

Jane Thompson, of the South Carolina Thompsons, may it please you, was no longer a star in her opening horizon, but merely an unimportant asteroid much worn from too many occultations with bigger spheres.

Occasionally I caught glimpses of her at Mass, and at Easter we knelt side by side at the altar rail.

A month later I opened a big envelope to find that Mrs. Desmond requested the honor of my presence at the marriage of her daughter Annie to Mr. Horace Granger at St. Paul's Church. The sheet fluttered from my fingers. St. Paul's! A baleful chapter of soul-history was revealed in that line! The Grangers had objected to their son's marrying a Catholic, and Annie had sold her spiritual birthright! I realised the situation perfectly. As to the details of the struggle, whether the victory had been easy, whether it was Horace or his mother who had proved obdurate I could only guess. However, soon afterward I was to learn much, if not all. As I was passing the Desmond home Annie hurried down the steps, and was so obviously lent on overtaking me that I slackened my pace. Her face was flushed, and her eyes wavered and fell before my gaze.

'I suppose you think very badly of me, Miss Jane?' she began.

'Don't you think very badly of yourself, Annie?' I replied.

'Mr. Granger would disinherit Horace if we were to be married by a priest,' she said rebelliously.

'I fancy not. People do not disinherit only sons so easily as all that.'

'Horace wouldn't make the promises, anyway. It's perfectly absurd to ask it of a Protestant. Priests don't know much about human nature.'

'It is just because they do know human nature that they find the promises so necessary. And, pardon me, a girl of twenty is scarcely capable of judging the discipline of the Church that has been guiding human souls for two thousand years.'

'It's not the Church that makes the Christian,' she returned, belligerently. 'It's what you do, what you are yourself. I know some awfully mean Catholics, and plenty of Episcopalians who are good Christians.'

'So do I.'

'The Episcopalians believe ever so many things just like us—the same creed, the same prayers, only in English, doing good to others, being charitable, helping the poor and those in trouble. You can be just as good in one Church as you can in another.'

'You and I, Annie, cannot. God gives His grace through many channels. To the Episcopalian who firmly believes in his Church and who lives according to his conscience God gives grace in various ways. To the Catholic He gives it mainly through the sacraments. If you cut yourself off from the Church you no more get this grace than a branch which has been severed from the vine continues to draw life-giving sap from the parent stem. Human beings are not judged by the same standards. From him to whom much is given much will be required.'

'I can't help myself, Miss Jane. You know Mrs. Granger—a son must obey his mother, and a wife must obey her husband.'

Annie delivered this train of logical reasoning with an air of triumph.

'If a husband ordered his wife to kill herself, would she have to obey?' I asked.

'Oh, Miss Jane!'

'If he ordered her to commit a forgery to save him from ruin, would she have to obey?'

'Of course not.'

'And—Horace Granger is not your husband. Let him marry a girl of his own faith, and you marry a man of yours.'

Annie's eyes plainly said that a woman who could even suggest her giving up Horace was crazy, simply crazy, and deserving of the forbearance accorded to lunatics.

'I'd marry Horace if every person in the world tried to prevent it,' she flashed.

'And turn traitor to your Church?' I answered calmly.

'You wouldn't like for Episcopalians who become Catholics to be called traitors! It's a poor rule that won't work both ways.'

This remark seemed to prove the situation so absolutely hopeless that I walked on for a few moments in silence. Then I said, 'If Horace were to become a Catholic I suppose you would be glad?'

'Why, of course! And maybe he will some day.'

'So, then, you are leaving the Church solely to marry Horