hard for you to leave business, too."

"Yes," admitted Jeremiah happily. He swelled and cast a loving eye toward the brick.

Then he wilted. The proud pleasure was gone. "*She* always wanted a bunnit with pink roses on," he said in a low voice, "an' I couldn't never buy her none, an' now——!"

Father McGowan laid a hand on Jeremiah's. "There, there, Jerry!" he said. "Think how happy you're making the children!"

A sallow boy came in. He cast a sneering look at a limp figure in a gilt chair. Then, without a word, he picked up a book and went out.

Jeremiah's eyes were like a child's—the eyes of a frightened child. "Sometimes," he said in a whisper, "I'm afraid he's *ashamed* of me!"

"No!" exploded Father McGowan, "No!"

There is nothing like the scorn of the undetected guilty for those who are exposed. Cecilia was treated to fine scorn, supercilious looks, and, worst of all, a chill overlooking; for she had allowed a boy whom she'd never met to buy her a soda water and a pink sundae! And,—what made the offence doubly revolting,—was the fact that the boy was considered by the girls a man, and that those who had seen him termed him "*Ravishing,* my dear!" He,—but let us quote: "Simply *Rav*ishing, my

dear, with dark eyes and hair. *Hon*estly, he looked as if he had a secret sorrow, or was on the stage, or was *fear*fully fast. Something *won*derfully interesting about him, you know. Why he would *ever* look at *her,* I can't see,——" etc.

Cecilia sat in the corner of the shabby-impressive room. She was reading "Sordello" because it was required by the English teacher. Cecilia wasn't a bit interested, and twice the book had slipped shut, and she hadn't known at all where she'd left off, which was annoying; she was afraid she might read one page twice, and she couldn't bear the idea of that. She wondered if this Browning person could have made a success at manufacturing bricks? She judged not. He didn't seem practical, but inwardly she was sure that he could have done anything better than write poetry. She really wondered quite a little bit about him, but after the laughter of the class on her question: "Is Mr. Browning an American or does he come from the Old Country?" she had ceased to voice her speculations.

She turned the pages fretfully. There were a great many more. She hoped that Mr. Browning was dead, so that he wouldn't write

any more stuff that they would be required to read. Then she berated herself soundly for this unholy wish.

Annette Twombly and a girl with tawny hair and green eyes came in. When they saw Cecilia they raised their eyebrows.

"There seems to be *no* privacy in this place!" said Annette. Cecilia turned a page.

"And what is worse, my dear," answered the green-eyed, "one is constantly called upon to meet persons socially inferior—the kind suitable to the kitchen and associating with the policeman."

Cecilia had turned another page, but she had not read it. The print was jumping dangerously from the quick pump of her heart. "I will not move," she thought. "I will not move, nor show them that I hear."

"Imagine allowing an unknown man to buy you sodas!" said Annette, who was looking out of the window. "Isn't it utterly *hope*less?"

There was a pained silence. The hopelessness of it had evidently eaten deeply into the systems of Annette and the green-eyed.

"Milk, an' sugar, if yuh have it," mimicked the green-eyed. She scored her point. Cecilia's book closed. She got up quickly and

went toward the door. There she paused with her hand on the jamb. "I hope it pleases you to make me so unhappy," she said quietly, "for otherwise I don't know what you are accomplishing." Then she went upstairs to an always lonely room. She closed the door gently and lay across the bed, staring at the ceiling. She never cried any more. She reached beneath the pillow. Her cold and moist little hand closed about the letter of a brick king.

"I love you!" she whispered fiercely. "I shall make you proud of me, but Maw, I'm glad you died before the roses came! I'm glad! I'm glad! . . . They have so *many* thorns!"

The young ladies downstairs didn't giggle as usual. They avoided each other's eyes. At last Annette said, "Upstart! How dared she speak to me that way!" It was said in an effort to reinstate her superior right to exercise the rack. The green-eyed didn't answer. She looked out of the window. At last she said carelessly, "Going to dress." And Annette was not invited to her room.

The green-eyed stood still just inside her door. She thought of a fat father, and of his

code of morals. The mother whom her eyes came from was very distant.

"It has been utterly devilish!" she said loudly. "Utterly. And I did it while I read 'The Mob,' and ranted over it." Then she threw a book across the room, which spelled emotional crisis for her temperament and, this time, reform. Her green eyes were full of healthily ashamed tears.

CHAPTER VI

A HINT OF PINK

Cecilia sat well forward in the parquet seats of an opera house in Boston. Her small hand was curled up in the fat palm of a fat priest. The people who saw this smiled indulgently, then looked again; for the little girl was so pretty, and so happy, and the man's face was unusual.

The curtain had not gone up. They were a good fifteen minutes early.

"You see, Father McGowan-dear," said Cecilia, "it was not just their fault, for I am so different. I am still, but less so. . . . Then one day they said more than usual while I was reading that Sordello poem. (It isn't interesting, is it?)" Father McGowan smiled and shook his head. "And I thought I just couldn't stand it. I was so miserable that I *even* thought of taking the veil!" Father McGowan laughed suddenly. Cecilia looked at him with questioning eyes. "Go on, dear," he said gently, "and excuse a bad-mannered old priest."

She squeezed his thumb and continued: "Well, it was that day I decided to go home. I decided I could not be a lady, I mean I could not acquire a *savoir faire* (that means a natural swellness)," explained Cecilia. Father McGowan nodded. His eyes twinkled. "So," said Cecilia, "I took all my money, and put on my hat and *sneaked* out. Then I walked down the block and across the Park. I saw a baby in the Park, a little girl, and she makes me think of Johnny when he was little and I took care of him. Then I thought of maw, and how she wanted me learned, I mean taught, and I went back. I am not very brave, and I wanted to c.. / dreadfully. I got in the hall, and there was Mrs. De Pui. She looked awfully cold, a. l she said, 'May I ask where you have been, Cecilia?' and then that green-eyed girl I hated broke right in and said, 'I had a slight headache, and I asked her to post a letter for me, Mrs. De Pui. I *hope* you don't mind.' The green-eyed girl is very rich, and so Mrs. De Pui said so sweetly that she hadn't minded at all.

"She always says 'post' instead of 'mail,' Father McGowan-dear. She spent two weeks in London last summer, and she said that the

English accent became unconscious, or at least that she used it unconsciously. And she does except when she gets excited or talks fast.

"Well, she followed me upstairs, the green-eyed one, her name is Marjory, and I said, 'I do thank you.' Then I felt mean about the way I'd felt toward her, and I added, 'I am very sorry that I have hated you so.' Then she kissed me, Mother McGo- n-dear. Really, she did, and she said she was *glad* I'd hated her. That it helped. She went down the hall, and paused at the turn to say, 'It is a great deal to ask, but some day I hope you'll like me!" Oh,—the curtain's going up! Look at that yellow dress. Aren't her legs *beautiful?* Mine are *so* skinny!"

There was a burst of music, and the chorus waved their arms with the regularity of the twist of aspen leaves, when rain is coming.

Cecilia gasped. Then she sat breathless, watching every motion on the stage. A fat priest sat looking down at her. Once he took off his glasses and polished them. Something was making them misty.

The curtain went down. Cecilia gasped again, then she told of the awful, humiliating sick-cat episode, and of her disgrace in ac-

cepting a "choclut soda," and a pink sundae with whipped cream on top. Father McGowan was very understanding. He did not think it was a sin. In fact he was quite violently sure it was not. He grew very red in the face.

"What is the matter with that woman?" he asked in an entirely new, and really horribly stern tone. Cecilia didn't answer. Her startled eyes recalled him. "By George!" he said. "I forgot the candy!" and he produced from a coat pocket the most beautiful box.

"Oh," said Cecilia, "oh!" She smiled up into Father McGowan's face, and then added, "I can put that ribbon in a chemise. Oh, *dear* Father McGowan!"

"What is a priest to do," asked Father McGowan, "when all his inclinations are to kiss a young lady's hand?"

"I *am* so happy!" said Cecilia. Father McGowan put his other hand on the small one that lay in his. Cecilia tightened her little fingers about his thumb.

Father McGowan pushed away his plate. The chops were underdone, the potatoes soggy.

"Here's yer coffee," said Mrs. Fry. She was a perfect person for the housekeeper of a

priest, being so visited with warts and a lemon expression that questioning her morals was impossible. Father McGowan stirred the coffee, then took a sip. He sighed. "Well," he thought, "at least it makes fasting easier!"

In the hall of the rectory were twelve people. They were all shabby, and a boy of eleven sniffed with a wonderful regularity. They were all waiting to see a fat priest. A girl with sullen eyes and once pretty face looked around with defiant assurance. Opposite her on the wall hung a carved wood crucifix. When her eyes met that, she shrank, and then she'd look away, and again be sullenly brazen.

A well-dressed man rang the bell. The warted housekeeper answered it.

"I should like to see Father McGowan," he said. "I will only need a few moments of his time," he added on seeing the people waiting.

"Set down," ordered Mrs. Fry. "You'll have to wait yer turn." The man smiled. He was faintly amused. "I hardly think so," he said; "I am Doctor Van Dorn. My time is rather valuable. I can hardly waste it in that way."

"It's his rule," said Mrs. Fry, nodding her head toward the rear of the hall. "All who waits is the same. Yuh waits yer turn, or yuh goes. *He* don't care." She had fixed her eyes above the man's head with all her words. He looked on her, frowning deeply, then said with an unconcealed irritation showing in his voice: "Will you at least take him my card?"

Mrs. Fry nodded. She held out a palm that looked damp, then went down the hall, reading the card as she walked. "He needn't be so smart," she made mental comment. "*Here* he ain't no better than none of the rest." She went toward the table at which Father McGowan sat and shoved the card toward him. "He wants to see yuh right off, *now*," she said.

Father McGowan picked up the card, read it, and then laid it aside. "Tell him the rules," he said shortly. He turned back to a page of pink letter paper, with a daisy engraved on its top. He glanced from it to the clock. He still had twenty minutes before work began.

"Dearest Father McGowan, dear:" was written on the pink sheet. It was crossed out

and below it was written, "Respected Father: —(I meant the first, but I suppose this is properer.) I can't tell you how happy you made me by the play and everything. I have put the pink ribbon in a chemise where it looks decorative, and cheers me up, as I like pink ribbons in underwear, although white are better taste. I am much happier. I am not *always* happy, but do not tell Papa, nor any one that I am not. I *am* much happier than I was.

"I apologise for clinging to you and kissing your hand good-bye when you left, but I am not sorry. It was very hard to let you go. Pink roses seemed *all* thorns just then."

Father McGowan stopped reading. He looked across the room with far eyes. They were surrounded by fat wrinkles, and made small by thick lenses, but they were rather beautiful.

"I wanted to do as you suggested and try another school," he read, "but I somehow feel that I must finish what I've started, and I would like to show these girls that my soul is not purple silk trimmed with green velvet, if you can understand that; they seem to judge everything by rhinestone hair-pins, which is not a real clue to character.

"When you go to dinner with Papa, see that Norah uses the butter spreaders, which are small knives shaped like fruit knives. I will be deeply grateful. They are used for buttering bread, and so on (not to eat from).

"We are studying art. Andrea Dalsartoe, who painted the Madona of the Chair, just now. Marjory is so kind to me. She is an Episcopal but nice in every other way. They say a prayer to themselves when they go into church, too. She says, 'Peanuts, popcorn, and chewing gum, amen,' which I do not think is *very* devout. She says it is just the right length when said *slowly*.

"You did make me so happy by that play and the candy. I have never had a better time but once, after which I was disgraced and sorry. (I had not met him socially, you know, which made it improper to eat sundaes with him, even while on an errand of mercy to a sick and dying cat.)

"We hear an orchestra every Saturday, chaperoned by our English teacher, who has asthma horribly and splutters a great deal. The music is classical and improving. I do not enjoy it very much, but there is a man in the orchestra who has an Adam's apple that

wiggles and he helps me. One can always find enjoyment when looking for it, can't one? He plays a horn, and blows the spit from it often. He seems to have a great deal of spit.

"I have not thanked you the way I wanted to for the play, and everything, not forgetting the taxi ride and the sundae afterward. I do love you, Father McGowan, dear. I believe if there were more priests who believed in God, *and* pink boxes of candy, there would be more Christians.

"Most respectfully, and lovingly,

"CECILIA."

The clock struck one. Father McGowan folded up a pink sheet, and put it, in its envelope, in his pocket.

He was smiling gently. He opened the door into the hall, and the people struggled tiredly to their feet.

"Pax Tibi!" he said with a hand above his head. A girl with sullen eyes sobbed aloud. A Doctor sneered.

Much later the Doctor was admitted to a rather bare room, made tolerable by the colours of the books which lined its walls. The priest sat behind a table. They exchanged

the usual formalities, then Father McGowan said: "Well?" Doctor Van Dorn shifted uneasily. "It is difficult to explain," he said. "I don't know just how to put it, but I thought you, if any one, could help me."

"I shall do all in my power to help you, if I think you need help," answered Father McGowan. The Doctor picked up a paper knife. He toyed with it, then blurted out: "I feel sure that there must be some reason for it, and that he's merely doing it from some evil wish."

"Who? Doing what?" asked Father McGowan.

The Doctor looked silly and laughed uneasily. "I'm not very coherent," he said.

"Oh, well," said Father McGowan, "we're both doctors in a way. We both meet that enough to understand it. Now take your time and tell me your story in your own way." He pushed a box of cigars across the table. "Want to smoke?" he asked with the move. The Doctor nodded and lit a cigar.

"It concerns a man named Madden," he said, "who, I have found, is one of your people. I have no proof, at least of the tangible sort, but I believe he is doing all he can to

ruin me. . . . He is succeeding fairly well, too."

"Well, well," said Father McGowan. "Now what's he doing?"

"It began," said the Doctor, "with my hospital, which you know is a private affair, and in which some of my fellow doctors, with me, do some experimental work. The most of my clientele consists of the rather more well-known people of this city, as you know."

Father McGowan nodded. The Doctor's voice was as usual, and he began to swell a bit, with the tale of his hospital and its clientele.

"I rarely take charity work," said the Doctor. "All New York is after me. . . ." Suddenly his face changed. "Was after me," he corrected. He studied the end of his cigar. "I did take one small chap," he went on slowly, "a charity case. He interested me. The complications were most unusual; however, you would not understand about them, and they do not influence the tale. I took him in and gave him the best of care, even to giving him a hundred-dollar room and an especial nurse. (His case was most interesting.) Well, as you know, the action of the muscles and or-

gans is changed by anæsthesia. I—ah,—I did but the slightest experimental work, keeping him well-fed, you know, and in this hundred-dollar-a-week room. The best of care, as I explained. He,—ah,—himself submitted to this slight pain when I told him that after it he would run and play as other boys. He had a natural, childish desire to run and play. Quite natural, I suppose."

"I suppose so," said Father McGowan. His tone was dry. His expression was very different from that which he had worn while reading the pink letter sheet.

"Then one day when a slight,—very slight, I assure you,—operation was absolutely necessary to his getting well, he said he would not, could not endure it. He had been quite weakened by his being in bed, and so on, but he screamed wildly. What he said was most improper and very ungrateful. He turned against us suddenly, as is the way of some when diseased." The Doctor stopped. He had grown rather white. He was again in a hundred-dollar room, which had a slat door, and no way to keep the voice of a frenzied charity patient from the rest of his aristocratic hospital. He heard the voice again: "Gawd, no,

youse devils! . . . Youse are killing me! Lemme die! Oh, [illegible], don't strap me down! I can't stand it [illegible] more. . . . Don't—don't! Christ . . . Christ . . . Kill me, but don't——"

The Doctor moistened his lips, and came back to the bare room in St. Mary's Rectory. "He was most ungrateful," he said to Father McGowan, "and he bit my hand when I tried to silence him." Father McGowan was looking out of the window. The Doctor went on less surely. "A woman who scrubbed the floors heard this, and, as is the way with her class, got emotionally aroused. It seems she lived in a tenement, and had lived there when Jeremiah Madden had lived across the hall, before he made his money. She went to see him. He removed the lad from my care, and with his malicious help, lied viciously about me and my work, scattering statements broadcast, and giving their statements to the papers. My own profession do not largely back me up, being, I suppose, jealous, and of little spirit. I think they recognise my skill too well to love me. You read those articles?" he asked, turning to Father McGowan.

"That has nothing to do with your narra-

tive," answered Father McGowan. "Please go on."

"Well," said the Doctor, his well-bred voice holding a hint of frost, "it,—that is, this malicious attack,—had prejudiced many. For the good of this Madden man's soul you should help him to be truthful, not to so belittle his nature by——"

"You're worried about his soul?" said Father McGowan. "Is *that* why you came to me?" Father McGowan smiled. The Doctor shifted in his chair. There was the staccato tap of crutches on the bare floor of the hall. The knob of the door turned.

"Father," came in a small boy's voice from the doorway, "I brung yuh a toad. I want youse to bless it. It's dead. It was a cripple, too. I found it all mashed. You'll bless it? Me an' the fellers is going to bury it. *Ain't* it cute?"

The Doctor had not turned.

"Come in, little Saint Sebastian," said Father McGowan. The little boy gave him a look that was pathetically adoring. His crutches tapped across the bare floor. Opposite the Doctor, he looked at him. Suddenly he screamed.

"Gawd! My Gawd! Oh, Father McGowan,—*don't*—let him have me!" He clung to Father McGowan's cassock as he sobbed out his broken prayer. "Don't, Mister, don't!" he ended weakly. Father McGowan picked him up. He looked at the Doctor.

"Go," he said.

Father McGowan again settled back of a bare table. A little boy sobbed in his arms. "Will you forgive me, little Saint Sebastian?" asked Father McGowan. The child's arms tightened around his neck. Father McGowan coughed.

"We're going to have some pink ice cream," he said after an interval. "Now here's my hanky. Gentlemen don't wipe their noses on their sleeves!"

"Will—will yuh bless the toad?" asked the child, after a damp smearing of Father McGowan's handkerchief. "He was a cripple. *Ain't* he cute, now?" he added in a tender, little voice. Then he brightened and said loudly, "But I'm glad he's dead, for they ain't no Father McGowan toads to be good to little toad-cripples!"

Father McGowan coughed, and tightened his arms about Sebastiano Santo of the slums.

"Oh, dearest Paw—I mean Papa!" said Cecilia. She clung to him. The lights of the New York station blurred through her tears. Then she veered away from him, and gathered Johnny close.

"Aw," he said, "cut it! There's one of the fellows over there." But "one of the fellows" faced the other direction, Johnny saw, and he allowed himself to hug Celie quickly. He was glad to see her, but he felt a vague resentment toward her because her coming made his throat so stuffy. He remembered the time when he used to sit on her lap and eat bread spread thickly with molasses. He didn't know quite why he was thinking of it in the Pennsylvania Station. . . . He remembered that he used to pull her curls and that she'd pretend to cry and then kiss him, and then they'd both laugh, and laugh. It was always a great joke. And then she'd look at the clock and fry potatoes and meat over a smelly stove, and say, "Now laugh! Paw's coming home. He needs all our laughs!"

"John dear!" said Cecilia. Johnny forgot the past, and swelled. Cecilia's use of his name made him feel a man.

"Mister, will yuh please attend to this here baggage?" he heard his father say.

"Don't call him 'Mister,'" he corrected Jeremiah in an undertone. Cecilia stepped from them to a group nearby.

"Good-bye, Marjory," John heard her say. "Yes, I *will* come to see you. You'll come to my house, too?" She turned to a rather more cool looking young person, and added less surely, "I would love to have you, too, Miss Annette, if you'd care to come."

"I'm rather busy——" John heard the Annette person reply. Then he saw her turn away from Cecilia. His heart grew hot. "If I don't see you again," said Cecilia, "I wish you the happiest kind of a Christmas!" Annette did not reply. The Marjory girl kissed Cecilia twice. "Good-bye, little Saint," she called after Cecilia. "I'm coming to see you to-morrow!"

In the motor there was a pause for inspection. "Yuh look so different," said Jeremiah rather wistfully.

"My heart is just the same," said Cecilia. "It will always be the same." She kissed Jeremiah Madden after her words and then leaned forward and kissed Johnny. He didn't mind,

none of the fellows being present. Then they were silent, for when hearts are very full they are liable to wiggle up into throats and choke people when they try to talk. At last they were out of the crowded streets and on broad ones, where other cars, taking people pleasure-bent, rolled past them.

Then the house. The house from which Cecilia had gone last September, wearing a suit all over buttons, with a touch of "tasty" red here and there.

"Norah, darling Norah!" said Cecilia. Norah's red arms drew her close, then, quite in Norah's way, she eclipsed behind a blue-checked apron, and sobbed loudly. Cecilia looked about the hall. There was some new furniture. A hat-rack that was evidently the work of a lunatic with the unrestrained use of a jig-saw.

"Look up, Celie!" ordered Jeremiah. Cecilia looked up. Strung across the hall was an elaborate electric sign. The words were made of blue, yellow and red globes. She read: "Welcome to our Darling!!!" Cecilia gasped. Then she turned to her father. "It is beautiful," she said, "and *just* what I wanted." She stopped and swallowed with difficulty.

Then added, "Papa dear, I love you so!" Johnny smiled. He raised his eyebrows and his shoulders. Then he sniffed. He thought he smelled the scent of roses.

CHAPTER VII

SANTA CLAUS

Father McGowan, holding a cassock high about his black-clad legs, stood in the back yard of the rectory grounds. The back yard looked like those photographs entitled, "Rude shelters for the soldiers," or "Huts built by the South Australian Light Horse Brigade."

All over the brown lawn were small shacks. Some of them made of brick, some of old and weather-beaten boards, and some of these two with a smattering of very ex and sticky roofing mixed in. Father McGowan smiled. Mrs. Fry looked out of the window. Her lips tightened.

A small boy emerged from one of these affairs. Emerged on his stomach, wiggling out.

"Father McGowan," he yelled, "we got a secret passage!"

"No!" said Father McGowan enthusiastically, "No!"

Another door opened. Another boy came wiggling forth. "*We* got a secret place to

hide things in, in ours!" he said in a sing-song, mine-is-better-than-yours tone.

"Aw——!" said the first disparagingly. Father McGowan laughed. A boy came swaggering across the lawn. He whistled, "In My Harem." He touched his hat to the priest.

"I'm going to get a case of pop," he said loudly, "an' drink it here. Mom, she gimme a candle, and Pop sez I can stay out 'til nine." After this he was instantly the centre of an awed and admiring group.

Mrs. Fry opened the door. "The 'phone wants yuh," she said shortly to Father McGowan. Father McGowan went in with evident reluctance. He wanted to hear more of the case of pop, which he knew would narrow down to two bottles.

After he'd passed through the kitchen, Mrs. Fry spoke again to her sister who sat steaming by the stove. *"He's* like that," she said, a great love, yet vast contempt, showing in her tone. "He lets all the kids around build shacks in the backyard, and even gets 'em stuff to build with!"

"What fer?" asked the steaming one. Her bewilderment was complete.

"Oh," said Mrs. Fry, "he sez something

about its bein' necessary to a boy's soul to build something and tear it down. An' pretend things that ain't. One day they calls that mess of rubbish the wilds of *Sie*beria, an' the next an Indian camp. An' *he,* he gets right out an' chases around with 'em. He's busted his glasses twice this month." Mrs. Fry sighed. "I kicks," she went on, "and then he sez, 'Mrs. Fry, I'm sorry, but the fact is, an aunt brought me up, awfully good woman, too, but too neat. I never pounded, and a boy needs to pound.' Then he sez, 'Now if there is anything you need for the kitchen that I can get you, Mrs. Fry, I'd be glad to.' An' what can I do? I lead an awful life because of them young rapscallions, but *he* can't see it!"

"Well, I'll be beat!"

Mrs. Fry poured out a cup of coffee and pushed it toward her guest. "Ain't sugar high?" she said as she dumped in two lumps.

"You bet," answered her guest. "Does *he* set and study much?" she questioned. *He* was very interesting. Mrs. Fry drew a long breath. "He don't get no time to set," she answered. "He hardly has a chance to eat half the time besides being pestered by them kids. I never know when he'll be on time for

meals. Did I tell yuh about the bath-tub?" she questioned.

The steaming shook her head.

"It has two ally-gaters in it!" said Mrs. Fry with emphasis.

"My Gawd!"

"Yes, one of these here kids got 'em sent him from Florida, or some furrin port, an' his mother, being a sensible woman, wouldn't have 'em near. Well, the kid comes bawlin' to Father McGowan (they always do), an' he sez, 'Now, Jimmy, don't cry. You can put 'em in my bath-tub; I only bathe once a day, and I can use a tin one. Mrs. Fry has her own bath-tub on the third floor, so she won't care.' I did, but what kin yuh do? I sez, 'I won't enter that room with them rep*tiles* in it fer to clean it.' He sez, troubled like, 'Well, Mrs. Fry, I'll do it, or get one of the boys to. I don't mind.' Them kids messing around there. Can yuh see the way *they'd* clean it!"

"Ain't that fierce?"

"Yes, an' he don't care so much fer it, either. He sez he *could* hope they'd die or summer'd come. (We're going to have a pond in the backyard—to run into the cellar!) Yuh oughta see that room after he's bathed in that

there tin tub. All that's missin' is Noah and Shem—we got the animiles."

There was the click of crutches in the dining room. The door opened. A small boy appeared.

"Come in, dearie," said Mrs. Fry. Her tone was softened.

"What's his name?" asked the visitor.

"He don't know," answered Mrs. Fry. "He was in the hospital one time, real sick, and lately he don't remember so good. 'Father McGowan calls him 'Sebastiano.' Want a cooky, dearie?" The boy nodded, and smiled.

Cecilia had had her friend Marjory to lunch. It had gone rather well. She recalled it as she stood looking out of a heavily glassed window into a frosted street. She, herself, had set the table. The napkins had not been set up in tumblers. The fibroid tumor vase was quite absent. There had been valley lilies in a flat bowl for the centrepiece. . . . She had disposed of the blue glass butter dish by dropping it. Cecilia felt strangely sad as she did it. The blue glass butter dish had once seemed so very lovely. . . . "Are they giving me anything to take your place?" she questioned, as

it shattered on the floor. Then she called Norah, and listened to her laments as she gathered up the pieces. She had the feeling of untruth added to her little sadness.

As yet nothing had taken the place of blue glass butter dishes for small Cecilia. She still preferred rhinestone hair-pins, and French-heeled shoes to their plainer sisters. Beauty had been taken away and none substituted, at least none that she enjoyed. The only thing she really cared for was the dragging of her newly acquired French in her talk. She did this often with the proud feeling that it was what her mother had wished.

Jeremiah had said, on meeting Marjory, "Pleased to meet yuh, mam," and Cecilia had broken in with, "I love papa so much, Marjory, you must too." She had hardly known why she had made this defiant and sudden declaration. Johnny had been much impressed with Cecilia's guest. So much so that his misery was acute when Jeremiah related the incident of the brick throwing.

"I sez to him, 'Yuh can lay yer own bricks an' here's one to begin with!'" Jeremiah had said with his customary chuckle, that chuckle that always came with his proud remembrance.

"I think that was exceedingly clever of you, Mr. Madden," Marjory had replied. Cecilia had smiled on Marjory with the smile of an angel, she had also laid her hand on her father's. Johnny had squirmed.

Cecilia gazed out of the window. The air looked cold. She wondered whether she would ever get the chance to thank that Mr. Keefer Stuyvesant Twombly for those lovely flowers? They had come just at the right time. He was wonderful, as the girls said, and "ravishing," but better, he was nice. There was a scuffle at the door, Norah's voice was heard: "Now mind the *eee*-lectric sign!" she said sharply. Cecilia knew that the tree was coming in.

Late that evening Jeremiah opened the door of the pink and gold "parlour."

"Santa Claus has been here and went," he said mysteriously to Cecilia and Johnny, who sat on the stairs, "an' he's did good by yuh!"

"Now remember!" said Cecilia to Johnny, with a stern look. Johnny had been told that his disbelief in Santa Claus was not to be expressed. They scrambled up. Cecilia stopped in the door. The tree was a mass of silver and glittering lights. It was really very lovely.

Mr. Madden's tastes were well suited to trimming a Christmas tree.

"Showy like, an' nothing cheap or old lookin'!" he said, as he surveyed it with proud eyes. Cecilia went toward a table on which her gifts were spread out. First, she saw a phonograph with a morning glory horn. . . . By it was a pink velvet box, strapped in silver. "Jewels," was written in a neat, spencerian engraving on one spot of the silver banding. There was a mother of pearl brush and comb and glass, bound in wiggly gold.

"They are lovely, Papa!" said Cecilia. "And *just* what I wanted!"

"Looka here!" whispered Jeremiah. He pulled her toward the light the tree threw and took from his pocket a small box. He opened it slowly. Cecilia saw a chain and pendant that would have made a very good showing on the Christmas tree itself. It was plainly built for one of the rhinoceros family. It had seemed to dislike showing any partiality in gems. There was a fair smattering of all jewels present.

"Three hunderd dollars!" breathed Jeremiah Madden. His eyes shone, and he breathed quickly. "Celie," he said, "it ain't too good

fer yuh! There ain't nothing I wouldn't do fer yuh!"

"I know, dear," answered the small Cecilia, "but you shouldn't. It is too much. You have made me very happy." She turned away. There was a sudden smarting beneath her eyelids. . . . She hated the school that had taught her a quiet manner, and to see blue glass butter dishes as a visitation rather than a glory.

"That ain't *all!*" said Jeremiah. He took hold of her arm, and led her to the other side of the room. "Throw on the lights, Johnny!" he called loudly. Cecilia felt him tremble. The lights snapped on with a too white glare. Jeremiah and Cecilia stood before a picture over which was thrown a cloth. Jeremiah drew it aside.

"It was did from a tintype," said Jeremiah softly. He looked on the face of his Irish wife. Her lips were painted a brazen carmine. Her cheeks glowed like the stage ladies' of the billboards. Around her neck were three ropes of huge pearls.

"He threw in the pearls," explained Jeremiah in a voice that shook a little, "an' fancied her up some, but them eyes,—it's your maw, Celie. Your maw that died in a two-room

flat." With the last words Jeremiah had turned away. His shoulders had a limp droop. The happiness of the evening had faded.

"What's in this box?" asked Cecilia, unsteadily. It was a hat box and stood beneath the new portrait.

"Her present," answered Jeremiah. "The present I give her. Look at it, Celie. Ain't it pretty? I picked it."

Cecilia opened the box. She drew out a large, flopping hat. It was trimmed with pink roses.

The next day when Father McGowan was all ready to start for the Madden house, there was commotion in the wilds of *Sie*beria. It had been reported the day before that one of the "guys" had smoked a Piedmont, and Father McGowan, finding this so, had had to dust him mildly with a hickory cane, hung on the back porch for that purpose.

He disliked doing this, and smoked for a good hour afterward to soothe his nerves. Mrs. Fry had watched the chastising with pleased eyes, but then, on going to the bathroom, all happiness had vanished, for one of them rep*tiles* had crawled out of the tub. She had

dropped her scrubbing cloths, and disappeared screaming.

Father McGowan had been all ready to start. He had found his hat (which had the most mysterious way of disappearing), and with an ashamed expression, he'd put a small box in his pocket.

Then the wilds of *Sie*beria had demanded attention.

"Them young devils," Mrs. Fry had said, with a bob of her head backward. "They *are* raising Cain! Something's wrong." She went off muttering. She still cherished and resented the encounter with the rep*tile*. Father McGowan went toward *Sie*beria. It was one of the few times in his life that he hadn't wanted to.

"*Now* what?" he called from the back porch. A scream was the only answer. It came from one of the brick dwellings. The chastised of yesterday, Father McGowan saw going quickly over the fence.

"Oh, drat!" said Father McGowan. There were wilder howls from the brick mansion. Father McGowan went toward it. He looked for the door, then he chuckled softly, for the

door was entirely gone. He took off his gloves and began to pull out the bricks.

"Walled in," he muttered.

"Lemme out! Lemme out!" came from within, in muffled tones. Then with the opening Father McGowan had made, and with the advent of light, the screams dissolved into pathetic sobs.

"When I git him!" came in moist tones. A small boy wiggled out. He had a paper covered book in his hands. "He done it," explained the boy, between sniffs, "while I was a-readin' in the secret chamber. *He* done it. When I git him! I'll smash him! I mighta starved!" he ended pathetically.

"Well," said Father McGowan, "that *is* a shame! Won't you come have a piece of pie now? You must be hungry."

The boy nodded. He followed Father McGowan toward the house. "He done it," he went on, "because I told on him fer smoking. I thought I *oughta*." The sufferer's tone was pious. "My nerves is shook up," he said when they reached the porch. "I was afraid I'd starve. There's pictures in our physiologies of starving Cubans,—they ain't so nice."

"Mrs. Fry," said Father McGowan, "we

do need a piece of pie. Could you find us some?" Mrs. Fry muttered and went to the refrigerator. Out on the back fence the chastised called, "Yi! Yi!" A note expressing scorn. He added, "Cry baby! Cry baby!" The cry baby turned and exhibited a piece of pie. The chastised relaxed into a pained silence.

"Come here!" called Father McGowan. The boy slid from the fence and came slinking toward him. "Mrs. Fry saw you smoking," said Father McGowan. "I never listen to what you tell of each other. Here's a piece of pie for you." He looked at his watch and added in a perfunctory way, "You shouldn't have walled him in."

"I ought to have given you a Rosary," said Father McGowan. He still looked guilty, but happily so. Cecilia stood before a mirror, looking at a dainty little chain and pendant, which she'd clasped about her throat.

"I know you ought, Father McGowan, dear," she answered, "but I'm *so* glad you didn't! It's *so* beautiful!"

She gasped happily. Father McGowan smiled. "Papa gave me one," she said. "It—

it is, that is, I love it, but I'll wear this more." She looked into Father McGowan's understanding eyes.

"I am learning," she said, "but I learned things before I went to school that I shall never forget, and that I never want to forget."

Jeremiah came in.

"You give her that?" he asked in a pleased voice. "Well! But have you saw the one I give her? *Three* hunderd dollars! Get it, Celie, and then play us 'The Shepherd Boy.'" Celie vanished.

White-clad nurses flitted about the halls of Jeremiah Madden's house. There was a dead silence, and upstairs that druggy-sick smell.

Cecilia had been very ill. She was better, but still sick enough to keep Jeremiah anxious. He hovered about the house almost forgetting bricks, and wearing a collar all the time, as he did on Sundays. It had begun with a cold, then a cough, which (through Celia's standing on the curb, better to view a gentleman down the street who was interestingly drunk) had turned to pneumonia on both sides.

She had gone to bed protesting that she felt very well, but that her breath was not acting

quite right. Then she had grown so very, very sick that she had forgotten time, life and even Jeremiah of the bricks.

Those days had been rather dreadful for Jeremiah. . . . He had taken to sitting just outside her door on a very upright chair. He turned the pages of "Ridpath's History of the World." He was trying to "educate himself up to Celie." . . . However, he missed a great many of the pictures and only got as far as Volume One.

Each time a trim nurse would step from Cecilia's door, he would cough to get his voice in shape, and then whisper gratingly: "Excuse me, Missis, but how is she?"

"She is doing well," the white one would answer, in a tone of thin sincerity. Then Jeremiah would go back to Ridpath, miserable, and unconvinced. Once in a while he would hear Cecilia's high, little voice—"Keefer, the butler!" she repeated again and again one day. She said it in gasps, but somehow got out the words. The effort in her voice had cut Jeremiah's heart, but the words had brought a proud smile.

"Associatin' with butlers!" he whispered. "*Ain't* she gettin' fine?"

Then Cecilia moaned of butter dishes, blue ones. Jeremiah had left his post and Ridpath's History long enough to go shopping. He bought her three butter dishes. Two of them had covers. The third boasted of a curling handle, on which perched a dove and a cupid, on a spray of something that looked like spinach in the crude state. Cecilia had been very pleased with them. She had looked on them, said, "T-thank you, *dearest!*" and then cried gently, the tears slipping down her face with pathetic regularity. She cried all that afternoon.

"I'm not good enough for you!" she gasped, "but I love you, *and* butter dishes!"

CHAPTER VIII

A LITTLE TOUCH OF THE MAN WITH THE HOUR GLASS

Time had been careful with Father McGowan. Perhaps he thought Father McGowan rather nice as he was, and unneedful of the lines that usually come with heart and soul expansion. Be this as it may, the fact was that he was little changed. The lenses in his glasses were a bit thicker. He had accumulated a little more tummy in the last seven years, but he still played Indian and exile in *Sie*beria with the same joy, and he was still the true father to every child who knew him.

He sat behind a bare table in a room unbeautiful except for the books which lined its walls. He was looking over his mail. He laid one letter with a foreign postmark aside.

There was a tap on the door. A small boy of nine, or thereabout, came in, sobbing wildly. "My mom, she sez you're a *Catholic!*" he gasped between sobs. "Yuh ain't, are yuh?"

"I'm afraid so," answered Father McGowan. He looked very guilty.

"Oh, dear!" replied the small boy, and sobbed more loudly.

"Now, now!" said Father McGowan. "We can't *all* be Methodists, you know. The church wouldn't hold 'em." The child still sobbed. "I'll tell you," went on Father McGowan; "you pray that we'll all belong to one church in Heaven. You do that. Wouldn't that be nice?"

"Uh huh," agreed the boy with tempered enthusiasm. He smeared his tears across his face with his coat sleeve. They left white streaks. "I couldn't *believe* you was a Catholic!" he said sadly. "You're so nice, and because of the pie and all." His face was long and his eyes melancholy.

"I'm sorry," said Father McGowan, "so sorry. How's Siberia to-day?" The child reported and then vanished to do his utmost in making a convert by prayer.

Father McGowan opened the rest of his mail, and then reached toward the letter of foreign stamp. He always kept the best 'til last.

"Dearest Father McGowan-dear:—" it began in a hand characteristic of many boarding schools, and yet showing a bit of individuality —"I have wanted to write you. . . . So many things to do that half the time all I get accomplished is my loving of you dear people, every day a little more, though more seems impossible. I love you, and Papa and John so much. So much that when I'm away from you, and think of you, I feel quite choked. It is rather beautiful, and terrible, this caring so deeply. I do not know how I could ever say good-bye."

There was a page of Cecilia's large scrawl. It contained no news, but Father McGowan read it closely. His eyes were the same as when, years before, he had looked on a table Cecilia had decorated in honour of a big, fat, Roman priest. Suddenly he laughed. "We have a small donkey," he had read, "whom we have named Clara, after the vicar's sister. Our donkey has long ears and a religious expression, too. The vicar's sister is really very nice, but our grey donkey looks so like her that we always expect her to stop in the middle of the road and talk of missionary barrels and Sunday School treats. The latter is a form of entertainment which contains much jam, tea,

many pop-eyed little girls and boys, not to omit a large stickiness. (I went to one, and poured tea down Lord Somebody's neck. It was a great condescension for him to 'stop in,' and only the fact that I am of 'mad America' saved me from a public hanging.)

"Marjory and I have splendid times. I am so glad I am with her. It is nice for me, and I think for her. Mamma Aliston is one of those poor ladies who enjoys suffering. If she had lived where I did in my younger days, she would have said: 'I ain't feelin' so well. The doctor's give me three kinds of medicine. It's me *nerves*.' As this is not i der, she mutters of draughts, and places a dgy and diamond-ringed hand above her heart many times a day, sighing expressively. Marjory has no sympathy with her. She only says, 'Don't eat that, Mamma; it is bad for you,' about anything Mamma enjoys. I am a beautiful buffer. (Please pardon the 'beautiful'; it refers to spirit.)

"The way those two people clash is utterly dreadful. I remember always, when I hear them, Saturday nights, years ago, when the gentlemen of our building used to tumble upstairs, very drunk, and I would then hear

squawks and abuses. We are all the same, but people never realise it. . . . I laugh inside when they talk of 'lower classes.' I laugh but sometimes it hurts a little. I am ashamed, Father McGowan, that it should. . . . Coming home very soon. I want to give a man named Jeremiah Madden as many years of happiness as I can. I am coming home to play 'The Shepherd Boy' every evening after a lemon pie-ed dinner.

"Father McGowan-dear, I have been worried about John. . . . Here I see so many heavy-eyed boys slinking into manhood. Those boys who travel with their blindly indulgent mammas and leave a man at home, alone, across the seas.

"I think if my little brother should grow up to be viciously weak I could not bear it. I cannot see how he could, for the blood in us is too plain for fancy wickedness. Rather ours would run to fierce encounter, and, if we must be truthful, flying dish-pans. But,—well, I've dreamed of him too often lately, and I remember that he may be stepping into manhood. I wish I were better fitted to be wise with him. . . . I have not liked his letters, Father McGowan. His estimate of people is made in

the shadow of a dollar mark. . . . " Father McGowan read another page. On the last was written: "So, I will see you very soon, dear (excuse the liberty, but you *are* dear!), and I am ready to take up my burdens. Those that come with money. I hope to do much and learn to do it well. You will help me?

"I shall leave Marjory and her mother in this sleepy little village, shadowed by its Cathedral. The cross that has stood for peace through many years shines from its spire and seems to bring it here. It is *so* lovely, Father McGowan!

"Very much love from your always grateful and loving

"CECILIA."

"But, my dear!" said Mamma Aliston, "I could not *permit* you to return alone! Could not permit it!"

"I'm sorry," answered Cecilia, "but I must go. I have my maid. I should not be really alone."

"I don't like the look of it," said Mrs. Aliston fretfully. Then, "*Is* Clara going to sleep! Why you girls *insist* on having her when you could motor smoothly with a footstool and

cushions and all the windows closed,—Oh! My heart!" Cecilia turned a sympathetic eye toward Mrs. Aliston. "It is nothing, my dear," said Mrs. Aliston in answer to her look, "nothing to one who is *used* to suffering. Oh, dear, what a sorry thing this world is, when we are poorly equipped to meet it. Who was that who passed us? Not Lady Grenville-Bowers?"

Cecilia nodded and stopped Clara so that Mrs. Aliston could feast her eyes on the holy dust titles were kicking up. It was not Lady Grenville-Bowers, but Mrs. Aliston was happily unconscious of it, and Cecilia had learned the proper use of lies. After Mrs. Aliston again settled she went back to the original subject. "Let me see," she said, speculatively; "perhaps there will be some one crossing to whom it will be suitable to confide you. I dislike so intensely this running about alone,—my dear! *please* watch that beast! Yes, more than likely there will be some one. I know so many people, many of whom some would feel privileged to know! I'll look about. I dislike so intensely this idea of your crossing alone. It is rather, pardon me, dear, common,—mid-

dleclass. Yes, I'll look about. No doubt some one may be found."

Cecilia nodded absently. She had learned to "yes" and "no" at the proper times with Mrs. Aliston, quite without a listening attention. Strangely, she was thinking of some one else beside her father, John or Father McGowan. This some one who had been the leading man of her dreams for a great many years. In fact, ever since she had rescued a sick and dying tabby.

She had carried his true voice with her wherever she went. . . . Often when things called men had asked for her hand because it held money, a genuine voice had echoed through the years.

"Pussy needs some Mothersills,——" she would hear, and then with an absurdly little-girl feel for being so influenced, she would gently discourage.

There had been some who really loved; some loving with an air of condescension showing through their manner,—others truly, and with humbleness. Some poor, weak, with only love as recommendation. Some just ordinary men, —one or two made big by what they felt for small Cecilia.

And with them all, something was wrong. She heard the echo of a nice boy's voice, as he bought a small girl a "choclut soda," and a sundae all-over-whipped-cream, and she heard it while she said: "No; I'm sorry. I really can't. I'm *never* going to marry. I hope you'll find some one you'll like *much* more than me!"

And they had all said they never would, which is the way with young men. . . . Cecilia had believed the first one, then life had taught her the quick healing of some hearts, and she had smiled a little when the rest said it.

That smile was always the undoing. They usually kissed the hem of her dress, and swore to shoot themselves, and Cecilia would whisper: "Oh, *please!* Some one will see you!" or, "Oh, *please!* Some one might hear you!" whichever the case might be. Then they always kissed her hand and went away, and Cecilia would sigh and say, "Well, I suppose that means an awfully nice wedding present soon, to show that I'm not put out!"

Sometimes she wondered if K. Stuyvesant Twombly were living, and if so, where? Then she often decided *not* to think of him, because it was too childish. . . . And then she would discover that every life must have its fairy tale,

and that he was hers. . . : "Home!" said Mrs. Aliston, with a sigh of relief. "Oh, my poor body! 'My little body is a-weary of this world.' Who said that, Cecilia? Bernard Shaw? or Arnold Bennett?"

"No," answered Cecilia, "I think it's in the Bible, but I can't just remember."

A groom stepped forward to lead Clara away to her boudoir and dinner. Cecilia went into the cool house to write her father on a small typewriter she carried for that purpose, Jeremiah being "partial to print."

Outside the grey of the English twilight crept slowly near. . . . Everything was peaceful,—quiet. America were far away.

The person suitable for Cecilia's chaperon was found. She was very correct, had several chins, and was well connected. She came from Boston and mentioned this fact in a hushed tone. On talking with her, Cecilia felt as she had in the first few months of boarding school —chilled, and alone.

This morning was the one before they sailed. Miss Hutchinson had wished to go to Westminster for a last look. "You will come with me?" she had asked of Cecilia. The question

had really been a statement. Cecilia replied that she would be charmed to go. She went to get a broad hat that entirely eclipsed one eye.

The sun was faintly present. "It is fine," said Miss Hutchinson, who spoke English whenever she remembered it, to show that she had lived much abroad.

"So it is," said Cecilia. "How absent-minded of the sun!" Miss Hutchinson didn't answer. She was busy showing a taxi driver the error of his ways.

"Robbers!" said Miss Hutchinson, as they settled on the stuffy cushions. Cecilia looked after a passing bus, and wistfully. She dearly *loved* to ride on top. They bumped along, Miss Hutchinson expatiating on some one's relatives. It seemed that one of them had been "in trade."

"Papa makes bricks," said Cecilia calmly, wondering, as she said it, whether the British soaked their shoes overnight in the "bath" to get that delightful muffiny effect and the curl up at the toes.

"My dear," said Miss Hutchinson quickly, "that is quite different. His business is on a large scale, and his fortune excuses any-

thing. This man had been in trade in a small way,—a sweet-stuff shop, I believe, or a chemist. Something fearfully ordinary."

"Horrible!" said Cecilia. Miss Hutchinson looked at her. Cecilia's smile was strange. She hoped she was not saddled with a young person of too modern ideas for seven days. . . . In Westminster Miss Hutchinson went toward the Poet's Corner. Cecilia wandered outside. She paused by a small stone set in the wall. "Jane Lister, Dear Child," she read. The gentle little ghost smiled on her from those simple words. She looked long at them. She always saw the "Dear Child," quaintly frocked, smiling.

Some one paused behind her. She turned. "Isn't that almost too beautiful?" she whispered.

"Yes," answered K. Stuyvesant Twombly.

He looked on this impulsive, American girl, and smiled. Then she turned back to Jane Lister, and he raised his hat and went on.

Her eyes made his memory itch, but he could not know why. Perhaps some one whom he'd met suggested her. He met a great many people. . . . Uncommonly pretty, if he cared

for beauty,—or girls. Then his mind turned to business interests. He was supremely American.

The girl in the cloister still gazed at a weather worn slab. "Dear child," she said, "he is alive. Oh, dear child, isn't that beautiful too?"

John was faintly smiling. A superior smile that was his own and took in no one else. He used it often on the "Gov'ner," who from it, was reduced to a pulp, and realised himself fit for nothing but supplying funds. . . . Father McGowan was not reduced to a pulp, but he was genuinely angry. He thought with a longing of a hickory cane which hung on the back porch of the rectory.

"How old are you, John?" asked Father McGowan.

"Eighteen," replied the overgrown boy. "Gettin' on, yes, gettin' on." He lounged back in his chair. Father McGowan leaned across the table.

"Old enough to take tender care of your sister when she gets back," he said.

"Certainly," answered John. He studied his finger nails. They were gorgeous examples

of the manicure's art. John wished the old man would get on. He had a date. . . . He wondered what he was driving at anyway? He covered a yawn and muttered a pardon. . . . "Late hours," he added, in explanation.

Father McGowan again thought of a cane which hung on the back porch.

"How's your father?" he asked.

"Oh,—the Gov'ner?" replied John in a tone of entire surprise. "Really, I don't know. I haven't seen him for a week." He again looked at his finger nails then he thought of a girl he did not meet socially. His thoughts and attentions ran to that kind.

"What a rotten life a priest's would be! Staying in a dull room like this—" he thought, then became conscious of a long silence. He looked up. Father McGowan's eyes were full on him. . . . Space faded. John was a baby in a crowded flat. He cried, and a little, tired-eyed girl picked him up. "Aw, Johnny!" she said. Flies buzzed about. The dull hum of traffic came from the street below.

Some one called, "Celie, aw Celie! Quick!" from a room off of the kitchen. The little girl vanished. He heard unpleasant sounds, then moans. . . .

John started up. The chair in which he'd sat overturned. "You devil!" he said to a fat priest. The dream had faded. John breathed in gasps.

"I will excuse you," said Father McGowan, "if you will remember what a sister did for you, and in return give her the greatest gift: a pride in the boy she loves. Good-night, John."

After the boy had gone, Father McGowan scratched his head, as was his manner when perplexed. "What was the matter with him?" he asked aloud. Then he sighed. The talk, he was afraid, had done little good. At first he had gotten only a supercilious smile, and then that outburst.

Well, life was only a succession of tries, and a climbing at the wall unscalable. . . . Father McGowan dismissed the problem, thought of the comfort of a hot bath, and then the perusing of a new book he'd just bought. "Oh, drat!" he muttered. There was a baby water snake in the tub, and the tin one did not invite a lingering. It scratched in several inconvenient spots.

Outside, John still breathed in gasps.

"Home," he thought as he settled in a low, grey roadster. "I don't like her hair anyway," he offered in weak excuse for abandoning his original plan. Yes, he would be good to Cecilia. Awfully good to her. . . . Had her life, his,—ever been as dreadful as that flash?

Cecilia should never know him otherwise than she believed him. It would be a noble deceit, lived for love of her. That was the game one played with women that one truly loved.

The *Arcania's* decks were alive with people scurrying hither and thither, seemingly with no impulse behind their unrest, nor aim in direction.

A few souls stood very calmly by the rail, watching the steerage embarking. Their whole attitudes said, and loudly: "This is all old to me. I will have you know it is even a bore!" They were looked on with respect by the few to whom crossing was a novelty.

Cecilia was pleasantly excited. Sailing was not new to her, but she was so healthily alive that she tingled with any enthusiasm near.

"Our deck chairs are in the most absurd spot!" said Miss Hutchinson. "I told the

steward what I thought of him, and them. He said he would change them. Aren't you going to look at your flowers? Your state room is full of them. I stepped in. Your maid was putting some of them in your wash bowl. I told her that would never do. You will have to use it, you know, to brush your teeth, wash, and so on, and if you're sick—it is most inconvenient to have the stand cluttered with flowers. I—ah, happened to notice Lord Ashby's card on some flowers. Where did you meet him, *dear?*"

"Sunday school treat," replied Cecilia. "I poured tea down his neck." Her reply was made in an absent way. She was scrutinising the passengers. There was a fat woman near who looked lovely! She stood within earshot of Cecilia and Cecilia heard her address her husband as "Poppa," and then a very healthy and pleasantly loud-looking maiden as "Lotty." It made Cecilia feel as if she were in the warmth of a summer sun, just to hear them. So happily natural, they were.

"*Horrid* people!" said Miss Hutchinson loudly. She elevated a lorgnette, and looked "poppa" up and down critically. "Beer, Cin-

cinnati," she decided in far-reaching tone. Cecilia squirmed.

"That dear baby in the steerage!" said Cecilia, to divert the offended Miss Hutchinson.

"Dirty!" commented the diverted. "So absolutely degrading the way the lower classes have children! One after the other!" ended Miss Hutchinson. Cecilia did not voice it, but she wondered what other mode of entrance into the world was possible, one at a time, rarely two, having been the style for a good many years.

The baby began to whimper. Its mother slapped it vigorously. Cecilia looked away. She hated to see a child slapped. Johnny had often been most trying. She had rarely slapped him. . . . Then she turned and quite forgot the hot, whimpering baby of the steerage. . . . K. Stuyvesant Twombly stood behind her. He recognised the impulsive girl who had spoken to him at the small tomb of "Jane Lister, dear child," and he raised his hat and smiled.

Cecilia gasped. Then she went below, and very quickly, to see her flowers.

"Oh, but you are nice," said Cecilia, "if your

name is not!" Then she looked away from K. Stuyvesant Twombly. She had not meant to say anything like that! It had simply come out!

The wind blew strongly and ruffled her hair. K. Stuyvesant Twombly watched her with a good deal of interest. She was *quite* different from any girl he'd ever met. . . . She watched first the rough sea which looked like a small boy's chewing gum, laid in a safe place waiting for the next chew . . . grey, indented with the marks of small teeth. Then all the sea would slip below the rail, and all of the world would be sky.

"I was named," explained K. Stuyvesant, "Keefer, after a rich uncle. He died and left all his money for the support of Lutheran missions in China. After that my mother used to faint every time she'd think of my first name."

Cecilia laughed. "I'm *so* sorry!" she said. "Does she still faint over it?"

"She died last February," answered K. Stuyvesant quietly.

"I'm *so* sorry!" said Cecilia again. K. Stuyvesant didn't answer. They were quiet for a few moments, both watching the tilt, and eclipse of the sky-line. At last the man spoke.

"It is tragic," he said, "to have the ones you love die, but it is more tragic to have those you have loved from instinct, and never known, die. You wonder, all the time, whether they too, are fretting because of the lost opportunity. You wonder what there was below that you didn't see. . . . All I remember of my mother was her hurry to get in a great number of engagements, and a chill aloofness, cultivated, I have thought since, to keep in check over-tired nerves. . . . If we could have once gone below the surface! Even with incivilities, if in that way, we could have known each other. . . . Never saw one another, fleeting glimpses. . . ."

"You poor man!" said Cecilia.

"I'm ashamed to have said that," he said. His voice was gruff. "But,—it's been in my heart these long months,—that endless regret." He drew a shaky breath. Cecilia laid her hand on his arm. Without a shade of consciousness his hand closed around hers. "I've never told any one that before," he said. "You're awfully—different. I feel as if we'd known each other always." He turned his head and looked down at her. Their eyes met, and it was hard to look away.

"You're so dear!" he blurted out.

Cecilia, used to many men of many compliments, coloured. She squeezed his hand, and then shyly drew hers away.

Mrs. Higgenmeyer came waddling down the deck. She saw Cecilia and smiled widely. "Well, dearie!" she said in her usual carrying tone, "Lotty was looking fer yuh. She and poppa are playing rum now. She wants you should see a wireless she had from her gentleman friend."

"I'd love to!" answered Cecilia. Momma passed by. K. Stuyvesant and Cecilia laughed gently.

"I like to love and laugh," said Cecilia; "but if you leave the love out, the laughter is too liable to turn sour."

K. Stuyvesant nodded, but he hadn't heard what she said. He was undergoing new and terrifyingly beautiful sensations.

"The Higgenmeyers are dear, aren't they?" said Cecilia.

"Um hum," answered K. Stuyvesant. He turned quite boldly and stared at her, while she looked out upon the sea and sky. He wondered, while he swallowed hard, whether he had *any* chance. He wished he weren't such a

duffer! He even wished faintly that she weren't so wonderful.

Cecilia looked up at him again, and again the warm colour came into her cheeks. Then she began to talk quickly of a recent play. Her voice was not quite steady. She wouldn't meet his eyes.

Miss Hutchinson was speaking of a paper she'd read before the Boston literati on "The Message of Ibsen." Cecilia didn't know much about Ibsen, but she thought he would have been rather surprised if he'd heard what he "really meant."

K. Stuyvesant was, as usual, with them. Cecilia and he looked at each other often. The new, disconcerting light in his eyes had given way, and was displaced for the moment by a mischievous twinkle. Cecilia was able to look at him frankly again.

Miss Hutchinson arose, untangling from her steamer blanket like a huge butterfly from a cocoon. "My point was," she said loudly, "that Ibsen is the Seer of those who SEE, but," she sighed, "there are so few of us!"

She vanished.

Cecilia giggled. "Are you one of *us?*" she asked of K. Stuyvesant.

"Lord, no!" he answered laughing, and then added seriously, "I'm an awful dufi'er. Stupid and all that. I never used to care, but now I do. You—you don't read that kind of stuff, do you?" His appeal held a great fear.

"Oh, no!" answered Cecilia. "I stopped reading improving things after I left school. I can't bear them, and it depresses me so to use my head! I'm not a bit clever." She sighed with her last words. They were both making many confessions about their failings. Somehow it seemed necessary. Also, they both wished a great deal of the time that they were *much* nicer!

"You know what Stephen Leacock said about intellectual honesty?" asked Cecilia. K. Stuyvesant shook his head.

"I can't quote," said Cecilia, "but he said as you grew old you would find books had brought you more pleasure than anything except tobacco. But then, he said, you must be honest about them, reading only what you liked. That if 'Pippa Passes' didn't appeal, you should let 'Pippa' pass, that she was not for you. There was some more, but I shan't

ruin it by misquoting it. It was so clever!"

K. Stuyvesant didn't answer. Because Cecilia was afraid of his silences, she began to tell him of a small brother whom she greatly loved.

"But you'll know him," she ended, "if you come to see us. You will, won't you?"

"Well, rather!" answered K. Stuyvesant. "Why, you *know* I'm coming!" There was almost a resentment in his voice. "Cecilia," he said, with his first use of her first name, "I haven't any right, but you're so *dear,* I have to. Have I *any* chance?" He leaned very close above her steamer chair. He had gotten quite white. "Cecilia?" he whispered in question. He reached for her hand, then drew back sharply.

"I know you meet lots of fellows much finer than I am," he went on, "and when I'm away from you I don't see how I have the nerve to hope, but I can't help it. Cecilia—dear?" The "dear" was rather muffled. K. Stuyvesant had never used it before and it stuck, even though he wanted so much to say it!

She turned her face toward him, and he could say no more.

She thought of a brick on the top shelf of

a gilt cabinet. "Nothing could matter to him," she thought; "he is *so* dear, but I must see . . ."

"When we get home," she whispered, "after two months you may ask me again, if you're sure."

"Sure?" he echoed. "Sure? Oh, *heavens!*" Then he looked down at her for quite a few rather breathless moments.

After that they talked. "After two months," repeated Cecilia stubbornly. It made no impression. At last she equivocated a bit and gained her point. "I hardly know you," she said, looking away from him; "I—I prefer——"

"I don't know anything about girls," said K. Stuyvesant, "but I know I've been a dub. I'll try to be agreeable, I'll *try* to keep this to myself. But,—you *will* give me a chance?"

Cecilia said she would.

"Gosh,—I love——" began K. Stuyvesant; then he shook his head. Cecilia didn't mean to, but she slipped her hand in his, under the kind shelter of a blue and green checked blanket. K. Stuyvesant didn't say anything more. He only looked.

Mrs. Higgenmeyer came paddling by.

"Poppa ain't so well," she called. "He's sick to his stummick!"

"I'm—I'm sorry," answered Cecilia. She tried to pull her hand from K. Stuyvesant's. He refused to let it go. After Mrs. Higgenmeyer had passed, he spoke. "You're mine!" he said in the manner of all lovers. "You are!" His voice was gruff. Cecilia was to learn that that meant that she mattered much.

At his words Cecilia's heart turned over, but she remembered her eccentric, dear, and much-loved father, and a certain brick.

"You promised," she reminded him. "I said after two months, when I knew you. You promised."

"I'll be good," he answered dismally, "but I know you, and it's hard to think of waiting. There isn't any question of time. You're just——, well, I'm thirty-two. I'd never dreamed that I could feel this. I want to kneel when I think of you. I——" he stopped.

Cecilia drew a deep breath. They looked at each other, and the world ceased for them. They were only a chord stretched to breaking,—a chord for Heaven's tunes.

CHAPTER IX

HOME

"I tell Celie, it ain't like we couldn't buy 'em perfect. (I could pay for 'em whole.) But she sez that ain't it."

Jeremiah Madden surveyed a Greek Venus as he spoke, whose arms were quite lacking. "As fer me," he went on, "I like 'em with all their limbs with 'em,—tasty and neat. This here kind of thing makes me think of the War. There's one in the Eyetalian garden I'm going to buy a cork leg for."

The young men who surrounded Jeremiah Madden laughed loudly. The loudness of their laughter made Jeremiah a bit suspicious at first, but he reasoned they would hardly accept his hospitality and laugh at him,—it must be with him. So, vastly pleased and beaming widely, he went on with pleased pride: "This here garden cost me near a million, fixings and all. That fountain to the right (the one with the dinky bird settin' on the female's arm) cost me——" but he didn't finish, for Johnny

came around the corner of a path and emerged from its boxwood protection with a cough, and then a loud inanity. He frowned on Jeremiah and the laughter of the young men stopped.

"I didn't know *you* were here," he said coolly to the quaking Jeremiah. Jeremiah realised that he had displeased, and began unsurely, "I'll be gettin' back to work. I just left fer a few minutes, I——"

"Come on," broke in Johnny, and the group of tired-looking youths followed him, leaving Jeremiah confiding to the stone "female" of his work and of how he must get back to it. Realising himself alone, he swallowed his words, and watched the group disappear toward the tennis courts with a puzzled hurt in his face. . . . A half a mile away, and well below, the waters of the Sound shone brazen blue in the sunlight. Sometimes a gull swooped low, and its wings were silver. In one spot a marble wall with a Greek relief stood out in blazing white against the distant water. . . . Jeremiah saw all the loveliness, but he could not feel it.

"That wall cost me——" he muttered, and then stopped, hearing footsteps.

Cecilia stepped from the same path from

which Johnny had made his entrance. Her hat was a broad one, hiding her face provokingly, her dress one of those "simple" affairs, so dangerous to hearts and purses.

"Dearest!" she called rather breathlessly, "I did so want to see you! I've been hunting for you everywhere!" Jeremiah put his arms around her and forgot his worry about a certain son, and even forgot the cost of things.

"Well?" he questioned gently.

"Well," she repeated after him, "I just wanted to see you." She fidgetted as she had at seven, when the request for a new skillet or pan had been necessary. Jeremiah understood, and looked down at the simple affair, talking of it, to give her time. "That dress now," he said, "ain't it kind of plain? Don't you like 'em fancied up with ruffles and lace and stuff?"

Cecilia said that perhaps it was plain, but that she rather liked it. However, she would get one all-over ruffles for Jeremiah's dear gaze. After that they were silent, Cecilia staring absently out over the deep, blue Sound.

"Papa, dear," she said at last, with a gulp. "There's a man coming out to see me,—I mean us,—for Sunday. I hope you'll like him. He

—he's really nice. I hope you'll like him." She stopped for a moment and then again said: "I *do* hope you'll like him."

"Do you want me to like him?" asked Jeremiah.

"Oh, yes," said Cecilia, "I do!" She was again looking toward the Sound. Her small, white teeth were set on her lower lip. "He's very dear," she said at last; then she plaited a pink-edged handkerchief. Jeremiah frowned. "There ain't a man fit fer yuh!" he said crossly, "not a one!"

"Yes, there is," answered Cecilia.

"There ain't!" contradicted Jeremiah. "Does he play tennis?" he questioned, "and set around in white pants?" Jeremiah's voice had grown absolutely fierce. Cecilia laughed. "I suppose he does," she admitted, "but he works, really hard. He told me that life had only meant work for him, until——"

"Hum!" grunted Jeremiah. "Hum! Let me catch him trying to keep company with you! White tennis, and pants, and gulfing around with them funny sticks! *Lemme* catch him!"

"Don't get so excited!" said Cecilia between

little giggles. "He may not even want me. He really hasn't asked me yet."

"He ain't?" exploded Jeremiah. "He ain't? *Why* not? Is the durn fool blind? I'd *like* to know why not."

Cecilia sank to a white marble seat. She was laughing helplessly. Suddenly she sobered and wiped her eyes.

"Dear," she said, "do you think I'd love you less, for—for loving some one else? Didn't you love the whole world more because of mamma? It only makes me want to be much nicer, and want to hug the earth!"

She covered her face as she finished, with slender, little hands. Jeremiah sat down by her.

"I want my bonnet with pink roses on it!" she whispered, "I *do* want it!" He put his arms around her because he couldn't answer. A gull with silver wings swooped low. Cecilia uncovered her face, and kissed the brick king. "Which is my very prettiest dress?" she asked. "I want to wear it Saturday afternoon."

She tried to think her depression came from the night before, but half of it came from the letter which she held in her hand. She had had

THE DINNER HAD BEEN WHAT SHE WANTED

the strangest sinking sensation on reading it, and she *did* love Marjory. Why it had made her feel that way was a mystery.

She opened the letter again. Its pages crackled, and sprung into their first folds as she laid them on the table. The third sheet she picked up and read: "Mamma is really quite wild about travelling with the Johnstons and I am absurdly relieved. Being with that dear lady tells on my disposition (usually perfect, you know, dear!), and I am happy to say a dutifully depressed good-bye to the water bottles and ailments which are all I know of my progenitor. I told her I would come to you for the summer months, and then perhaps go to Cousin Alice. I may go home, but I'm not sure, and such a course involves the proper dowager, who is always too proper, or too improper, and ever a bore! I shall write you again about all this, and when I shall arrive.

"Dear, I shall so enjoy being with you. You are the only good person I know who does not offend me. Perhaps because you are so unconscious of that quality. Your influence is wonderful with me. . . . How do you like being an 'Influence'? I have turned flippant, but you know I was serious——"

And that letter, in some strange way, had depressed Cecilia. She had wanted the summer to be a quiet one,—one in which she could learn to know a small brother, have ample time to amuse her father,—and——

Well, she was utterly ashamed, but she'd wanted it alone. It was so little of her to wish it so. Marjory had been so good to her. But,—Cecilia had dreamed of quiet evenings with the moon making a glittering path of silver on the Sound. . . . She'd dreamed of a big, gruff man coming toward her across soft grass. . . . That, and the scent of roses, pink roses. . . . Instead the summer would be full of Marjory's friends. Marjory had so many and such gay ones! Dancing, playing cards, motoring,—hunting pleasure with a strained intensity, running foolishly so that boredom should not overtake them. . . . And she *had* needed the summer with John. Marjory, her good friend, was not the one to show him things as Cecilia would have him see them. Cecilia sighed.

Then a little spasm of pain flickered across her face. The night before was in her mind, when John, with the friends who were visiting him, had grown too joyous. She had heard

them come in in the deep night. The sounds had rung clear in the still air.

The cars they drove had come crashing through rose bushes, knocking down slender trellises. . . . With silly laughter, she had heard the men come toward the house. There had been unpleasant words said loudly, as if such utterances were humorous. There had been more silly laughter after them.

Cecilia had felt quite sick. She had covered her eyes and made requests of some one's else mother. . . . Then she had slipped into a negligee and cautiously opened her door.

The hall was empty and she went to John's room. She shook as she travelled the long hall, and she hated John's friends with a marvellous hate for one so sweet-natured. She was heart-sick and afraid. John's room was empty.

She stood there a moment, steadying herself. There were pictures scattered about the room which made her understand things more fully. One, on a table near her, showed a pert miss, with tightly curled hair, and a dress of cheap fanciness.

"Your own little girl," was written across

its corner, and then the little girl's name, "Fanchette LeMain."

Cecilia turned away. She went out into the hall. She felt as she had years ago when John was her baby. At the top of the broad and long stairs she looked down. John was on the first step, sprawled unbeautifully, his head hanging limp on his chest, his hands closed around a cerise scarf on which glittered little silver spots.

She looked about to see that no one else was there and then ran quickly down the stairs.

"I'm too heavy," said John, halfway up the stairs. He had been considerably sobered by black coffee, and more so by the sight of Cecilia. He leaned on her arm.

"I have carried you before," answered Cecilia. "When we lived in the flat, that was. I used to think that when you grew up I could lean on you. It was funny how I planned."

John didn't answer. They had reached his room and he sank to his bed and sat, blinking stupidly, on the edge of it. Cecilia slipped to her knees, and began to take off his shoes.

"Don't!" he ordered sharply. "Ring for Higgens."

"I'd rather not," answered Cecilia.

"It was the heat——" he began. Cecilia sat back on her little heels. She looked like a small girl saying her "Now I lay me——"

"It was not the heat," answered Cecilia. "When you were small I washed your mouth out with brown soap for doing that. Now do you want a drink? I'll wet this towel; you'd better put it on your head. There's the dawn," she said, looking toward the window. Then she turned and picked up a cerise scarf with silver spots on it. She folded it and laid it on the table by the photograph of Fanchette LeMain. John looked unhappy.

Cecilia put her hand on her brother's shoulder. "Good-night, dear," she said. A quiver ran across his face.

"I didn't want you to know," he whispered. "'You're so dear, but old-fashioned. You don't understand how a man——" he stopped, and she slipped down on the bed by him. "Everything's so beastly here. I'm so ashamed to have the fellows see dad," he went on incoherently. "Always talkin' of how things cost, —always makin' breaks in grammar,—afraid of his own butler——" John's eyelids were drooping. He fell back, asleep. Cecilia got

up and tried to pull him into a more comfortable position. Then she went to her own room. On the way she passed Jeremiah's. She paused by his door. She wanted to kiss him,—as she had Johnny, when, very small, he had bumped himself.

"Excuse him, Dearest," she whispered. "He's very young. Some day he'll understand, I hope." Then she went on. The dawn had come. The Sound was covered by a grey fog. Cecilia lay down to stare up at her ceiling. She did not sleep again.

At last came noises. The gardeners talked as they worked on the terrace below her windows. "Cut up rough," said one. Cecilia could hear the break of wood. The white trellis with its pink rambler had evidently suffered.

"The old man——!" said another voice expressively. They laughed a little.

"Well, the kid's a gent, anyway," said the other, loudly. "Drunk every night, and enough lady friends for a Hippodrome chorus——" they laughed again.

Cecilia turned and hid her face in the pillow. Her palms were wet.

Father McGowan was surrounded by brigands. Their burnt cork moustaches gave them a fierce expression terrible to view.

"So you saw a man climbing up the grape arbor?" questioned Father McGowan.

The spokesman wriggled a little, and then said, "Well, we didn't just *see* him but we heard him."

"I seen him," said the youngest brigand, whose lower lip was quivering. "I seen him. He had eyes like fire. I want—my maw! I'm scared!" The youngest brigand dissolved into tears. They ran down his cheeks and through his Kaiser Wilhelm of burnt cork, leaving a grey trail on his small chin. "I want my maw!" he repeated.

"An' las' night I seen a man down the alley. He sez 'Hello Bub.' That fierce I ran home, *I* tell yuh!" said another of the group.

"Bet it was Jack, . ? Hugger," came in an ominous tone from the background. The brigands quaked. Their eyes had grown large with excitement, and fear was plain above the moustaches. One small boy who wore a horse-hair imperial, muttered of "gettin' home to study his gogerfy." He, and all the rest, cast longing eyes toward the door. The youngest

mopped the tears and smeared his moustache across his face with his coat sleeve.

The fat priest got up and laid aside his pipe with reluctance. "Come on," he said; "we'll go find the villain. Come on!"

Two small boys clung to his cassock,—the rest pretended a bravado. They swaggered largely through the kitchen, where Mrs. Fry, washing the rectory dishes, glared at their intrusion. Outside the soft dark covered the fears of the brigands. Father McGowan went toward the arbour. He looked well on the frail structure, and then shook it. A black cat hissed, and jumped down.

"*I* wasn't scared none!" said the brigand who had wanted his maw, "*I* was just pretending!" The rest of the brigands giggled foolishly and muttered of "Foolin'."

Father McGowan tactfully spoke of the weather, and then he suggested going down to the corner drug store, where pink sodas could be bought for five cents. There was a flattering acceptance of his offer. They started off, all talking loudly to him of their large achievements. He listened and answered just at the right time, and said just the right thing. So they faded into the night, the long, black

shadow with the smaller ones about it, clinging to it.

"He's takin' 'em to the drug store, I bet," said a lanky boy who was smoking in the shadows. His voice was sad.

"He must say lots of Masses," said his companion. "Every time them kids bawl around his place they get something to eat."

"Um hum," agreed the first speaker, "but he ain't no soft guy. Sometimes he licks 'em fit to kill."

Down the street the drug store screen door slapped shut smartly.

"Them five-cent sodas ain't no good anyway!" said the lanky boy. "*I* wouldn't want none!" the other sighed.

"No," said Mrs. Fry, "he ain't here. He's went to the drug store with a mess of kids. Yuh can set, or yuh can go. *He* don't care. That's the kind of a man *he* is."

The man who stood on the Rectory porch said he would wait. As he stepped across the threshold Mrs. Fry recognised him as a doctor who had been uppish and sent in his card, "like he was a King." She looked critically at his boots. "Trackin' in dust all the time——" she

muttered. Then she went heavily down the hall, slamming the dining-room door after her.

"*He* never gets no rest!" she stated aloud to a picture of a dead duck, hanging by its feet. "Never no peace nor no time to smoke!" She glared at the fowl which had been given Father McGowan by Agnes O'Raddle, as she soliloquised. The erstwhile Mr. Fry, who had always been forced to smoke in the backyard, was far away.

"Well?" questioned Father McGowan. The doctor who sat across the table from him leaned forward and began to speak quickly, his breath coming between his quick words in gasps: "My wife's people had the controlling interest in this plant, and I put all my money in it. It had always paid well. A ventilator, it is, which slips beneath a raised window,—simple affair, yet good. Then this Madden man got ahold of an improved article, patented it, and started a manufactory in the same town, started it on a large scale,—advertised extensively. . . . Well, we're ruined. We can't compete. He sells below cost. He can't want money; he's losing now. Why does he do it? We've done everything. I've offered him——"

The bell of the telephone which stood on the desk rang sharply.

"Pardon," said Father McGowan, and then, "Why, Cecilia!" There was an interval then the doctor heard him say: "Your prettiest dress? Why they're all pretty! Why?" There was a longer interval, then a sharp "What?" from Father McGowan. A silence, and then, "Dear child! I'll be out to-morrow!" Father McGowan hung up the receiver. His manner and voice were changed and softened.

"The little boy is dead," he said to the doctor. "He was happy before he died. He grew very young, and forgot a great deal, the little boy who was in your care, I mean. Now go on, tell me more of this. Will you smoke?"

The fat priest pushed a box of cigars toward the shaking doctor.

"I—I wouldn't do that now——" began the doctor. "Something's broken me. God, I've suffered! What's that?" he ended sharply. There was the tap-tap-tap that sounded like small crutches on a polished floor. Father McGowan looked perplexed.

"It must be the vines against the window," he said, "but I didn't know it was windy. Have you a match?"

The doctor nodded, and lit his cigar. His hands shook cruelly.

"God, I've suffered!" he said hoarsely, "and I believe this Madden man has caused it all. My practice and money gone, I——" he stopped. *"Can't* you help me?" he finished. *"Can't* you?"

"Norah," said Cecilia, "which is my prettiest dress?"

"I dunno, dearie," replied Norah. "Yuh ain't exactly homely in none! But don't go thinkin' too much of yer looks. My maw used to say, 'Beauty's only skin deep.' She was a great one fer them sayin's."

"Norah," said Cecilia, "am I—am I what you'd call pretty?"

"That depends," said Norah, "on whether yuh like dark or light hair." She surveyed Cecilia critically, her lips sternly tight, but a proud light showing in her eyes. Since Cecilia had grown up, the Virgin had undergone a complete physical transformation for Norah. If Norah's Virgin had been on earth, she might easily have been confused with Cecilia Evangeline Agnes Madden.

"How you *kin* set in them corsets!" said

Norah, anxious to change the subject. Cecilia laughed, then turned before a long glass which stood between windows. "I wish I hadn't been educated," said Cecilia. "I *love* pink ones, trimmed all over with roses and lace!"

"My maw used to say, 'Handsome is as handsome does!'" said Norah sternly. Cecilia's new concern for her looks and clothes was disquieting to her. She thought with a horror of Marjory's salves, and eyebrow pencils. . . . Suppose Cecilia!—Norah shook her head.

A maid came in the room with a froth of lacy frills falling over her arm. She disposed of the froth, then bent above the seated Cecilia, and began taking the pins from her yellow hair. It fell loosely, with the soft, slow motion of waves, about her shoulders and well below her hips. . . .

"Tres joli!" said the true worshipper of beauty, as she always did.

"Nonsense!" replied Cecilia, absently, as *she* always did. This was the rite, frowned on by the jealous Norah.

"I mended yer skirt," said Norah crossly. "It was tore fierce."

"Thank you, dear," said Cecilia, and then: "Josephine, which is my most pretty dress?"

Norah left, shutting the door with decision. She muttered of people who talked Eyetalian, and other Heathen languages. Then she decided it was her duty to tell Cecilia of Josephine's outrageous flirting with Mr. 'Iggens. After this lofty resolve her face cleared, and her expression became pleasant.

She passed a heavy-eyed boy in the hall. In the early days he had often shed his tears against her shoulder. . . . He had found love, and understanding, exhibited by doughnuts, and bread spread thickly with brown sugar.

"Mr. John——" said Norah timidly as they were opposite.

"Huh?" he responded, with a cool look. Norah swallowed with a gulp, and went on. Her heart was heavy. Her spirit ached.

"We give him too many doughnuts," she said. Then again her face cleared.

"I'll tell Celie how they go on!" she reflected. "Then I guess she won't be so smart! Winkin' and carryin' on!" The dwelling on the iniquities of Josephine was vastly cheering. Norah almost forgot a heavy-eyed and overgrown boy, who, when little, had sobbed his troubles

out against her thi[illegible]ulder, and had turned to her for soothing sugar cookies.

At the pretty little station, K. Stuyvesant was met by Cecilia.

"How'd do?" he said gruffly.

"How do you do?" said Cecilia. She had on her prettiest dress, but K. Stuyvesant Twombly didn't notice it. They disposed of the baggage question and then he settled, stiff and conscious, by her side in a small grey car.

"Pretty day," said K. Stuyvesant at last. Then he looked at Cecilia. "Gosh! I love——" He stopped suddenly and shook his head.

"Wh-what have you been doing since I saw you?" asked Cecilia.

"Thinking of you," answered K. Stuyvesant gruffly. Cecilia didn't answer. He was afraid she hadn't liked his telling her the truth, so he described a futurist exhibition, while horribly conscious that the quick beating of his heart made his voice shake.

"I'm glad you came," said Cecilia after the futurist exhibition had been described. "I wanted to see you."

"Dear!" said K. Stuyvesant loudly, and

without the least effort. He sat looking down on her with a very honest and revealing look, a look that would have made any one with the least feeling bet their last cent on him.

"Two months," reminded Cecilia. . . . It was really too wonderful. It had to be proved. If he really cared he would wait two months.

"There's the house," she said aloud, "and on the terrace my dear brother." The car twisted between tall gate posts, and the house and terrace were lost to sight from the shading trees. A collie dog bounded out from the shrubbery and barked fiercely.

"Evangeline!" called Cecilia. "He is Norah's," she explained to K. Stuyvesant. "She named him after me."

"Who is Norah?" asked K. Stuyvesant.

"She was our 'hired girl,' " answered Cecilia, "'before we ever heard of maids." K. Stuyvesant didn't reply. In a second the car was by a side entrance. "John!" called Cecilia to the languid figure on the terrace. John sauntered slowly toward them.

"Glad to know you, I'm sure," he said in his most grown-up and *blasé* manner. "Nice of you to run out to see us. We get jolly bored, you know." After this John turned

toward the house. There was an old man on the broad porch, looking wistfully and undecidedly toward the group.

"Oh, the Gov'ner!" said John in a tone indescribable.

"Daddy," called Cecilia loudly, "please come here *right* away!" The brick king came toward them eagerly. "Pleased to meet yuh," he said as he acknowledged the introduction. K. Stuyvesant spoke kindly of the beauty of the place. "It ought to be beautiful!" answered Jeremiah. "It cost enough! Them there fixings fer the garden," he went on, "them alone cost——"

"Let me take you to your room," broke in John. "Don't you want to get in cooler things?" K. Stuyvesant assented and followed John to the house. When he reached the porch he looked back. Cecilia stood with her arm through her father's. She was looking up at his face. Her smile was tender.

"Gosh!" said K. Stuyvesant, and shook his head. Then he drew a long breath and turned to follow John.

The dinner had been what she wanted, thought Cecilia. He had seen *everything*.

. . . Jeremiah had asked the butler to "spare" him a piece of bread. He had also tucked his napkin in his collar, and then, with a quick movement, removed it, looking around as he did so to see if he'd been noticed.

John had wiggled and sighed loudly when bricks had been talked of. In an effort to gloss over the crudities he had contributed a "smart line of talk," far more impossible than any amount of money mention.

K. Stuyvesant had responded politely to everything and had avoided looking at Cecilia with a studied effort. Cecilia had been silent. She felt it better that she should not appear in this act.

"He come to me, being as I was a man with money, and I sez——" came to her again in Jeremiah's cracked voice.

"I beg pardon?" K. Stuyvesant had said, having lost it through John's interruption. "Granted," said Jeremiah. "I sez, he come to me an'——"

K. Stuyvesant had been *so* dear! Cecilia stood leaning on the wall with the Greek relief, as she thought her thoughts. . . . She looked on the Sound, which was black in the night, except for a path of white moonlight. A path

that quivered silver. She looked and saw K. Stuyvesant listening to Jeremiah's talk. He *had* been so dear! She wondered whether they'd never finish their smoke and talk, and whether he'd *ever* come to her.

Her eyes filled with tears.

"Mamma!" she whispered to the soft dark. A fitful little breeze sprang up, seeming to answer.

He came across the soft grass slowly. His heart knelt to the little Irish girl who sat upon the white marble w[illegible]

"Hello, Mr. K[illegible]nt!" she called gaily.

"Hello," he answ[illegible]ly. He stood, arms on the wall, a few [illegible] from her, looking at her boldly in the soft light. The world was full of the rhythmic surge of his pulses. . . . The night air seemed to beat upon him with the heat of fire, but there was no thought of touching her. He was utterly humble before his shrine. He wanted, this American man of 1915, to kneel before this little maiden. . . . He craved the touch of her hands on his head. He was shaken, purified, thrilled. . . . He repeated "two months—two months!" to still his

overmastering desires. The silence had been long and had grown heavy. K. Stuyvesant was afraid of it. He gulped convulsively and almost yelled: "Great night, isn't it?"

Cecilia nodded. "Don't you want to smoke?" she asked.

"I guess I'd better," he said unsteadily, then, "Oh, Cecilia!" He reached toward her, then drew back, for John came toward them.

"Cablegram," he said languidly, "for you, Celie."

Cecilia opened it. "From Marjory," she said, after reading it by the light of John's flash. "She comes next week. You must like her," she added to K. Stuyvesant. "She is my best friend."

CHAPTER X

"MY BEST FRIEND"

Father McGowan frowned.

"I love him," said Cecilia. "I don't care who knows it. Where's your handkerchief? I—I guess I've lost mine."

Father McGowan supplied the handkerchief. Cecilia dabbed her eyes. "You see she's so attractive," she went on, "and I'm—I'm not so very. And then John, and everything. I'm ashamed of crying like this." She gulped again. Father McGowan covered her small hand with his. "Dear child!" he said gently. "Dear child!"

The fire leaped, spluttered and hissed with capricious change. Outside the weather was grey, with a drab touch in the air. The sky was a shivery colour. Cecilia and Father McGowan sat on a wide davenport in the library.

"Where is he now?" asked Father McGowan.

"Playing tennis with Marjory," said Cecilia.

She again dabbed Father McGowan's handkerchief on her eyes.

"Oh, drat!" said Father McGowan fiercely. He put his other hand over the small one which lay in his. Cecilia tightened her fingers about his thumb.

"I've been so miserable," she said, "that I've even thought of being a nun. I would if it weren't for papa, and John,—and my hair. (I couldn't bear to have it cut.) And he shows so plainly that he likes her, and then she tells me what he says,—oh, dear!"

"Darn fool!" said Father McGowan. "Is he *crazy?*" He glared at Cecilia with his question, and she laughed unsteadily.

"I'm ashamed to bother you," she said, "but it helps, and I can't tell papa. I think papa'd kill him. He's done nothing wrong, you know. You can't help what your heart does." She avoided the fat priest's eyes and looked down at her ringless left hand. "There have been lots of men," she said, "but none I could even dream of marrying. This is different, and—and I do! His eyes are so dear and so is he, but I would love him anyway. I think he's the rest of me."

"Drat!" said Father McGowan forcibly. "Drat him!"

"I wish I'd been left in the flat. Then I'd have grown up to marry some teamster. It's only when you reach for things too high above you that your arms begin to ache,—then papa and John, all the time misunderstanding each other. Both of them being hurt by this money, —and I—I *love* him so!"

"Cecilia," said Father McGowan, "this world is full of hurts. You have to take them as you do the weather, without a question. Some one put them here to polish our little souls. . . . After you are fifty you will accept them with thankfulness and cease questioning. The faith of childhood will return in a bigger way, with a belief in the absolutely unknown. Some one put them here to polish our little souls. They are here, let them polish, not scratch."

"Yes," answered Cecilia meekly.

"Oh, drat!" said Father McGowan with an entire change of tone. "I don't *want* you polished. *Dear* child! Drat him, is he *crazy?*"

Jeremiah wandered in. He was sullen. He had been talked to by a fat priest, who told him that he should leave the discipline of a

certain doctor to God and the world, explaining that it was rarely necessary for humans to add to any one's unhappiness by a mistaken sense of dealing out justice.

Jeremiah had listened with his eyes on the top shelf of a gilt cabinet which held a brick. After Father McGowan had finished, Jeremiah had spoken of the weather, and Jeremiah was a good Catholic. Father McGowan realised it was a bad case. He had abandoned it for that time.

"And will yuh stay fer dinner?" asked the sullen Jeremiah.

"I *will*," answered the priest decidedly. Cecilia handed him a handkerchief, which he folded carefully and put in his pocket. Then she got up and played "The Shepherd Boy" for the King of Bricks.

Outside in the grey light a sullen-eyed man played tennis with Marjory. He played with much energy and replied with scant courtesy to Marjory's remarks.

"Cecilia said that she was tired of entertaining,—that I'd have to do it for her," sang out the green-eyed. K. Stuyvesant's chin squared.

"In," he called. "I'm a fool to stick

around," was his mental comment on himself. He was not surprised by the dead weight his heart felt, although the sensation was new.

They finished their game and went toward the house. "You're doing lots for John," said Marjory. "He adores you! Imitates your every move! You'll try to get him through this smartness?"

In truth she did not consider it smartness, for to her it was the natural attitude of young men. However she was clever enough to see the way this big, silent man felt about it, and to agree outwardly.

"I'd do anything to help one girl," he said loudly. He wanted Marjory to know how he felt about Cecilia. Perhaps she'd help him. They reached the broad steps.

"After dinner I want to see you," whispered Marjory. "In the garden,—alone. Something about Cecilia. By the white wall?"

"Not there," he answered quickly, "but by the Italian dial, if you like."

In the hall he met a fat priest. The man was heartily uncordial, but he didn't much care. After a few words he went up to his room. There he stood by his window and looked on

the grey Sound. A fog was creeping over it. Everything was dismal and dull.

"I'm not much good," he muttered, "but no one could love her more. I would be—so good to her. So good. Little Saint—I——" He covered his eyes with his hands. His hands shook.

There was a tap on the door. John came in. "Hello, old chap!" he said energetically, the languid indifference all gone from his tone. "Can I stay and talk?" He settled, while K. Stuyvesant took a grip on himself, and tried to bring himself to an agreeable acceptance of his task.

In another wing of the house Cecilia was dressing. Marjory, gorgeous in a flame-coloured negligee, lounged in a comfortable chair and talked during the operation.

"You may go, Josephine," said Cecilia, "and thank you."

"If I treated my maid as you do yours," said Marjory, "she'd have no respect for me."

"If I weren't decently kind," answered Cecilia, "I'd have no respect for myself, and Josephine likes me."

"Oh, my *dear,*" said Marjory, "she *adores*

you." Marjory scrutinised her nails. "I told Stuyvesant to-day," she said, "how much he'd done for John. You don't mind?"

"No," answered Cecilia. "He has. I'm grateful."

"He said he was glad I wanted him to, that he'd do anything for a certain girl. He has the *dearest* eyes, when he looks at you—oh, you know how——"

"Yes," answered Cecilia, "I know." There was a pause while the only sound heard was the brush on Cecilia's hair—the soft snap and swish.

"Cecilia," said Marjory, "*were* you engaged to Tommy Dixon?"

"Yes," answered Cecilia, "but, Marjory, I can't bear to remember it. It—it was while I was much younger and hurt because of something Annette Twombly had said. I thought I'd have to marry some one like that to help papa. You know how foolish duty may be at nineteen? He was of a splendid family. I thought papa would like it, when now I know that all he wants is my happiness. After all, decayed flowers from a good plant are not worth anything."

"When did you break it off?" asked Marjory.

"When he kissed me," answered Cecilia. "It taught me how intolerable love is unless it is very true. I will always remember those kisses. I can't forget them. What are you going to wear to-night?" Cecilia changed the subject with suddenness, for it made her sick.

"Black," answered Marjory. Cecilia's heart sank. Marjory was so very pretty in black! Marjory got up. "Bye, childy," she called, "I must go." And she waved her hand airily as she went out.

On the way down the hall she repeated Cecilia's words: "I will always remember those kisses. I can't forget them." That would do very nicely for the little talk by the Italian dial. . . . She would play sympathy, understanding. She would not lie, but if he cared to misunderstand how could she, Marjory, help that? A sudden spark of her honest father flew across her soul.

"I don't care!" she said in answer to it, "I love him, I really do!" Then the love and trust of the small Cecilia twanged on a heart chord. Marjory shut her eyes. In her mind came those of K. Stuyvesant Twombly, as he looked

when he gazed on the daughter of a "Brick King." Marjory hardened. "She doesn't love him as I do," she whispered; "she can't!"

She was only the echo of a single purpose: cruel in its selfishness, animal in its origin, and savage in intensity.

CHAPTER XI

ACCEPTANCE

"Celie, be yuh happy?" asked Jeremiah anxiously.

"Oh, yes!" answered Cecilia. She caught her breath rather spasmodically and went on: "Of course I'm happy! Here I am, all through being improved and ready to stay at home with you and John. Isn't that enough to make any one happy?"

"Don't you want some new frills, or something?" asked Jeremiah wistfully. "You know I can buy yuh anything, and I like to, good."

"I have so much," answered Cecilia. She went over to him and perched on the arm of his chair. "You and John are everything to me," she said. "When I have you I have everything!" She leaned toward him and kissed him. Her arms tightened fiercely about his neck. "You are *everything!*" she repeated loudly. 'Iggins came sliding in with that effect of being on casters, proper to butlers.

"Was yuh lookin' fer me, sir?" asked Jere-

miah. Higgins assented and delivered a small box. Then he elevated his head and left. Outside the door he muttered of leaving. He recalled with bitterness his last post, where the man of the house had been a "perfect gentleman" and had thrown boots and curses at him without partiality.

" 'Sir!' " he echoed with a fine scorn. " 'Ow is a man to keep 'is self-respect?"

Josephine tripped down the hall. She carried Marjory's small dog, who had a scarlet coat buttoned about his small tummy. "Dee-ar Eegeens!" she purred, then fluttered her eyelashes.

"The post 'as its hadvantages," said Dee-ar Eegeens, and followed in Josephine's direction.

Inside the library Cecilia stood by a window with Jeremiah. He was untying the string of a small box and his fingers shook.

"I got it fer you, Celie," he said, "because I thought you was peaked like." He opened the box reverently.

"Oh!" said Cecilia.

"Twenty-five thousand," said Jeremiah. *"Look* at her!" Jeremiah lifted his present

from the box. The pendant of his present looked like a lamp shade from Tiffany's.

"Oh!" said Cecilia again.

"Look at that there diamond and emerald and ruby all mashed together like!" said Jeremiah proudly. *"Look* at her! *Don't* she sparkle?"

"It does," said Cecilia; "it certainly does!"

"I told 'em to take out the pearls and put more sparkly stuff in. I sez, 'Put in all yuh can! Don't spare no expense.' I sez, 'Make her showy. She's fer the best girl on earth.' They done it too."

"Oh, yes!" said Cecilia. Her eyes were a little moist. Tears came easily lately. She put her arms around Jeremiah's neck. "Dear," she said, "I love it. I can't say thank you the way I want to."

Jeremiah didn't answer and she laid her cheek against his shoulder. Together they looked out of the window on the green and then the water's grey.

"Celie," said Jeremiah uncertainly.

"Yes?" answered Cecilia.

"Celie," he said, "you wasn't sweet on that young Twombly? You *wasn't?"* Cecilia shook her head.

"I was afraid you was frettin' over him," said Jeremiah; "you wasn't?" Again he felt her head move against his shoulder. She clung to him for a moment, and then straightened and said, "I must go dress." At the door she paused and turned back. "I love the pendant," she said. "It is beautiful. I *love* it!"

Jeremiah beamed widely. "I knew yuh would," he said boastfully. "I sez, 'Spare no expense. It's fer my little girl that nursed her maw, cooked her paw's meals, and then learned him to wear a *dress*-suit. None smarter!' "

"It is beautiful, dearest," murmured Cecilia. Then she left the room. Alone, Jeremiah went to stand below a portrait.

"Mary," he whispered, "what makes her look like she wants to cry?"

CHAPTER XII

PAIN

"If it is any satisfaction," said Father McGowan dryly, "I will assure you that he loves you. Anybody could see that. I suppose it is your father, Cecilia."

She nodded. "Marjory——" she started, then stopped.

"Well?" said Father McGowan.

"Marjory told me he said it was—papa," said Cecilia. All the tragedy possible to feel at twenty-one was in her young eyes. "She did it kindly," added Cecilia. Then she went on unsteadily: "I don't know why I am not brave. I am so ashamed. He—he isn't worth it."

"No," answered Father McGowan, "he isn't." Cecilia slipped her hand in his. The warm contact had brought her peace at many times. It did now, in a way. "Cecilia," said Father McGowan, "sometimes love means pain. You know Father Tabb's poem about it?"

"No," said Cecilia.

"Once only did he pass my way
'When wilt Thou come again?
Ah, leave some token of Thy stay!'
He wrote (and vanished) 'Pain.'"

Cecilia tightened her fingers about Father McGowan's thumb. "You have always been so good to me," she whispered. "You have always understood and helped me!"

"Well, well!" said Father McGowan. "What else am I here for?"

"Marjory said if I kept papa,—kept papa——" Cecilia stopped.

"Kept him in the backyard or in the cellar, it would be better?" ended Father McGowan.

"Oh, *don't!*" said Cecilia. "Please don't; for two or three times I've felt like John,—I'm *so* ashamed."

"Dear child!" Father McGowan said. "Dear child!"

"I love papa," said Cecilia. "It's only this new feeling that unsettles me. Sometimes I think I'd pay any price. Sometimes, like John, I'm ashamed, and then how I *hate* myself!"

A gilded moon had slid from behind a line

of poplars. It had shown Father McGowan eyes that reflected an aching soul, tragic young eyes, almost bitter in their hurt.

Suddenly Cecilia held his fat hand against her cheek. Then she smiled at him bravely. "I'm going to be good!" she said with a little catch in her voice. "I'm going to be good!"

"Cecilia Evangeline," said Father McGowan, "dear child!"

Marjory entered the room with a slam and a swish. "I telephoned Stuyvesant and asked him to come out to dinner," she said. "You don't mind?"

"No," answered Cecilia, "certainly not."

"He seemed anxious to come," said Marjory consciously. Cecilia didn't reply.

"What's in that box?" asked Marjory.

"A present," answered Cecilia. She took it from the box and held it up for inspection.

"Oh, Lord!" said Marjory. "Your father?"

Cecilia again did not reply. Her cheeks were pink and her eyes sparkled.

"If I were you," advised Marjory, "I wouldn't wear it to-night. You know how conservative the Twomblys are——"

"What he thinks is not vital to me," said

Cecilia. "I shall wear it. I *love* it. I think it's beautiful!"

"You dear child!" said Marjory. She looked on the small liar with respect. Suddenly she was shocked into speechlessness. The small liar was sobbing wildly.

"Oh, Marjory! Oh, Marjory!" she gasped.

Much later Cecilia stood at the foot of the broad stair.

"Where's your necklace?" asked Jeremiah.

"Oh," said Cecilia, "I forgot it, but I *want* to wear it. I do! I'm going to get it now." She turned from him and ran up the steps.

"Here he is!" she heard John call from the porch. Then came Marjory's loud laugh. Cecilia's breath came fast, and her fingers trembled as they clasped the new necklace about her throat. She stood before the mirror a minute before she started down. "It *is* beautiful," she said, "and I am proud to wear it!"

That night Cecilia lay long wakeful. She had not slept much or well lately. She heard the different clocks follow each other with minutes' difference in their chimes. Hour after hour. . . . Cruel hours. . . . Control left her

and she turned from side to side, restlessly moving into what seemed, each time, a more restless position.

She hoped K. Stuyvesant had believed her when she said she thought her new necklace beautiful. She remembered John's sneer and his question: "Been shopping at the 'Five and Ten'?"

Best, she remembered Jeremiah's proud pleasure in his gift. The remembrance hurt, and made her feel little.

There was a tap on her door which made her strained nerves leap. She sat up in bed and turned on the lights, blinking in their glare.

"What is it?" she called.

"It is I," answered Marjory. "I've been wakeful. I want to talk with you for a moment."

"Come in," said Cecilia. Marjory opened the door and came across the room to sit on the edge of Cecilia's bed.

"I'm sorry you haven't slept," said Cecilia.

"That doesn't matter," answered Marjory. Cecilia saw that she was very tired, so tired that she looked old. She was the Marjory of gay evening, with a grey veil shrouding her.

"I'm going away," said Marjory abruptly. Her fingers ... ed with the coverlet and her eyes avoi... ecilia's. "I'm going back to mamma," she continued. "I think she needs me, and—and I *hate* the States!"

"Marjory, *dear!*" said Cecilia, "I'm sorry—so sorry."

"No one wants me," said the new Marjory. "I only make trouble wherever I go. No one wants me——"

"I always want you," said Cecilia. "I do, Marjory,—I really do."

"I believe you really mean that," said Marjory slowly. "I'm almost too little to understand you, but I know you never lie."

"I lied about the necklace," said Cecilia; "I don't think it beautiful, except for the love it shows."

"Cecilia," said Marjory, "I can't be truthful. I can't, Cecilia——"

"Don't!" answered Cecilia. "You are! I know you better than any one. You have been my best friend always, and I say you are!"

Marjory's fingers plucked at the coverlet restlessly. She breathed in quick gasps. Cecilia laid her hand on Marjory's. "Perhaps tomorrow you'll feel differently?" she suggested.

"You know dark makes things so much darker. I'll do anything to make you happier. I'll ask Mr. Twombly to come out and play with you often, Marjory dear."

"Don't, oh, don't!" whimpered Marjory. Her shoulders shook. Cecilia closed her eyes a moment, and then spoke quite loudly and steadily. "Dear," she said, "I'm sure he loves you. I'm sure he does."

"Don't!" implored Marjory. "Don't!" She threw back her head and spoke in a different tone. "I hate America!" she said viciously. "I hate everything! Life, my place in it. I hate you for being so good! I hate,—oh, God! Oh, God!" Her tirade ended in a paroxysm of dry sobs. Small Cecilia reached out her arms and drew Marjory's head against her soft bosom.

"Oh, dear Marjory!" she whispered, "you have been so good to me! I would do anything to make you happier! *Anything!* Marjory, dear Marjory!"

Marjory sobbed on.

"I wasn't worthy of my dreams," Cecilia heard her say between gasps. "I—they were too big for me. I knew it, but——" she stopped. Cecilia, all uncomprehending, baffled, said only, "Dear!" and again, "Dear!"

Some strange trouble this was to bring tears to the dry-eyed Marjory, but Marjory needed comfort, not questions. "Dear!" she said once again. Marjory drew away. "Oh, heavens!" she said, laughing, "what an emotional actress I could have been. Forget this and sleep; I shall." She stood up, stretching. Suddenly she was again the new Marjory. She looked on Cecilia. "I *did* try," she said, "and some people can't be decent even when they try. They can only get halfway."

"What?" began Cecilia.

"Nothing," said Marjory. "Good-night." She started for the door, and then turned back. She leaned above the bed and kissed Cecilia rather fiercely, quite as if she thought of some one else whom she loved in another way while she did it. After she'd gone Cecilia hid her eyes. Without reason the kisses of Tommy Dixon were recalled. Those of the life-half, without a touch of soul. Then Cecilia forgot them in her wonder about Marjory.

"I would do anything for her happiness," thought Cecilia, "even that." And then she closed her eyes and asked to be strong.

When she opened them she saw a golden streak across the floor. The sun was up.

CHAPTER XIII

A REQUEST

"Miss Cecilia——" said Stuyvesant Twombly into the telephone which stood on his desk. His heart hammered so that his ears ached, and the furniture in the room swayed and bent.

"I want to ask you a favour," he heard. "It matters a great deal to me, and, well, to——" she stopped.

"Yes?" he said, aware that his voice was crisp. He had not meant to have it so, but his voice, when Cecilia was near, did as it pleased.

"It's about John," he heard her say very quickly. "He—you know he cares a great deal about you, and that you influence him greatly. You did more than any one else ever has for him."

"I'm sure," interrupted K. Stuyvesant, "I'm glad. I don't mean that," he blurted out; "I mean——"

"I understand," said Cecilia; "I telephoned you to ask you if you wouldn't come to the

house sometimes because of him? I—I'm not home very much. The—the little incident of the boat is quite forgotten——"

K. Stuyvesant coughed.

"I understand you," said Cecilia. "I hope you do me?"

"Yes," answered K. Stuyvesant miserably.

"You will help him?" she questioned further.

"I will," he answered. "I told Miss Marjory I'd do——"

"Yes," broke in Cecilia, unable to bear more; "she told me what you said. I'll be more grateful than you can ever know, too."

K. Stuyvesant swallowed convulsively.

"Good-bye," she said in a small voice. "Good-bye," he answered gruffly. He hung up the receiver and stared across the room. His teeth were set with cruel tightness on his lower lip. . . . He remembered how her little hand had crept into his beneath a blue and green checked steamer blanket. He almost wished he could forget it. . . . And that distance at which she'd kept him had not been what he'd thought, her proving of his sudden love, but only her inclination. Lord, how he'd dreamed, and still dreamed! . . . He'd do

what he could for John. He believed much was possible.

And how even the sound of her voice left him! Shaking, and aching with his want. First hot, then cold. . . . He stared, unseeingly, across his office. He recalled his first evening at the country house when he'd stood by the white wall with a Greek relief, worshipping a little Irish maid.

Then Marjory had come. He wished she hadn't. He almost hated her, and found no reason why he should, except for her telling him something which haunted his long nights. . . . "Cecilia, Cecilia!" ran through his head, —and heart. . . . For her, he'd do what he could for John. He reached for the telephone and called a number he knew too well. After an interval, and a request, John answered.

At first his tone was languid, then it leaped into colour from pleasure, and K. Stuyvesant hid his eyes. . . . John, genuine, echoed the dearest Cecilia. His voice, even in its grating boy-quality, held a hint of hers.

"Then we'll go riding?" K. Stuyvesant asked.

"I'd be jolly glad to!" answered John. "I've

wanted to see you, but I thought I'd better not bother you."

"We'll take in the aeroplane show," said K. Stuyvesant, "if you like." John liked very much. He hung up the receiver, looking like a boy. His thickened eyelids were lifted, his eyes wide open.

Looking toward the photograph of Fanchette, he recalled an engagement. "You may go to hell!" he said loudly, not stopping to think that his staying away would not send her there; but that she was more liable to its admittance on earth, if he, and other idle young men of his stamp, were with her.

The aeroplane show! That would be great! Of all the chaps he'd ever known he most admired K. Stuyvesant, and to chum with him! Well, wouldn't the fellows look! Well, rather!

In the hall he passed Jeremiah. "Going out with Stuyvesant," he called pleasantly. Confiding his intentions or aim in direction was unusual. Both he and Jeremiah wondered at it. Jeremiah was so pleased that he was past smiling. A little quirk came in his heart, and he whispered, "Just then he looked like Mary used to when I brung her the wages. He did!

I wished she could have saw him!" Then Jeremiah went on down the hall, stooping a little more than usual, as he always did with the thought that made him old.

"A bunnit with pink roses on!" he muttered next. That always came with his memory of Mary, that "bunnit" that she never had.

"Hello, Madden," said K. Stuyvesant. John threw out his chest. K. Stuyvesant had acknowledged him a man. "How're yuh?" he added. John said that he was well. As they spoke they sped away from the stern-faced houses of New York's moneyed folk and into its hum.

"Glad to be in town again," said John; "awful glad to see you too. Got beastly quiet out there after Marjory left. Can't be sleepy while *she's* around!" K. Stuyvesant assented.

"You mashed on her too?" inquired John. K. Stuyvesant took his eyes, for the faintest second, from the street ahead. Then he looked back. He had answered. John felt limp, and adored with more fervor. "Didn't mean to offend," he muttered.

They had spent a pleasant afternoon. At least John thought so, the pleasantest, he

thought, for ages, but just now he was suffering from a profound shock. K. Stuyvesant had said something that had left John mentally holding on to his solar plexus.

"You say it's an evidence of *youth* to get drunk?" said John.

"Uh huh," answered K. Stuyvesant in an indifferent tone. "Surest sign in the world that a fellow's about nineteen. You know how it is, a chap wants to get old, be thought old, so he imitates what he thinks is manhood. Like a kid, picking out gilt instead of gold, he picks out a drunk, and thinks it's a man. Look at that motor! *Some* peach!"

"Yes," agreed John absently. However he hadn't seen the motor. He was hoping with violence that K. Stuyvesant had not heard of his lurid past. For the first time he thought of his "past" without pleasure. Heretofore his "past" had been like a treasured museum. Each piece of fresh wickedness added to it with great pleasure, and the knowledge that its value was greater.

"Everybody goes through that stage," said K. Stuyvesant, quite as if he'd read John's mind. "It's the measles of the pin-feather age.

Look here, John, whatcha think of that shaft? Looks kinda heavy to me."

"Hollow, aluminum," said John in a little voice. He was suffering from a complete emotional turn over. It was difficult to contemplate shafts. K. Stuyvesant fingered a frame with interest. "Like to own one," he said, "*darned* if I wouldn't!"

"Keep yer hands off them machines!" said a loud voice, the owner of which glared on K. Stuyvesant. K. Stuyvesant removed his hands. He also smiled. John was nettled. His great dignity was hurt.

"Why didn't you tell him who you were?" he asked of Stuyvesant with heat.

"Oh, Lord!" said Stuyvesant. "Why should I? The fact that I draw a little more on pay day than the next fellow doesn't give me the divine right to paw all over the works." John was silent. He was again mentally steadying his solar plexus. The afternoon had been full of earthquakes to his small ideas, and reconstruction.

"Look here," said John seriously, "did you go through that period?"

K. Stuyvesant looked sheepish, then he laughed. "Sure," he said; "I was a real devil

at twenty. I couldn't stand girls because I thought they laughed at me, so I decided to drink myself to death. My proud ideal was to be the heaviest drinker in New York, and to be so pointed out. Sometimes I stayed out as late as two."

John laughed with him, although his inclinations were far from laughter. Coarse hands were despoiling his altar, and, worse, laughing at it, as an echo of childhood.

K. Stuyvesant had seated himself on a folding chair that smelled of a hearse. John settled by him. "These chairs always make me think of Uncle Keefer's funeral," said Stuyvesant. "Mother went, draped in eighteen yards of crape. She mourned him deeply until she heard the will, then she tore off the weeds and had 'em burned."

John was far away, so the subject of Uncle Keefer's funeral was abandoned.

"Did—did you collect girls' photographs?" asked John.

"Girls never liked me," said Stuyvesant, "and guns weren't allowed. I did use to have a gallery of second-rate actresses decorating my boudoir. I bought the pictures at a photographer's. The less they wore the better.

Lord, what a calf period! Hiccoughing, little asses! Makes me sick to think of it!" Real disgust was written on K. Stuyvesant's face. John pushed his hair away from his forehead. He felt very hot. If some one else had spoken, he would not have noticed. But K. Stuyvesant—chased by most of New York! Honestly liked by the fellows, as a good sport. Owner of several cups for several achievements. Rated as "damned indifferent, but a bully chap!"

John felt weak and little,—worse,—he felt terribly young. He looked away from K. Stuyvesant. Perhaps K. Stuyvesant sensed something of his misery, for he laid a big hand on John's shoulder. The hand was cheering.

"Where you going to college?" he asked. John explained that he had not thought of going, that he hated work, and that a certain amount of study seemed necessary for school.

K. Stuyvesant talked persuasively. "If you studied this winter you could enter next fall," he said; "you have all of the year to do it in. I'll look up some decent tutors, and help all I can, but I'm darned stupid, myself. Wish I weren't. All I could do would be to root. I'd do that!"

"Would you kind of help me keep interested?" said John, looking at his feet. "I haven't done anything that I haven't wanted to, for so long, that I've lost the knack. If you'd help me keep interested,—will you?"

"You bet I *will!*" answered K. Stuyvesant.

"Thank you," said John quietly. K. Stuyvesant's hand tightened on John's shoulder convulsively. Then he took it away. Cecilia's voice had seemed to say the little "thank you." He was shaken, and vastly relieved when John began to talk of monoplanes. He wondered with dull misery if all his years would be full of this "where is the rest of me?" feel. "Why isn't she here? *How* can we be apart when I feel like this?"

He looked at John. The monoplane essay had ceased. "How is your sister?" asked K. Stuyvesant gruffly.

"Cecilia," said John, "I wish you'd come in." He was by the door of his bedroom as he spoke. Cecilia answered that she'd be happy to come in, and stepped past him. "I'm going to college," said John dramatically after he'd closed the door. "Stuyvesant wants me to. He thinks he can get me in his Frat. He's going

to buy an aeroplane, but he says I can't go up unless you say so. Can I? Are you glad I'm going to college?"

Cecilia was entirely bewildered, but said she was glad he had decided to go to college. She sat in a low chair by a table, and her bewilderment increased when John took several photographs from his bureau and threw them carelessly into the waste basket. Next she saw Fanchette thrown in a table drawer, which was then slammed.

"John dear," said Cecilia, "*are* you sick?"

"No," answered John, then she saw a twinkle in his eyes, often there in the little boy days. "I'm Irish," he continued, "and I can see a joke, even on myself. I've tried to be very old, Celie."

She put her arms around his neck. He hid his face against her throat, and she felt him shake. The joke was forgotten. "It's so hard," she heard in muffled tones; "I'm ashamed of dad, and then I try to gloss it over, I——"

"If it hadn't been for dad," said Cecilia slowly, "we would have both been getting slabs of peat out of an Irish bog, surely barefooted, probably hungry."

"It would have been better," said John bitterly.

"Perhaps," answered Cecilia, "but that is not the question. We're here."

"Quite so," said John, and laughed a little. He had drawn away, ashamed of his emotion.

"Have I seemed like a kid to you?" he asked.

Cecilia looked at him squarely. "Yes," she answered.

"Why didn't you help me?" he blurted out. "Let me be the laughing stock of every one. The son of a multi-millionaire, the laughing stock of——"

"If you recollect," interrupted Cecilia, "I did try. More than once. You told me I was only a girl, that I didn't understand. You even told me to mind my business on several occasions."

"Oh, Celie!" said John.

"Dear!" answered Cecilia, in another tone. She sat on the arm of the chair in which he'd thrown himself. He put an arm around her.

"Now that you are awake," said Cecilia, "what do you think of those near-men you've been introducing me to all summer?" She was smiling. John's inclination to anger vanished. He smiled foolishly instead.

"The mixture is the trouble," he said, "with no one whom you can respect to guide you,—no power above. I feel better, naturally, than the Gov'ner."

Cecilia let that pass. "Orchids and hollyhocks in one bed," she said, "but in time I believe you'll come to love the homely honesty of hollyhocks,—those that thrive in all weathers. I believe you will, John. I do."

He got up and stretched. The new man had gone. She saw this, and rose with him. "Good-bye, dear," she said in a very everyday tone; "I'm glad you had a good time this afternoon."

In a flash he changed again. His arms closed about her soft body, and he kissed her. "Celie," he said huskily, "you're the *best* fellow!"

"Johnny," she answered, "you *darling!*" He gave her another squeeze, and released her. Then he was again the conscious boy. "This darn tie," he muttered, looking in a mirror; "it wads up rottenly!"

Cecilia left indifferently, but outside his door she turned and kissed a panel opposite her small head.

She wore the want-to-cry expression which

so worried Jeremiah, but her eyes were happy. They looked like those of a little girl who holds the best beloved, just mended, doll, all fixed up, ready to love and spank some more, to scold, forgive, and kiss.

CHAPTER XIV

PINK

"You are an advocate of gum-chewing?" asked Miss Annette Twombly, with a faint, not too pleasant smile.

"No," answered Cecilia, "but I do think we ought to give them a good time, not reform them. Why, they get dicipline all day at their work. I wanted to make them forget that, and all their imperfections." She turned with the words to glance about the group of young women who sat in the office of the Girls' Club.

There was a vague murmur. "But—gum—!" Cecilia heard in a voice which held horror.

"My idea," said Annette, in her cool, slow voice, "was to give them higher ideals, and to teach them not to wear those horrid, pink silk blouses, you know. Teach them that it isn't nice to chew gum, and,—ah,—well, give them a *larger* life."

"How are you going to give it?" asked Cecilia. "I see what you are going to destroy,

but what are you going to put in their places? I think a certain amount of pink is necessary. It has to be *very* bright, for there is so little of it. It has to reach a long way."

Annette didn't think this worth answering. She simply raised her shoulders and eyebrows in a gesture denoting suffering tolerance and pity. Then she turned to a neighbour and spoke in an undertone. They laughed, and Cecilia flushed.

"Are you an upholder of the green velvet 'throw' on the parlour organ, Miss Madden?" asked a young woman, noted for her bizarre dress.

"I am when the green velvet is the only possible beauty for them,—the only reachable one. I think it's so narrow," she went on heatedly, "to make them enjoy themselves just in our way,—to inflict our likes and dislikes because it's possible to do so. I want to give these girls what *they* consider a good time, and what they want. Patterns for good times differ. I want dances instead of classes in art. They need them."

"But, my dear,—gum, and those fearful frocks! Annette meant to tell them not to wear cheap laces, but to dress plainly, and suit-

ably to their station," explained a drab young lady whose own dress looked as if it had been designed for a futurist ball.

Cecilia sighed. She saw a band of heavy-eyed and tired-out girls denied their little cravings for beauty. She saw them laying aside pink blouses which brought a faint pink into their small, starved souls. She saw them trying to be ladies, and losing the little solace of "spear-mint gum," and roses of cabbage size and architecture on their cheap hats.

"I think they need the pink," said Cecilia. "If their dress is criticised I think the Club is failing in its mission. Every one will criticise them, few will love them. Let's leave their manners and their dresses to their own management. Let us just try to make them forget the factories, and the flat crowded full of children. I wanted to give them a place where they could bring their beaux."

"We agreed about the dances," said Miss Twombly; "I shall *adore* coming to them! Won't they be *killing?*" A hum of voices followed this, in which was heard: "But their horrible frocks!"—"In the end they would thank us!"—"Give them a vision of a larger, more helpful life!"

"I shall not subscribe to a reformatory," said Cecilia loudly. She hated to say it, but an echo of some one who had wanted a "bunnit with pink roses on" flew before her. She meant to do all she could to help other people get, and keep, their particular brands of pink roses.

Cecilia's contribution for the club's maintenance was large. It was agreed that for the present at least no helpful hints as to the bad taste of its members' clothes should be given. Cecilia looked at a small watch, and got up. She said good-bye pleasantly. When the door closed after her there was a surge of noise.

"Well," said Annette in a carrying tone, "of course she *would* sympathise. I suppose her own tastes are really theirs. *Have* you ever seen her father?"

"She plays 'The Shepherd Boy,' and 'The Storm in the Alps' for him every evening," said the bizarre.

"My *dear*," said another, "*have* you seen the boy? He is *really* quite possible and they say that the horrible old man is fabulously wealthy too."

"Criminal!" breathed Annette. Her eyes were angry and full of resentment.

"Annette," said a girl from across the room,

"how are you getting on? I think it's too original of you!"

"You aren't still doing that?" asked another. Annette nodded.

"What?" asked a bewildered onlooker.

"Working, really work," she was informed.

"My *dear,* how sweet!" said the informed. "Isn't it ennobling, and broadening, and all that kind of thing?"

Annette nodded, and then spoke flippantly of it as a "lark." Her bravado was a bit too thick. Several young people who knew something of Mrs. Twombly's investments looked at each other across Annette's head.

After she left there was another free discussion. "Social secretary," said the drab one, "to a horrid person from Ohio, or the state of Washington, or somewhere terribly west. Trying to break in, lots of money, but oh,—like the Maddens."

"Hasn't Stuyvesant a huge fortune?" asked the bizarre. "Why doesn't he help then? Though his not doing so is quite what I'd expect. I tried to be so pleasant to him on one occasion, and he was absolutely *rude!* Really rude! He said——"

Cecilia had stopped at Mrs. Smithers' on her way home. She sat by the stove holding the latest Smithers on her lap.

"We got it with tradin' stamps," said Mrs. Smithers. She held up a purple vase which had evidently been created by some one suffering with a toothache. Mrs. Smithers was trying not to smile. She felt that she should be easily careless with her new grandeur, but it was hard to be so. "Look at that there seascape," she said, turning the seascape side toward Cecilia, "an' that there sailor with his girl. Ain't she purty? My old man, he sez if he seen one like her, he wouldn't come home no more!" Cecilia joined Mrs. Smithers' loud laughter over the "old man's" subtle humour.

"Two books," Mrs. Smithers explained after the laughter had ceased, "an' next time we're going to get a plush photograph album. It has a mirror-like on top, with daisies and I dunno what all painted around. *Hand* painted on that there velvet, mind yuh. It's *swell!*"

"I imagine it is," agreed Cecilia. "You like to have pretty things, don't you?" she questioned.

Mrs. Smithers' wide and fat face clouded. "Dearie," she said, "yuh gotta have gilt an'

fancy vases to make yuh ferget how homely most life is. I wish you could have saw me yesterday. My Gawd, I get tired a-doin' the wash, an' Jim so tony, him usin' *two* shirts a week! Well, I didn't mind the sweatin' all day, the way I do over the wash, fer all I seen was that there vase a-settin' there. Now ain't it purty?"

Cecilia agreed that it was. Mrs. Smithers smiled again. "Why," she exclaimed, "I nearly forgot Lena's dress—the one she's going to wear to the club dance. She set up 'til one last night a-fixing it. She was tickled to fits about it. Looka here." Mrs. Smithers reached below the dining table and took out the third box from the bottom. She opened it reverently. It disclosed a dress of cheap and flimsy lawn, made in the most extreme of styles. There was black velvet on it, several bales of lace, and some roses. Its colour was pink.

"How lovely!" said Cecilia, and she meant it; for Cecilia saw what the colour meant,—what it brought,—and the dress to her was truly lovely.

"Yessir," said Mrs. Smithers; "Lena, she sez, 'Maw, I feel like a queen in this here!'

(she's partial to pink) an' yuh oughta see her in it. Mebbe she ain't purty. Her gentleman friend, who works at Helfrich's delicatessen store, cold meat counter, yuh know,—he sez, 'My Irish rose,' when he seen it. That's a song, 'My Irish Rose.' The Kellys got it on the graphaphone. It's swell. Ever hear it?"

Cecilia had not.

"I wish she had a pink hat," said Mrs. Smithers, "an' then she could wear this to church. First Luthern, we go to,—that one with the fancy brick, corner of Seventh, and——"

"I have a hat," said Cecilia, "that I'm going to send to Lena. It's pink, and it has lots of roses on it!"

Tears came to the little eyes of Mrs. Smithers. She beamed widely. "I didn't mean fer to hint," she said; "honest to Gawd, I didn't."

"I know," answered Cecilia, "and you know I love to send Lena things. Is she still coughing, and is she drinking the milk I send?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Smithers, "but she don't just like it. She likes evaporated better, bein' used to it." Mrs. Smithers looked doleful. The mention of Lena's cough always

made her so. Her expression was like that of a meditative pig, for her small eyes and fat face together provided everything but the grunt. However, to Cecilia she was beautiful, for Cecilia saw the love in Mrs. Smithers' soul, which she spread around her seven children and the "old man."

"I won't forget the hat," called Cecilia from the doorway, "and it shall be *very* pink!"

"Miss Madden, meet my gentleman friend." The gentleman friend shuffled his feet and emitted a raucous "Pleased tuh meet yuh."

It was the night of the first dance at the Girls' Club. Little knots of its members stood around the edges of the floor, laughing often, and loudly. The gentlemen friends seemed to spend their time deciding which foot to stand on, and then shifting to the other.

The committee of "uplift workers" rushed around wildly, doing nothing. It was notable that Cecilia was the one to whom the "gentleman friends" were introduced.

Lena Smithers came up to Cecilia. "That hat," she said, "I dunno how to thank yuh! Paw, he's talkin' alla time about them roses. They're grand!"

"I'm glad you liked it, dear," said Cecilia.

"Yes," went on Lena more shyly, "an' my gentleman friend, him who clerks at the delicatessen, he likes it too. Honest, that boy's grand to me! They ain't hardly an evening that he don't bring me a string of sausage or a hunk of ham!" Cecilia looked impressed and murmured, "Really?"

"Um hum! Gawd's truth!" said Lena.

"Mr. Ensminger," said a fat girl, towing a flaxen-haired boy with no chin. "Soda fountain clerk to the Crystal. Better kid him on, Miss Madden, mebbe he'll give yuh a soda!"

There was loud laughter at this persiflage. Suddenly Cecilia forgot it, her surroundings, the gentlemen friends, in fact everything but the cruelly fast pumping of her small heart, for across the room she saw John coming in, and by him Stuyvesant Twombly.

"How did Mr. Twombly happen to come?" Cecilia asked of John much later, when they were dancing.

"Why," answered John, "I told him of it, and he said, 'Let's go down. Would your sister mind?' Of course I said, 'No.'"

"Of course," answered Cecilia.

"Who's the girl who dances like a duck with the rheumatism?" asked John. "She walked halfway up my shins, got discouraged, gave it up, and then later started it all over again."

"Sweet persistency," murmured Cecilia. Her eyes were on the partner of the duck with the rheumatism, K. Stuyvesant. He looked warm.

The music stopped. Cecilia and John found themselves with the duck and her partner. K. Stuyvesant stepped toward Cecilia with determination. "Will you *please* give me the next?" he said. His request was made in a desperate tone, a tone absolutely unsuitable for the asking of a dance.

"Why," said Cecilia, "there are so many girls here who sit about. I have to see that they have partners, and——"

"Oh, go on!" broke in John. "You dance; I'll do the proper for you." K. Stuyvesant put a hand on John's arm; the touch was full of gratitude. Then the music started in a slow, sentimental, sweet waltz song, popular that season. K. Stuyvesant invented several new steps. It was good that Cecilia was an unusual and adaptable dancer, for his tempo

and intentions were mixed. "What is this?" he asked at last.

"A waltz," answered Cecilia, and at that he stopped his mixture of one-step and maxixe. "Excuse me," he said gruffly. Beads of wet stood out on his forehead. He was out of breath.

"Would you like to stop?" asked Cecilia. "It's warm and you seem tired."

"Oh, no!" he said passionately. She looked up at him, and when their eyes met his arm tightened with a spasmodic quickness about her; then he turned a deep mahogany colour and stared unseeingly across her head. He had not meant to do that. He wondered what she'd think of him.

As for Cecilia, she shut her eyes and tried to be indignant. It was an insult, an insult when he felt as Marjory said he did, an insult! But oh, how sweet, how sweet!

The music stopped. "Thank you," said K. Stuyvesant huskily. Then he left Cecilia with many maidens and singled out John. "If you don't mind, I'm going home now," he said. "I'm tired. Thank you for bringing me along."

He looked back toward Cecilia. He saw the

top of her golden head, surrounded by others of more elaborate coiffure. They made a worshipping circle around her.

"Gosh!" said K. Stuyvesant. He recalled the little second when he'd drawn her nearer. "I'm not sorry!" he thought, then turned to hurry away from the lights and the music, for he wanted to be alone.

CHAPTER XV

FIRELIGHT

"It's a serious," said a boy with a voice like a nutmeg grater.

"Yuh boob!" exploded his companion. "He means a serial," he explained to Father McGowan.

"And," said Father McGowan, "you have come to me because you are temporarily embarrassed for funds?"

"Yep," said the nutmeg grater. "We're broke."

"An' it's that exciting! Every time they busts up an automobile an' wrecks a train—we'd pay yuh back,—an' him an' her in it, they——" broke in the other.

"You'd like a loan," said Father McGowan. "Well, well, here it is. What's the name of it?"

" 'The Iron Claw,' " said the younger impressively. "It's grand. Them there shows learn yuh a lot too." His voice showed his great thirst for knowledge. Father McGowan smiled. He was urged to go along, with the

assurance that they would also pay for that in the future, but he refused on the plea of work.

He went to the rectory door with them and let them out into the dismal snowfall, the first of the season. Half-hearted, damp, then he went back to his study, with a tender look in his eyes.

He was thinking of a small boy who had known no such pleasures—a small boy brought up by an always-old aunt, whose heart and soul were cut square, and without any dimples. He had been a very quiet small boy with a great hankering for nails and something to pound with.

He had gone through the pound period without pounding, and when he reached the dream time he knew that dreams to his unyielding old aunt would be as troublesome as nails, so he had kept silent.

Father McGowan's eyes still held the wistful look that had come into them at seventeen. He recalled all his naillessness as he saw two joyful theatregoers start off to see "The Iron Claw," but in thinking of it there was no regret—only a gratitude that from his denials had come a backyard full of junk and a para-

dise for many little boys who otherwise would have gone without their small-boy heaven.

"She was a good woman!" said Father McGowan; "a good woman!" He was thinking of the still old aunt who'd brought him up.

"Are you well, Father McGowan-dear?" asked Cecilia later in the afternoon when Father McGowan had settled before a fire in the Madden library.

"Oh, yes," answered Father McGowan. "Have a little cold, but I feel splendidly." Cecilia did not look impressed, and certainly Father McGowan's aspect was not convincing. His head was thrown back against the chair, and his breath came raspingly.

"A hot lemonade," said Cecilia rather to herself.

"Never!" said Father McGowan. "Never! Cecilia, you are a dear child. Don't irritate me. I hate lemonades. They make me think of money for the parish house, and they are bad enough cold."

"Hot toddy?" suggested Cecilia; her eyes twinkled.

"Ah—!" replied Father McGowan softly. Cecilia rang, spoke to a haughty person in

buttons, and soon Father McGowan was sipping something warm which did not smell of lemons.

"How's the pain?" asked Father McGowan in a commonplace tone; he studied the glass he held.

"Oh," answered Cecilia, "it is the same, but I am braver. I *will* be good, Father McGowan. I can't help lov—caring for him. I fixed my hair eight times the other day when I knew I'd see him, and used an eyebrow pencil Marjory left, but it wasn't becoming, and I washed it off. I can't help caring for him, although I know he's unworthy. I seem to have lost my handkerchief,—thank you." Father McGowan supplied a large square.

"You didn't use to cry much, did you, dear child?" he asked gently.

"No," answered Cecilia, "and I don't now except with you. You see, when I voice it it becomes so tragically real. It is fixed because I speak it to a human, while when I think of it it seems like a bad dream. It—it doesn't seem possible that I can care so much, while he doesn't."

The fat priest reached for Cecilia's hand.

He lifted it and kissed it. Cecilia looked surprised.

"A token of immense respect and humble love, dear child," said Father McGowan. "Kisses," he continued, "Cecilia, tie to the man who humbly kisses your hand. There are two kinds, the kind who wants only your lips and the kind who humbly touches your hand and who longs to be absolved by whimpering out his shames against your throat. Lord, what an old fool I am! *What* a subject for a priest to lecture on!"

Cecilia was silent, for she was thinking of Stuyvesant's kisses, which still burned her palm. They had held humbleness,—and hunger. She remembered how he had muttered that he "darn well wanted to get down on his knees, gosh! How he *did* love——" And then Mrs. Higgenmeyer had come along and called loudly of the night: "Purty night, ain't it?" and, worse, the chaperone of Boston had then appeared and said in her crisp, quick-cut way: " 'Beautiful night of stars,' as our inimitable Mr. Browning said."

Then the man with the Vandyke beard from Philadelphia had passed. He had crossed forty times, had a valet, and complained of the coffee

and service, therefore commanding every one's respect. "Stevenson," he had corrected in passing. "Horrid person!" said Miss Hutchinson, but to Cecilia there were no horrid persons, for the world was full of a tall, gruff man, and her heart was swollen from his hot kisses on her small palm. Her eyes must have told him something of this, for he muttered, "Dear!" with the impetuosity of a loosened champagne cork. "What say?" Miss Hutchinson had asked.

"Father McGowan," said Cecilia, "shall I ever be allowed to forget my inferiority to the most? It is always there, even when they ask me for money for their charities. They say, 'Mrs. Dash has subscribed. *You* will probably *want* to.' By right of bricks, I purchase my admission. Shall I always feel this way?"

"Oh, no," answered Father McGowan. "When you get past thirty you forget how you feel—that is, if you're any good. After that you think of others, and the *ego* is rubbed down by the world into its proper size."

"I *am* a pig!" said Cecilia.

"You're not!" disagreed Father McGowan. "No one could call you that——" He paused. "For a long time," he went on, "I've wanted to

say something to you, because you are too near it to get a perspective. I want you to look around at the snobs who do not mix with those in trade, and then I want you to ask what grandpapa did. Probably he made pretzels or ran a laundry. Do not ask the immediate members of the family of this, for they may not like it, but ask some *kind* friend. You and John, you people of stronger, fresher blood, are America. You are what comes in and puts bright eyes into depleted stock and takes out the hiccoughs. Don't apologise for your strength and the fact that papa's reservations for his first trip were made in the steerage."

"I don't," answered Cecilia. "I'm rather blatantly proud of it, although since boarding school I haven't bragged of it."

"In time you may even elevate your lorgnette and ask coldly, 'Who *is* she?' " suggested Father McGowan.

"Oh, no!" said Cecilia, "I'll *never* do that!"

"Your children probably will!" said Father McGowan, and then he said "Drat!" to his own stupid self.

"My children," said Cecilia, "are gentle, white ghosts, and they play and do only what I

dream. They would never do that, I would send them from my arms first, and I do—love them. My arms would be empty. Am I going to be a sentimental old maid, Father McGowan-dear?"

Father McGowan said he thought not. Then he turned and again quite brazenly kissed Cecilia's small palm.

"Cecilia," he said, "to-day seems like the end of the world to me. . . . My soul is on wings. Dear child, I wish you could know what you have always been to me. But you do, don't you?"

"Yes, Father McGowan-dear," answered Cecilia. "I have known. I have always brought my worst hurts to you, and one does that only to one who loves."

"Well, well," said Father McGowan, unused to personal sentiment and awkward from it, "now we understand. How's John?"

"Wonderful," answered Cecilia. She smiled mischievously. "Almost a boy again," she added in explanation.

"Twombly responsible?" asked Father McGowan.

"Yes," she answered, "entirely. His ideals when transplanted are unusually good. How-

ever, they do not seem to take root in him."

"Well, well," said Father McGowan. He stretched in a tired way and said he must go. No, he couldn't stay for dinner, for he was to take the night turn at nursing a burned iron moulder. "Won't he be thirsty when he sniffs my lemonade?" said Father McGowan.

Cecilia rang; the lofty person appeared. "Just a minute," said Father McGowan. "I want one more word with you." The person faded.

"Cecilia," said Father McGowan, "there's a doctor to whom your father is playing God. I don't want to bother you about it, but to-day, coming here, I somehow felt as if I ought to." Father McGowan settled on the edge of a chair, and he told Cecilia the dry facts of the ruin of Doctor Van Dorn. "Try to make your father see that it's better not to tamper with the works," he ended; "to leave that to whoever or whatever is pushing the old ball around. . . . Well, good-bye, dear child. Oh, I can get out without the help of his Royal Buttons, thank you."

After he left Cecilia again settled in front of the fire to think of her new problem. Her brain eluded it with a maddening persistency.

She thought of a new frock, the Girls' Club, a dance. Then again of the really horrible revelation, and the unexpected obstinacy of her father.

She looked up at a softly coloured painting above the mantel, which she'd had painted in Paris. It had been marvellously done, and especially since the only model had been a small tintype.

"Dearest," said Cecilia, "you would not want him punished, would you? And,—is there any punishment more cruel than life?"

The painting smiled down gently.

"Pink roses," it seemed to say. "There are always pink roses, but youth must hold them to see their beauty. . . . Seeing no loveliness in dreams denied, no heights in greatest depths. . . ."

"Come in!" said John. "Please!" K. Stuyvesant hesitated. He wanted to, for just a glimpse of Cecilia was everything to him; but, she—she had not wanted to see him. "I am out a great deal," she said in that memorable 'phone message,—also, "I have quite forgotten the little episode of the boat." Those two sentences had made things cruelly plain.

"Come on," begged John, "you must be cold!"

K. Stuyvesant got out of his machine, and went with John into the long-waisted house.

"Fire in the library," said John; "wood, you know. Bully, aren't they?" John, ahead, stopped with his hand on the drapery which softened the broad doorway into the library. He put the other, silencingly, on K. Stuyvesant's arm. Cecilia sat in front of the fire. She held a framed picture in her hands, standing upright on her knees. Looking,—looking,—looking, she was. They stood there for what seemed to Stuyvesant many minutes. He felt himself grow hot, cold, then he longed to shake John,—again, hug him.

"Celie!" called John. With a crash the photograph slipped from her hands to the floor.

"Oh!" she cried breathlessly, *"how* you frightened me!"

"Come in, Stuyv," said John, loudly. *"Look* what she's looking at! *Your* picture!" Stuyvesant didn't answer. He had set his teeth, and his chin was very square.

"How long were you there?" asked Cecilia.

"We just came in," said Stuyvesant, before John could answer.

"I just picked up your picture," said Cecilia. "John hadn't shown it to me. I'm sorry I was stupid and broke the glass."

She moved, and Stuyvesant's eyes followed her, a heartache too large for concealment showing in them.

"Whatcha go for?" asked John. "Stay and talk!"

"I really can't, dear," she answered. "I'm sorry." Then, nodding, she disappeared. In a moment they heard the sound of the piano. Some one who could feel, as well as play, was tinkling out "The Shepherd Boy."

"She does it for dad," said John, "because he likes it, but you ought to hear her play good music. She's a wonder; why, in school——" John broke off, another thought interrupting: "Why didn't you let me jolly her about your picture?" he asked. "It was a great chance."

"She wouldn't like it," answered K. Stuyvesant miserably. "Please don't tell her we were watching her, will you, John?"

"Aw,—why not!"

"*Please,* John!" Stuyvesant's voice was earnest.

"Well, I won't," agreed John in a disappointed way. "But I do like to tease her!

She's awfully cunning when she gets excited, and you can get a rise out of her every time."

After that they settled to play rum for a small stake. Stuyvesant was absent. Time and again John and the cards faded while he saw Cecilia sitting before an open fire,—soft in the firelight, gentle,—almost ready to smile on him. His picture? . . . Probably scorning him,—but,—at least she'd thought of him for that little space. He looked toward the chair, and he saw her gently smile in his direction.

"Rum!" yelled John, much delighted. "That puts me out. Gee, you're in the clouds! You owe me forty-nine cents."

CHAPTER XVI

THE MYSTERY

The rectory hall was quiet, although it was well filled with people—shabby, the most of them, and sitting uneasily upright in their chairs. Damp snow clung to the coat of one woman who had just entered, and the smell of dirty and wet clothing was in the air.

Now and again the steam pounded in a low radiator below a window. There was a great deal of sniffing, and a hacking cough from a woman who bragged of a "weak chest." At last an old man who had been fingering the brim of his hat spoke in a hoarse whisper. "How *is* he?" he croaked. His thumb pointed over his shoulder toward the stairs.

"Ain't no better," responded the woman who coughed. "*She* come down a half hour ago an' sez 'He's the same.'" The woman coughed again, and afterward wiped her eyes.

"He gimme a pipe," said the old man, turning the hat in his hands. "It hez a real amber mouthpiece on. He sez, 'Here, Jake, you know

a good pipe, now I don't. This here was gave to me, I want you should hev it,' he sez,—like that he sez——"

"I bet!" said a frightened looking little man, hitherto silent, "I bet he did! What he done fer me——!" The little man stopped, looked around, and cowered back in his chair, swallowed several times, then spoke in a high voice, evidently unnatural and the fruit of great effort. "I was in the penitentiary," he said, "an' when I come out no one would gimme a job. I was despert. I got my wife, an' her aunt, what's had a stroke, an' can't use her limbs no way. My wife took to coughin' an' couldn't work no more. Gawd, it was fierce! I was despert. I come to him. What he done fer me——! I sez 'What kin I do? I gotta feed them women. Hev I gotta steal again?' He sez no, an' he set me down an' gimme a meal. Talkin' to me while I et . . . Gawd, I never kin fergit it. . . . That there meal was none of them cold potato hand-outs served up with a sneer. Human beings is awful rough with each other sometimes. When I got through I got up. I sez, 'I don't want no more. I guess I kin hunt my own job now, fer you've made me a man agin. . . .' He sez, 'Well,

well,' an' then he set me down, an' believe it or not, he gimme a *ceegar*! A fie' center too! Then he come with me to my old woman, and Aunt Ellen, an' he seen that they was did for, an' the next week he got me a job at the *cie*ment plant." After he finished he cowered again. The world had shown him little forgiveness. His world was scorn, or a hidden shame.

The little man had, in telling of Father McGowan's goodness, voiced his crucifixion. The pain of telling it made him feel as if he were at last thanking the big priest adequately. . . . He blinked, and avoided his companions' eyes now. He knew what to expect.

"I'm glad he helped yuh," said the old man, "but he would. There ain't nothing *he* wouldn't do fer nobody."

Common sorrow, like common joy, had drawn these people together. The love of the man upstairs had filled their souls, and left no room for littleness. The little man of the penitentiary was one of them, not an outcast.

He sat up straight again, still blinking. "Yer right," he said; "he's helped a lot of us to believe there is a Gawd . . . an' something beside hell, livin' or dead."

"Yep," answered the woman with the cough. She drew a shawl close about her and moved near the clanking radiator. "Ain't it cold?" she said. "I'm used to settin' near the stove. I wisht she'd come. That there woman in white, I mean, the one what nurses him."

"I wish too," said a fat soul who surveyed every one with suspicion. "I gotta get home an' pack my man's dinner pail. Night work he does. It ain't so nice. *I* don't get no company. All day long he snores, an' at night I set home, or go alone. We used to go to pictures every Monday regular as clockwork."

"He helped me buy a parlour organ," said a thin woman a little apart from the group. "I come to him, and I sez, 'I'd go hungry to get a organ, what I could pick out tunes on, an' mebbe learn to play "Home, Sweet Home on.' He sez, 'Well, well!' (yuh know his way) an' then I told him how I'd wanted one, an' saved up, and then had to use that there money to bury pop (his insurance havin' ran out) an' he helped me. I got it. I kin play three measures a 'Home, Sweet Home,' real good, except fer being slow in the bass. . . . There ain't nothing like music fer company. *I* don't get lonely no more of evenings. I use to get

that down, an' tired a settin' alone after work, that I'd hate to hear the six a'clock whistles. It ain't no joke, settin' in one room with the wall paper all off. I wonder how he is?" she ended in another voice. No one answered. The woman near the radiator coughed, then wiped her eyes. The old man twirled his hat.

A girl with a sullen look slunk in, and settled near the door. There was quiet. Once in a while a chair was moved, and grated on the floor. The radiator clanked. There was the staccato tap of heels in the upper hall, then on the stairs.

"*You* ask her," said one woman to another.

The old man spoke. "Mrs.," he said, "how *is* he?"

"There ain't no change," said Mrs. Fry, "and there ain't no sense to your settin' here."

"We'll be quiet," said the old man wistfully, "and we'd kinda like to. We all love him."

Mrs. Fry covered her face with her handkerchief. "Set if yuh want to," she said in what was, for her, a softened tone, "but there ain't a bit a sense to it." Then she turned and went down the hall, blowing her nose loudly.

"There's three doctors," said a girl just out

of childhood, and yet from her place in life old looking.

"I know that," replied the thin woman. "It looks bad fer him, but he *can't* die! There ain't another!"

"He won't die!" said the old man. "Fer them that knowed him, he'll always live."

In the kitchen Mrs. Fry was sobbing in the roller towel. She heard Father McGowan's voice come, as it had, in gasps. "Now,—now! Mrs. Fry——" echoed in her heart, "don't feel badly—I'm tired,—and—I'm ready to go —to sleep——" And then he had smiled.

"Mrs. Fry," came in a voice from the doorway, "yer wanted!" She looked up to see an old man with the tears running down his face and following the wrinkles in criss-cross paths of salty moisture.

The nurse stood in the hall. She alone was calm. "You'd better go now," she said quietly to the little group. Several of them sobbed loudly. The door opened suddenly. "Where's Father McGowan?" called a little boy. "I got a new kitty what I want to show him. *Ain't* he in?"

Cecilia was on her knees in the dark, by her bed.

"Father McGowan," she whispered, "oh, Father McGowan-*dear*, where are you?" He had not gone where childhood had had an Irish mother go. Growing had made the mystery—the vast uncertainty—the haunting question of the still, dark hours!

Cecilia lifted her face. Her eyes were dry. "Oh, God," she said aloud, "if you *are*, give us another life. There is no possible good-bye for little human hearts that love. Oh, God, let me see Father McGowan-dear again. Oh, let me! I will be good all my life, if I may meet him once again——"

She stopped, choked.

The mystery echoed. . . . "Father McGowan-dear," she whispered, "where *are* you? Dearest, *where* have you gone, and why?"

CHAPTER XVII

A RELAPSE

"He died," said Johnny, "of pneumonia. One of those quick cases, you know. Cecilia's frightfully broken up—you can see it—although she doesn't say anything."

"I'm sorry," said Stuyvesant.

"I never saw much in him," said John musingly, "but he had an awful hold on a lot of people."

"Your sister cared for him, didn't she?" asked Stuyvesant, then added bravely, "I think that assures his being unusual."

"Oh, I don't know," said John in a lazy way; "girls are queer,—sometimes sentimental. He was good to her when she was tiny. She always remembers things like that. I think she's kinda sentimental."

Stuyvesant looked peculiar and grunted.

"Saw Tommy Dixon down town to-day," said John. A sudden flush spread across Stuyvesant's face. His eyes were unpleasantly bitter. "Good sport," continued John.

"I disagree," said Stuyvesant loudly. "Don't like him, nor his rotten code." John looked on Stuyvesant speculatively. He reflected that, after all, Stuyv didn't know it all, and that if he wore a cassock he might have been taken for Father McGowan. His ideals were very similar.

"Can't train with a Sunday school class," said John. "Live while you're here, yuh know. Damned if I haven't been good lately!"

Stuyvesant was worried. Thus far his work had been easy, because of John's adoring following. But,—were John to follow Tommy Dixon with the same adoration,—then,—it *would* be work! He thought, with an inward sneer, of the smallness of the boy's measures for life. He thought of his always following the new, and of his weak swaying, and then he thought of who had asked his help.

"Come to dinner with me, John," he said, while he made mental arrangement for the cancelling of another engagement.

"Don't mind," answered the old John, in his old tired-of-life manner. "Got a date before dinner. Where'll I meet you?" Stuyvesant named a club, and they parted. Stuyvesant went to his office. There were several mat-

ters awaiting his attention, but he pushed them aside. Across the room he saw Tommy Dixon's insolent face. On it was the ever-present smile, that which shaded into a leer too easily. . . . "She says she can't forget his kisses," came with a touch of flame across his tortured brain.

"God!" said K. Stuyvesant. "God!" He hid his eyes with his hands. His breath came fast.

It was half after eight, and John was to have met him at eight. Stuyvesant looked at his watch, and frowned. The day had been hard, and had left small capacity for patience. . . . The mention of Tommy Dixon had brought back a misery he'd hoped somewhat dulled (one remembered by a stern control of thought, usually not more than once a day).

Now John, after Stuyvesant's breaking an engagement,—was late. His casual acceptance of Stuyvesant's hospitality brought a smile to that gentleman's lips. He wondered if John thought he courted the opportunity of hearing his rather young, and too often callow, opinions stated with absolute assurance as truths?

At nine Stuyvesant shut his watch with a snap, and went out alone to dinner. He was entirely out of humour. He allowed himself to meditate largely on Tommy Dixon. It was torture—exactly fitted his mood, and helped.

"Celie," said Jeremiah.

Celie stopped playing the chimes of a new "piece" of Jeremiah's pattern.

"Celie," he went on, "I done that you asked."

"Doctor Van Dorn?" she asked in a whisper.

"Yes," answered Jeremiah. He blew his nose loudly. "*He* asked me, an' he asked me," Jeremiah explained, "an' I was that uppish! 'Jeremiah,' he'd say, 'don't try to cast yourself for God. It won't work,' an' I'd say, 'Is it going to rain, Father McGowan?' Just the last time he come I seen him in the hall, an' he was pleadin' with me; he sez, 'You can control his work. See that he does no harm, but don't do more,' an' I sez, 'It's snowin' now, ain't it?' Oh, dear Lordy! Ain't life one mess of regrets! One after the other, spoilin' your di*eg*estion, an' makin' yuh kick around of nights! . . . I loved him too."

"Dear," said Cecilia, "he knew that!"

"Yuh think so, Celie?" asked Jeremiah wist-

fully. "Oh, yes!" she answered. Her answer held an applied genuineness. It convinced Jeremiah.

"I give him back his rotten little factory (I was losin' money on it, anyway), and I wrote him a letter. I sez, 'Dear Sir——' An' I went on telling him Father McGowan an' Gawd done it, not me. I sez I was his well-wisher now, wishin' him all success, an' I sez not to get funny in the hospital business on sick kids no more or I'd have him jailed. The letter was friendly and Christian, all owing to Father McGowan, who doesn't know it—God rest his soul!"

Cecilia was smiling tremulously. "You absolute darling!" she said. She perched on the arm of his chair, and they sat in silence.

"After all," she said, "hurting this little man wouldn't bring mamma her pink roses, would it, dear?"

Jeremiah's eyes snapped. In them was the look that certain competitors, who scorned him socially, dreaded. "It brung me mine," he stated; "it brung me mine!" Cecilia laughed. A sudden lightness of spirit, like the flash of day into dawn, was hers.

"Dear," she said, "I believe Father Mc-

Gowan knows! I believe he does!" Jeremiah kissed her and smoothed her golden hair with his hand which would never become smooth. "You're like your maw," he said. It was his greatest tribute. Cecilia clung to him with a pathetic hunger.

"Miss Cecilia, the telephone," said the pompous person from the doorway.

"Yes, sir; yes, sir," answered Jeremiah, "she's a-coming." Cecilia went to an adjoining room. After her "yes" things swayed a bit. She did not need his voice, which said, "This is Stuyvesant Twombly." She knew. "Yes," she repeated.

"I *have* to bother you," he said. "I've just had a message from John. He's been a little hurt—just a little, Miss Cecilia, and he wants you to come with me to where he is. He's a little hurt. You won't worry? I'll stop for you in a moment, that is, if you'll come?"

"Oh, of course!" she answered; "but you're sure he's not really hurt?"

"Yes," he answered. "Do up well. It's cold." She hung up the receiver, and stood a minute, hand over her thudding heart. She was not thinking of John.

As for Stuyvesant, he hung up the receiver

and swore loudly. He was thinking of the 'phone message which had come from John, and of John's small sister. "Stuyv," he had heard John say, "I'm up here at the Eagles' View House. I had a bust-up. Get Celie and come. I'm dying——" There had been a lull. "He's fainted," had come across the wires in another tone. Stuyvesant's first amusement over the last 'phone message faded suddenly. Perhaps John had made the supreme effort and had managed to speak those few words? Then he abandoned speculation and telephoned Cecilia. He had assured her that John was not much hurt. . . . The gentle care of her was instinctive. If John were right the other would come later.

With a doctor in the car they drew up before the Madden House. The chauffeur was not off his seat before Stuyvesant was out and on the steps. "Are you warmly enough dressed?" he asked of her.

"Yes, thank you. John?" she questioned.

"He telephoned me that he had a smash-up and that he wanted you. I have a doctor; he may have some sprains or bruises," said Stuyvesant.

"It's so good of you," she responded. All

of Marjory's hints had gone. She felt his hand on her arm and felt from it a sweet sickness.

"Miss Cecilia, may I introduce Doctor Holt? Miss Madden——" After that she settled, and felt rugs being wrapped around her. Stuyvesant's hands lingered. They held a thrilling tenderness. "Are they well around you?" he asked. Cecilia said they were, and Stuyvesant drew a long breath. The doctor looked from one to the other speculatively. He judged them lovers and himself in the way. The girl was certainly entirely lovely—the soft type who asked for gentleness in return for unbounded love. The way she looked at young Twombly as he stared straight ahead was rather beautiful, thought the doctor. She jumped as he spoke. "These gay young men and their speeding," he had said.

"Oh, yes," said Cecilia, "aren't they fearful? I think they should be reared without silly sisters to worry over them!"

The doctor agreed. He imagined young Madden to be a hard-muscled fellow who liked sport. In speaking of speed, his only thought had been mileage.

The car had left the city and was running

with difficulty over a road which was bad from a light snow.

"Miss Madden is skidding quite a bit (pardon me, Miss Madden) alone on that back seat. You'd better get back there, Mr. Twombly," said the doctor. He smiled. He thought he had done something very kind, and done it neatly. Mr. Twombly stuttered something that sounded like, "I'm glad; I'd be glad—pleased——" Cecilia stared agonizedly ahead. The car made a turn, and, alone on the broad seat, she swayed, slid half across the seat, bumped.

Stuyvesant turned his chair. "May I, Miss Cecilia, or the doctor? We're going so fast. You'll be so jolted." In answer she turned back the rug, and Stuyvesant settled by her. After that there was quiet. Cecilia looked ahead, through steamed glass, at the ears of Stuyvesant's chauffeur. Stuyvesant sneakingly looked at her.

"Only ten," said the doctor; "we're making good time."

"Pardon?" said Stuyvesant, and at the same time from Cecilia, "Excuse me. I didn't hear." Under cover of the dark the doctor smiled. Cecilia flushed, and Stuyvesant bit his lip. He

clasped his hands together very tightly, for he was afraid that if she looked toward him he would put his arms around her and draw her close.

The doctor began to criticise the administration, as people always do when they know little of the facts. Stuyvesant clutched the straw, and argued hotly first on one side, and then the other. The doctor was pleased, for K. Stuyvesant was illustrating a pet theory of his, universal insanity. "Now if Van Dorn could hear this!" he reflected. "Why, the man could be locked up! He's much worse than millions in asylums!"

The car jolted, and turned. Cecilia swayed, and bumped against Stuyvesant's arm. It slipped back of her protectingly, and closed around her. "That was a jolt—" he said shortly, "these roads,—did it jar you?"

"No," answered Cecilia, "thank you." His arm had been pulled away with a jerk. Cecilia stared ahead at the chauffeur's ears. They were large and floppy, and the whole world seemed like them, a misfit. She felt chilled, alone, afraid. She wished the car would jolt again. She wished so brazenly. She didn't care,—she did!

At the Eagles' View Cecilia was ushered up creaking stairs to a cheap, little room. It was shabby, and hung with soiled cretonnes. There were pictures on the walls, entitled "The Bathers,"—"Playful Kittens,"—"A Surprise!" Some more lurid with titles impossible. Stuyvesant had followed Cecilia and from the doorway, over her head, he caught the impression. He had expected it, but it hurt cruelly. His spirit was a mixture of longing to press her face against his shoulder, and a great hankering to kick John.

"I'm dying!" gasped John.

"My dearest!" said Cecilia, and caught her breath sharply, then she slipped to her knees by the bed. She put her arm beneath his head, which was too low, and turned to Stuyvesant. "Where is the doctor?" she asked. At that moment he appeared in the doorway. "Well, young man," he said, "speeding?"

"I'm going to die," answered John in gasps. Cecilia had grown very white.

"Nonsense!" said the doctor. "Now if you people will just leave us for a few moments——" He began to open his case as he spoke.

"Want me?" asked Stuyvesant.

"No," he was answered; "you take care of Miss Madden." The door opened and a girl appeared. Her hair was streaked from bleach, and dark at the roots; her expression insolently daring.

"How yuh feel, honey boy?" she asked of John. John turned away his face. He looked sicker.

"One of your friends?" questioned Cecilia. John did not answer. "Yes," replied the girl, "I'm Miss LeMain. Me and John have been pals for this long while."

"I'm John's sister," said Cecilia, and held out her hand. Miss LeMain took it with a limp and high gesture cultivated as "elegant." "Pleased to meet yuh," she murmured, and then, "I'm glad you've came. My nerves is that shook up! Mebbe the gent'man would get us something to drink. My nerves is all shook. I feel fierce."

They descended the rickety stairs, the girls followed by Stuyvesant. If John had been well something would have happened to him. As it was Stuyvesant was fiercely protective of the small sister in a curt, silent way. His anger was almost overpowering. . . . He thought of Cecilia on her knees in that evil room. He

thought of her gentle treatment of Miss LeMain. . . . He was humbled by her sweetness, and furious from its cause.

"Is he your gent'man friend?" asked Miss LeMain while Stuyvesant ordered the drink. Cecilia shook her head.

"Thought he was. Seems like a cute fellah. Gawd, my nerves is shook! Jacky speeds so! I sez, 'Jack, you'll do this trick once too often!' an' he sez, 'I'm running this boat, girlie,' an' I sez some more, an' then he kissed me; yuh know what a kidder he is! An' the car a-running like that! Then the next thing she was over, an' I was in a field. Jack was somewhere in the road. This ain't the *first* accident I been in. I believe in a short life an' a merry one. All my gent'men friends has cars. No Fords neither. I hope Jacky ain't suffering. He's a sweet boy, an' some sport!" Cecilia's hands were locked tightly together in her lap. Her eyes were tragic. "My nerves is shook up fierce!" echoed Miss LeMain.

"I'm sorry," said Cecilia.

Stuyvesant had appeared in time to hear the last of the recital. "You'd better go lie down," he said decidedly. "It will do you good, and Miss Madden needs quiet."

"An' 'two's company, three's a crowd!' ain't that it?" questioned Miss LeMain with a giggle. Her sally was not greeted with enthusiasm. She left, terming Stuyvesant a grouch, and Cecilia sweet, but lacking pep.

Alone, Stuyvesant stood looking down at Cecilia. His arm was on the mantel. The shadows and lights from an open fireplace played on them. The rest of the room in half dark brought them close. Constraint was impossible because of the situation and Cecilia's dependence on Stuyvesant.

"The money came too quickly," she said meeting his eyes. "John has to spend it in the way that makes the most noise. I—I am *so* tired of it! So bruised by it! I wish we were back in that little flat, with John laying bricks as my father did. Perhaps then he would be a good man. That is everything to me."

"He is going to be a good man, Cecilia," said Stuyvesant. Neither noticed the use of her first name. "He will be a good man. This is a relapse,—a recurrence of growing pains. There are good things in him. When he's awake he has a sense of humour. That is a darn good thing to have, you know, I think, next to God, it's the best thing a man can own."

Cecilia pressed her handkerchief against her lips. "You will help him again?" she whispered.

"I will," said Stuyvesant. He put out his hand in pledge and hers was swallowed in his huge grasp. At the touch of her hand he gasped, "Cecilia!" but she did not answer, for the doctor's step was heard on the rickety stairs.

"Two broken ribs," he said; "scratch on his arm. Now we'll take him home. He'll probably yell over the bumps, but I judge the yells will do him good. Where's his companion? Send another car for her, or take her along?"

"Send for her," said Stuyvesant.

"No," disagreed Cecilia, "if you don't mind, we'll take her. I think it would be better." Stuyvesant looked annoyed, but sent the oily proprietor to call the lady of the shook-up-nerves. She descended immediately, wrapped in a large fur coat, and with a cerise motor scarf about her head. "I couldn't get no rest," she called; "I'm all fussy. How's Jacky darling?"

"*She* isn't going with us?" said John at the top of the stairs. He stopped and leaned heavily on Stuyvesant. "My God!" he exploded.

"Stuyv, she *can't!* Celie can't meet her! She can't! Tell her we'll send a car. I don't want Celie to see her."

"They've been talking for half an hour," said Stuyvesant. "Your sister insists on taking her in."

"Oh, Lord!" said John. "Oh, Lord!"

"Come along!" said Stuyvesant roughly.

"I really thought I was dying," said John in a shamed way.

"Shut up!" ordered Stuyvesant. "You make me sick!" They went down with no more conversation.

"How are you, dear?" asked Cecilia.

"Oh, Celie!" said John. He reached for her hand and clung to it. "Oh, Celie!" he echoed.

Until dawn Stuyvesant relived the night. The ride home had made the deepest impression. A girl with a painted soul and face had chattered loudly, and with a cheap sentiment reeking in her talk. She had spoken often of "Jacky darling."

While Jacky darling, from shame and pain, had groaned in deep, shaky groans, his head had lain on his sister's shoulder. On the other side Stuyvesant had sat. The doctor had dis-

posed of the case as typical, and was thinking of an article which he'd just read in the *Medical Journal.*

"Dearie," Fanchette LeMain had said, "your fur's open." She had reached toward Cecilia's throat, but Stuyvesant reached first. He fastened the clasp with shaking hands, and the back of one hand touched her chin. Then he had sunk back to dream his impossible dreams, and wonder why she should have cared. He knew he was a duffer! But he was almost sure that she once had cared,—for him.

CHAPTER XVIII

FORGIVENESS

"Celie," said John, "honestly he was *devilish* to me, and I deserved it!" John was lying on a lounge, covered and looking wan. The library fire burned cheerfully, and the portrait of an Irish mother smiled down on Cecilia and John.

Stuyvesant Twombly had just left. He had uttered some scathing truths.

"He said I was a 'callow pup,' " said John. "He said I shouldn't have called you to that place if I'd been half dead. Cecilia dear, he was right. Celie, forgive me!"

"Dearest!" said Cecilia. She sank to her knees by the lounge, and pressed John's face to hers. He felt her tears.

"I never will again!" he said huskily. "God help me!" She didn't reply. She couldn't, but only pressed him closer.

"I can't bear to see you take the tawdry and cheap," she whispered at length, "for, John

dear, it does crowd out the real. I know it does."

He nodded.

"Kiss me," he ordered. She turned her face, and then the door opened.

"I beg pardon," said Stuyvesant uncomfortably, "I thought you were alone." Cecilia had gotten to her feet, and stood, shy and flushing adorably.

"Cecilia's been weeping over the prodigal pup," explained John. "I told her I was sorry. I am. If you and she will give me another chance——" He held out his hand with his words, and Stuyvesant took it.

"I came back to say I was sorry I was so darn brutal," he said, squeezing John's hand, "but I'm afraid I meant it all."

Cecilia left them with a word or two. At the door she turned. Stuyvesant was looking after her, oblivious to John's presence.

"Celie's tears," said John, using a handkerchief on his cheeks. He recalled the new leaf, and added, "Three or four of mine too, I guess." His expression was sheepish, but that vanished, for in Stuyvesant's face was approval. "John," said Stuyvesant, "you're *all* right!"

John coughed. The genuine gruffness of Stuyvesant unsettled him. "I'm awfully glad you came back," said John. "You'll stay? Let's play rum."

CHAPTER XIX

SPRING

"What are *you* doing here?" Stuyvesant asked of Annette. Considerable surprise was in his face and voice.

"Oh," answered Annette, "I have been telling Cecilia Madden that I was a pig. I asked her to forgive me. I feel *much* better!"

They had met on the long drive that ran on the inland side of the Sound house, toward the main road.

"I'm stopping at a house up the road for Sunday," explained Annette. "Cecilia wanted to motor me back, but I needed air. Indigestion and conscience are so much alike. You want to breathe deeply after the easing of both."

"Yes," agreed K. Stuyvesant absently. "How could you ever dislike her, Annette?"

"She came into school," said Annette, "the rawest little person you ever saw. I felt the injustice of her having money, while I, who knew so well how to use it, ha[d] to scrimp and

save. I saw her with everything in the world that would have put me into heaven and she was miserably unhappy. It was my first taste of injustice. I hated it. I never was a resigned person, you know, Stuyv."

"How did the girls treat her?" asked Stuyvesant. He was becoming gruff.

"We put her through a refined form of hell," answered Annette, "the cruelties of which were only possible for the feminine mind to evolve. Stuyv, *do* look what you're doing! The gardener will be grateful to you!"

Stuyvesant had been switching a cane viciously. He had taken off many heads of a particularly dressed-up variety of tulip.

"I'll be darned!" he said, looking at them with surprise. "Couldn't you see how dear and all that kind of thing she was?" he queried farther. "I don't see how even a set of simpering, half-witted, idiotic, jealous girls could *help* seeing——"

"So you're in love with her?" interrupted Annette.

Stuyvesant looked on his cousin with surprise. Then he answered. "Of course," he said, "but how'd you know?"

Annette laughed. After her laughter she

slipped a hand through his arm. "Stuyvesant," she said, "your soul and mine are cut from a different pattern. It was always hard for me to understand you, but something has happened lately which has made me larger, much decenter. Stuyvesant, I want a long talk—a heart-to-heart effect. Will you walk back with me?"

"Of course," he answered.

"You'll be glad to know," she went on, "that after Cecilia had pneumonia she was quite the idol of the school. There was one of those complete shifts so characteristic of our American youth, and every one liked her but me. She used to try to make me like her with the most transparent little appeals. Heavens, I was a devil! She sent me violets at one time when I had a cold, and I gave them to the maid, and then spoke loudly before her of unwelcome attentions and social climbers."

Stuyvesant was walking in jerks. His arm beneath Annette's was rigid.

"She's forgiven me," said Annette, smiling.

He relaxed. "I am a darn fool!" he said, "but honestly——!" He stopped and shook his head.

"Doesn't she care for you?" asked Annette; "turned you down?"

"I haven't asked her. She's shown very plainly what she thinks of me."

"Rubbish!" said Annette shortly. "No man in love is a judge of anything! He only knows that she has blue eyes, or he can't just remember, maybe they're brown, but anyway they're beautiful!" Annette's cousin grinned sheepishly.

"What colour are they?" asked Annette.

"I don't know, but I guess they're brown. I know they're unusual, now aren't they, Annette?"

Annette giggled. "Very ordinary," she answered, "and they happen to be blue."

"They're not ordinary. You know they aren't! It doesn't make any difference to me, of course. I'm not in love with her looks, but they're *not* ordinary!"

"It is not like you," said the girl, "to give up anything you want in that half-hearted way. I don't quite understand, Stuyvesant."

"I——" he began, then stopped.

"Well?" questioned Annette.

"I didn't give it up without being sure. Her friend Marjory, well, she made me see a few

things." He was staring moodily ahead. A car whizzed by, leaving a trail of dust. "Damn!" said Stuyvesant. Annette laughed. "You see now if I asked her," he continued, "I'd lose my chance of seeing her. I don't suppose you or any one else could know what that means to me!"

"You might not lose it. I don't trust the green-eyed lady. I never have."

"But she's Cecilia's best friend," objected Stuyvesant, "and why would she do anything to hurt her?"

"I used to think you posed," she answered despairingly. "Now I imagine it is only feeble-mindedness. Take my advice, Stuyvesant: *Ask* her! The other course is so spineless."

"You don't know what I'd lose!"

"You wouldn't lose it!"

"I wouldn't?" he repeated. "Excuse me, Annette, but really you don't know what you're talking about. I do. I know too well." His voice had become bitter. She looked at him and saw that in the year past he had changed greatly.

"And now about you?" he said in a changed way. "Are you still set on this working busi-

ness? I hope you aren't. I honestly want to help. It worries me like thunder!"

"You're a dear!" responded Annette, "and that is quite a tale. Can't we sit on this wall? Whose is it? . . . The Maddens own all this? Heavens!"

She perched on the wall and he lit a cigarette. "No, not now," she answered as he held out the case. "The small Saint Cecilia doesn't, does she? Well, she couldn't. She might revert to the cob pipe." It was a flash of the old Annette. Stuyvesant looked unpleasant.

"My tale—" said Annette. "You know mamma is a worshipper of the long-haired. Any one who can create *anything*—futurist painters, pianists, the inventor of a new cocktail. You know her, Stuyv."

"Yes," admitted Stuyvesant.

"Well, what with their bleeding and papa's insane investments, he never provided properly for us, Stuyv. Mamma used to go to him and really cry! It was pathetic! And all he would say was that he had no money."

"He hadn't," answered Annette's cousin.

"I'd expect you to sympathise," she said. "You men always do, but that isn't my story. When he died his affairs were in such fearful

shape that mamma and I were terribly pinched. She never liked you, Stuyv, or she might have asked your advice. As it was, she invested in lovely nut groves in southern California. The promoters quite misrepresented them; they didn't pay at all or declare dividends or whatever they do. In fact they assessed the owners of the common stock for irrigation or something like that. I don't just understand business. About that time I met Dicky Fanshawe, who doesn't do anything original—only works—fearfully poor. I fell in love with him, but mamma saw me as the mistress of some gilt and pink salon, with a long-haired genius as a husband, and was simply devilish about Dicky. You know her, Stuyv."

"Yes," answered Stuyvesant. "I do."

"Then you know the Altshine failure took us in too."

"Yes," he answered. "I know. Why were you so stiff-necked about my help, Annette? I have enough to help you all you need, and I want to. You know it."

"Mamma has never liked you," said Annette, "but when the crash came, well, she was willing to live on you. For the same reason I was not. I know you disapprove of me. My

ideals are not many, but under the circumstances——!"

"You make me feel an awful dub!" said Stuyvesant. "I haven't any right to disapprove of you or be lofty."

"But you do. Well, mamma saw me retrieving the family fortune in some romantic and bohemian manner. I was to create something, a book, or be a decorator for the smart, a reader of East Indian poems. She had splendid ideas, but the fact is, I've found, you have to have a hint of something inside to do anything successfully outside. I hadn't it.

"I descended to a social secretary and chaperoning that horrid woman's nasty little white pups, and from that mamma has consented to my marrying Dicky. He only has ten thousand a year, and I'm going to marry him on *that!* I love him terribly! Isn't it splendidly romantic?"

"Um," grunted Stuyvesant. "Annette," he said, "I want you to let me provide for your mother. You will? . . . No, don't thank me. It irritates me. Oh, please!" After his last plea she stopped her effusive thanks and pressed his arm. Suddenly she laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Stuyvesant.

"Cecilia advocated pink for the poor," Annette explained, "and I never understood how they felt until my terrible employer asked me not to wear frills. She said they weren't suitable for my position! It's all so relative, isn't it? Cecilia saw the panorama. I saw only my corner."

Annette slipped from the wall. "Must go," she said. "Dicky's coming out at eight. You want me to be happy?"

"Of course," said Stuyvesant. Annette's face changed. "Stuyv," she said, "it's everything when you find the one who fits your heart and mind. . . . *Ask* her. Please, Stuyv. I can't believe she doesn't care."

"You're awfully good," he answered huskily. "Lord, Annette! If you were right——!" Annette stepped near him. For the first time since the nursery days she kissed him. "Stay here," she ordered, "and think it out. Bye!" With a wave she left. At the first turn in the road she looked back. Her cousin was still sitting on the wall, and he was staring intently at the cigarette between his fingers.

Annette had seen that it had gone out before she started.

"Poor boy!" she said. "Poor boy!" and then she thought of Dicky, who had turned her hard little heart softer to all the world. She forgot the "poor boy" who sat alone on the wall. She forgot money and things, the two which had mattered most to her, and once had been her life. With a new look on her face, she dreamed of a future—a future at which she once would have laughed.

Hers was the spirit that puts glory into the face of the tired mother in the overcrowded flat; beauty into the face of the tawdry little girl who sits on a park bench with her "gentleman friend"; youth into age, waiting for soft and endless night; a little touch of God, a hint of something larger, veiled for eyes too young; the proof intangible, sublime.

CHAPTER XX

PULLING OFF THE THORNS

The heat of June in the city drew forth a hot, damp steam. It made white faces and brought to mind sunstrokes, not June's country thought—roses.

"Gee, it's hot!" said John. He sat opposite Stuyvesant Twombly in a restaurant famed for its coolness. "Come out with me tonight!" he added. "Dad and Celie will be glad to have you, too. Come on! Awful nice and cool out there."

Stuyvesant answered absently, and smiled a little as he did. The idea of "Celie's" being glad to see him amused, even while it hurt, him desperately. He thought with a cankered humour of his trying to find out whether there was a spark of hope for him, after the talk with Annette had made his dreams too daring, and had made him need, all over again, proof of how little he mattered. He had gotten the proof. His first talk had been full of Marjory,—Marjory,—Marjory. He had not

wanted to talk of Marjory. Again he had hated her for coming between them.

Cecilia had told of what Marjory's letters had held,—how dear Marjory was (Cecilia had been a bit breathless at this point)—how she, Cecilia, loved her,—where Marjory was,—where she was going. It had been a very surface talk, not once touching anything personal, at least no more than the small Cecilia's great love for her friend. Then John had appeared and Cecilia had excused herself with much relief and gone quickly away.

It was as always, her avoidance, and what in a less sweet nature would have shown as marked distaste. Stuyvesant had understood, and held on to his small privilege doggedly.

"Then I'll leave," Stuyvesant heard John say; he didn't know what had come before, "but I'll get home from school often and see you."

"I'm going away myself for a while," said Stuyvesant,—"I don't know just where. I'm tired of business,—everything. I guess I need a change." He thought miserably of the "change" he needed, and then shut his heart on her sweet image. He made up his mind to

stop thinking of "that kind of thing," and his heart laughed at his decision.

"Stuyv!" said John aghast, "what am I going to do without you? Why, Stuyv! You can't go, at least for long. You don't mean a long trip?"

" 'Fraid so," he was answered. "I guess I'd better, John. I—the fact is I've wanted something I can't have. I don't want to baby about it, only I'm,—well, I can't forget it here. I'm going to try a change. Damn it! What did I say that for? I hate to whine."

"Stuyv!" said John. He reached across the table, and squeezed the hand that was drawing designs on the tablecloth with a strawberry fork.

Stuyvesant felt the sympathy, and looked up. The boy on the other side of the table gasped.

"Is it as bad as that?" he asked. Stuyvesant shook his head, and then he uttered his own word and convincingly. "Gosh, John," he said, "it's the limit. I'd never have believed it possible."

"Would it help to tell?" asked John. Stuyvesant smiled a little. "Not exactly," he replied. "I did tell one person," he continued after a pause, "and after that it was worse.

This person meant well too. Rot it, if I couldn't run a world better than it's run! I'd have people that love each——" he stopped, and looked wildly around. Then he mopped his forehead. "It's awful hot," he finished inanely.

"Yes," agreed John. "Lord, I'll miss you!" John was utterly despondent. "There's no one like you, Stuyv," he said in an embarrassed way. "You know how hard it is to say some things, but you can bet I know what you've done for me! I do—so does Cecilia. I had the wrong idea."

"I've been glad to be your friend," answered Stuyvesant. "You'll write me and tell me how,—how you all are?"

"Certainly," responded John. "Why, of course I will, but I don't know how I *can* say good-bye! Stuyv, I depend on you awfully. You know,—you know with dad, that is, I can't take his advice because I don't respect him."

"Why not?" broke in John's companion. "I'd like to know why not?"

John's mouth flew open. "His grammar——" he began.

"Trimmings," said K. Stuyvesant.

"Crudeness," said John.

"Companion of strength," said K. Stuyvesant.

"Mentioning money all the time," said John, "how much things cost."

"Better than spending it without mention on dubious objects." John looked away as Stuyvesant replied. "Look here," continued Stuyvesant, "you and I both know the honest goodness in your father's bedraggled ideas of a decent life—his respect for them. The other things are tinsel balls on the Christmas tree. Desirable trimmings, but not essential for the tree's strength. A few more years will convince you,—absolutely convince you. Some day you won't even wince when your father forgets and uses his knife to eat from."

"Never," stated John.

"You prefer a man who is slippery both inside and out?" questioned Stuyvesant.

"They get along better with the world," said John.

"Oh, no," said Stuyvesant. "They get along better with the empties. A few people, those that count, look for something on the inside."

John suddenly leaned well across the table. "Look here, Stuyv," he said, "is this a bluff? Damned if I understand you! I was lying

in the hammock on the porch last summer when Marjory and Cecilia came from the courts. They didn't see me, and I thought I'd hear about some beau and have a joke. I heard Marjory say that you said the old man should be kept in the garage. Not just those words, but smooth—Marjory's way. I never saw Celie so mad! She turned white as——"

"Did she say that?" shouted Stuyvesant.

"Lord, Stuyv!" said John, "everybody's lookin' at you. Yes, of course she said that. What's the matter with you?"

"What else did she say?" asked Stuyvesant. He was somewhat breathless, but for the sake of John more restrained.

"Well, Marjory told Cecilia what a hell of a case you had on her, talking about her eyes, and all that kind of stuff. Trust girls—they blab everything. Gimme the salt, will you?"

Stuyvesant shoved his glass of water toward John. "The salt, man!" said John, and then as he surveyed Stuyv ant with sad eyes, he added, "I hope it isn't catching."

"You go telephone her that we're coming out," said Stuyvesant.

"Who?"

"Your sister, of course. Tell her not to have

CECILIA STOPPED AND GASPED. IT WAS HARDER THAN SHE HAD DREAMED

any one else there. I've got to see her, John,—got to! Honestly, John, I've *got* to. I've got to see her a little while alone. I really must."

"I think you've made it plain," replied John. "You say you must see Cecilia. You did mention that, didn't you?"

There was no room for anything but heaven in Stuyvesant. He nodded seriously. "Yes," he answered, "I must! Really, I've got to, John!"

John howled. "The heat!" he explained, then he sobered.

"Look here, Stuyv," he said, "*did* you say that?"

"What?" asked Stuyvesant, then he remembered, and for the first and last time made a certain utterance. "She lied," he said quietly, and then, "Oh, my *gosh,* I'm happy! I believe I'm going crazy."

"Oh, no!" replied John, "impossible."

"Yes, John?" said Cecilia.

"Stuyv's coming out with me," she heard him say.

"Yes, dear," she answered.

"Any one coming to dinner?"

"No, dear. Shall I ask one of the Welsh

twins? They're always so sweet about coming."

"No," said John; "Stuyv and I were talking about dad, rather Marjory, and he's got a hunch that he's got to see you alone. Got to,—got to,—got to!" Cecilia did not understand, and was rather bewildered at John's laughter.

"Certainly he shall, John," she replied. Her heart beat in her voice. "Good-bye, dear," she ended, and heard the click of his receiver.

"Talking of Marjory" . . . Cecilia turned away from the telephone and went to stand by the sea window of her room. She would help them both all she could. All she could. . . . She closed her eyes, for she felt sick and faint.

"How can I help him?" she questioned, for Marjory's letters had not held a mention of him, although Cecilia's had tactfully recorded his every move. She looked out on the world —it was grey like the frothing Sound.

"I will help them to be happy," she whispered unsteadily. "Father McGowan-dear, —I am learning. Some day I will learn to think of it, and smile——" Then she turned to dress.

Norah came in, and looked on happily. Ce-

cilia was not vain after all. No, she didn't care which frock she put on, and she told Josephine not to fuss so over her hair, that it bored her. "What is the difference?" she had asked a little bitterly, and then to Norah she had said, "I didn't mean that! I didn't! What made me say it? I am not bitter, am I, Norah?"

"And why should you be," Norah had answered, "with everything in the world that money can buy?"

CHAPTER XXI

PINK ROSES

At five K. Stuyvesant and John started for the Sound house. The sun beat down cruelly with the same murky, hot-damp feel. The car wove between the traffic of the crowded streets like a huge shuttle. Both men in it were silent—Stuyvesant breathless and afraid to trust his hope, yet hoping; John despondent over Stuyv's going away. All that that gentleman had done came to John with a new force, —came when the possibility of losing Stuyv even for a few months was thrust before him.

Stuyvesant spoke:

"Takes so long to get out to-day," he said; "we seem to crawl. Look at that fellow ahead. Won't let us get past; have to crawl! Lord! Say, John, let me drive."

"I will not!" replied John with decision. "I have a distinct fondness for life. What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing," answered Stuyvesant loudly, "nothing at all!" Then he began to speak of

certain affairs downtown, talking quickly, as if afraid of silence. John looked at him with wonder. It was very unlike Stuyvesant to be hectic. He recalled the mentioned disappointment. That, also, brought wonder. Stuyvesant didn't seem to care for girls. In business he seemed to get what he wanted. What could it be? Suddenly an idea, which seemed to John almost insane, flew across his mind.

He couldn't recognise it in the face of Cecilia's and Stuyvesant's open avoidance of each other, but in spite of that, the idea clung. "Got to see her, got to——" echoed in John's ears. He swallowed convulsively. If it were true! And it was not Marjory after all,—well, wouldn't he be the happiest fellow on earth? Well, rather!

The last months had brought John to a state of adoration of Cecilia and Stuyvesant. More than love it was. To be as sure of Stuyv's always closeness,—to have Cecilia so cared for. . . . "Can't you let her out a little?" he heard Stuyvesant say impatiently. John answered with a gentleness absolutely new, but it was not noticed. He ran the car faster and well, and his best efforts were greeted with:

"This thing seems to crawl to-night. Darned if I don't want to get out and push!"

"You're in a hurry!" said John bravely.

"Oh, no, no!" answered Stuyvesant, looking on John suspiciously. Then he mopped his forehead, leaving it streaked with the dust that came off. "Hot," he said.

They rounded the last hill before the Madden gateway, and through a gap in some stately poplars they caught a glimpse of a white speck on an upper terrace.

"Cecilia!" blurted out Stuyvesant. "Oh, gosh! John, is my tie, that is, do I look——"

"Sure, you do," said John, comfortingly. Stuyvesant mopped some more. His face looked like a futurist painting of "The Dancers" or some one's aunt.

They rounded up the hill slowly. Evangeline bounded from the shrubbery and barked welcome.

"Evangeline," said Stuyvesant, as one in a trance.

"Yes," answered John; "Norah named him for Cecilia. Norah is an old family servant." Had Stuyvesant heard, he might have smiled, but Stuyvesant was past hearing.

"You poor boys!" said Cecili How hot and tired you must be!" Then looked at Stuyvesant and laughed. "I judge it was dusty?" she said.

"No, that is, I mean quite so," stuttered Stuyvesant. He stood before her silent, openly staring.

When John saw Cecilia flush he put his hand on Stuyvesant's arm. "Come on," he said. "We'll go brush up."

John's manner was as gentle as Cecilia's. Stuyvesant followed him. On the broad porch he paused and looked back.

Evangeline was telling Cecilia that he loved her, in dog fashion—wag code.

Cecilia patted him.

"Gosh!" said Stuyvesant, and then he mopped his forehead, making another picture in the dust.

Dusk came before dinner time. It crept down stealthily, like the thief it is of day. Shadows darkened and lengthened. Greens grew black. Cecilia in the half light on a wide porch watched a certain big and unusually gruff man. Something, she could see, was making him like a wistful boy—a boy so heart-

set on his want that he fears the risk of refusal.

Cecilia thought of Marjory across the seas. There was a chance to play traitor—a chance to rekindle the little spark she had once fired in Stuyvesant. The idea danced about her soul and burnt its edges.

"Father McGowan-dear," she appealed inside, "please help me! I am trying, but I *am* so little!" A breeze from the Sound came with a swish and moaned gently in and out among the loving arms of trees.

The lights in the dining room were soft. They shone gently down on a large bowl of pink roses which were in the centre of the table. Their hearts were a deeper colour and they nodded and seemed to talk when the steps of two pompous persons who passed things shook them.

Stuyvesant looked at Cecilia and then quickly away. He did not know what kind of a frock she wore except that it was white. He knew that she looked good, gentle and pure; that her eyes held the depths that hurts bring and the deep loyalty of love. There was a little droop to her lips that made him ache to see. He wondered at it, dared to hope that it

had come because of him, and then he put the thought away. Unbelievably sweet it seemed.

And Cecilia?

"Marjory across the seas," she thought, "to subdue Jeremiah just a little——" She closed her eyes. "Oh dear!" she thought, "what *is* the matter with me? These awful thoughts!" She opened them again and saw Jeremiah leaning on the table. His fists were closed about his knife and fork, and he held them upright, the handle ends resting on the cloth. John, curiously enough, did not seem bothered by this. He was watching Stuyvesant, who sat opposite.

"After that I started makin' bricks instead of layin' 'em. (Celie, ask that young feller to loan me a piece of bread. I want bread with my supper. I don't care what the style is.) So I begin to make bricks, an' when I look around and think that bricks done it all——" Jeremiah's voice faded. He left the rest to the imaginations of his listeners, while he laid a piece of bread flat on the table, and spread it *en masse*.

"I wisht my wife could have saw it," said Jeremiah as he loosened the piece of bread from

the cloth. "She deserved everything. I never gave her nothing."

"You gave her a great deal," disagreed Cecilia. "You know you did! We were happy in that little flat. I remember that. We loved each other and we had enough to eat."

Cecilia was aware of Stuyvesant's eyes. They were so dear! She wondered if it was very wicked to love them, for she knew she always would. . . . And he had intimated that if Jeremiah were less prominent—Cecilia swallowed hard. The gods are visited with temptations, and too often they come to little humans. Cecilia was meeting hers. For the minute she felt anything possible, justifiable for the end she craved, and in the middle of her minute the white spark in her little heart flared.

"Papa," she said, "please tell Mr. Twombly about the time you hit the boss on the ear with a brick."

The request of that tale was her crucifixion on the cross of loyalty . . . her proof beyond all doubt that her heart was in Jeremiah's rough old hands. Jeremiah looked pleased. His face lit rather pathetically. Cecilia answered his happy smile, and then she looked

down at her plate. Her throat felt full and stiff. She found it hard to swallow.

Through a numbed consciousness she heard a long and much loved tale.

"I love him, I love him!" she chanted inside. "He and John are *everything!*" She looked up and found Stuyvesant looking at her. The way he looked made her gasp a little, and below the table she closed her small hands so tightly that her nails hurt her palms.

"An' then I sez, 'Yuh can lay yer own bricks,'" came in the voice of Jeremiah. "'An' here's one to begin with.' (It took him on the ear.)" He ended in parenthesis.

"Your stand for liberty—was—well—timed. It was—certainly the best thing you could have done," commented Stuyvesant in jerks. He was trying very hard not to look at Cecilia, and it was work not to.

"Celie," said Jeremiah, "what *has* this fellow did to the potatoes? He does be-devil 'em so. He puts on so many airs that yuh hardly recognise 'em fer potatoes!"

"I don't know, dear," answered Cecilia, "but I'll see about it to-morrow."

"Mebbe Celie couldn't fry potatoes!" said Jeremiah. He smacked his lips loudly in re-

membrance. "These here furriners," he went on, "that we hire to cook,—poor things, *they* don't know no better!" And thus Jeremiah disposed of French chefs. The lips of one of the pompous persons curled a little. The roses nodded and bobbed.

To Stuyvesant, who stared resolutely on them, they all whispered, "Cecilia!"

To Cecilia they shouted "Keefer, the butler."

To John they were lovelier that night from a new hope, and, of his father, a new understanding.

But to Jeremiah Madden they brought back only the heat of an overcrowded flat—the woman who held his heart dying by inches, when money might have made her live. . . . Money! . . . A little tired-eyed girl struggling under a woman's load. A little boy who always cried for things he couldn't have.

"The bunnit with pink roses."

Life's question mark,—Fate's smile,—or God's hand?

Jeremiah looked away from the roses, and absently stuck the corner of his napkin in his collar. Then he looked about to see if any one had noticed, and hastily took it out.

Cecilia saw and her heart leaped with love. It seemed to her that the Saints had made Jeremiah do that then. Do it to show the little earth maiden her work in life. The taking from her father the shame which a son would have him feel, and giving him a substitute for the love that left him too soon,—too hungering.

They got up at last. Cecilia took a bobbing rose from the centrepiece. She began to break the thorns from it, but Stuyvesant's hands took it from her. He removed them methodically, and surely,—as he would. When he gave it back to her, there was nothing left to hurt.

"Thank you," she said.

"I wish I could take them out of the world for you," he answered gruffly. She shook as she crossed the room to where her father and John waited at the door. Her temptation was past. Her heart was strong, but she prayed that he would not say such things so much as if he meant them. It made it too hard.

"I am so weak," she thought, "so weak!"

Stuyvesant walked laggingly across the soft grass. John had said that he would find her by a white wall with a Greek relief, that that

was her favourite spot. Stuyvesant knew that he dreamed of that spot because of her, but his connection with it influencing her, he never thought of. His spirit, always humble with her, knelt.

He thought of John's understanding, and whispering, "Good luck, Stuyv, dear!" and of his gasping, "John,—you'd be willing?" John had whacked him on the back and had answered convincingly. Then he'd gone unsteadily down the steps, and had lagged across the close-clipped grass. He wanted as he had never wanted anything to see her, but he was shaken and unsure . . . sick from longing and fear.

Ahead of him in the half light he saw the stretch of wall standing out among the shadows.

He stopped, heart pounding, at the corner of the hedge-sheltered path. The little Irish maiden who was his key to heaven sat on the wall. Behind her the Sound was black. The soft stillness enveloped everything. The half night throbbed. Cecilia looked up, and saw the tall shadow in the shadows.

"John, dear?" she queried. Stuyvesant didn't answer for his voice was gone, but he

stepped toward her. He put out a hand and laid it on a white wall. The world was reeling for him.

"Oh," she said, "I thought it was John, but —but you wanted to see me?"

He nodded.

"Marjory——" she began, then scolded herself for a too abrupt start. She drew a quick breath, and tried to control reason and tact. "She is so lovely, Mr. Stuyvesant," she went on, "but sometimes she doesn't let people know when she likes them. She's like that."

Cecilia stopped and gasped. It was harder than she had dreamed.

"Has she been a good friend to you?" asked Stuyvesant in a queer, tight voice.

"Oh, yes!" answered Cecilia, "so good! I do love her so much! I would do anything to make her happy!"

"You *darling!*" said K. Stuyvesant. He spoke loudly, but his words shook, for his heart was pounding with a sickening speed. With his words Cecilia caught her breath so deeply that it seemed a sob. Doubts vanished,—seemed incredible,—but she spoke what would always be her truth, though her heart famished from it. She looked Stuyvesant squarely

in the eyes: "I love my father," she said, "and I am proud of him. I am proud to be his daughter."

"Of course you are," he answered. "You should be. Cecilia, I am very little, but I am large enough to see what you love in him. Have you misunderstood what I thought?"

She nodded. White, she was, and her eyes were on his face, imploring in their new hope.

"I loved you," said Stuyvesant, "on the boat. I saw how wonderful you were, but, Cecilia,—when I saw you here! When I see you turn and kiss your father when his eyes grow hurt because of John's unkindness. . . . Oh, my dear! Every instant of this year I've loved you, and more and more. I love you so . . . No one could be worthy of you, but, little Saint,—no one could love you more! No one."

He stopped, choked. "I dream on my knees," he went on: "I'll dream of you until I die. But,—what's the use of saying all this? I love you! I love you so! That's everything."

He put a hand out toward her, then drew back. "Cecilia," he whispered, "you *are* so sweet!"

He looked down and drew his breath sharply. He wondered if she would ever speak.

He heard her slip from the wall. . . . Perhaps she would leave him without a word. Dully, he wondered how he could go on living if she did that.

And then the world turned over and then it ceased to be, for Cecilia's hands lay on his shoulders. He felt them move and creep up and around his neck. It was true. . . . He felt a wonderful, shaken strength.

"Cecilia! Cecilia!" she heard him gasp.

After a time she pushed him away and laughed tremulously. "Dearest Keefer Stuyvesant," she whispered shakily, "whose tears are these? Yours or mine?"

There was no room for laughter in Keefer Stuyvesant's soul. He drew her close again and answered gruffly: "There is no yours nor mine any more, little saint. They're ours, dearest,—ours. Oh, Cecilia, *gosh,* how I *love* you!"

THE END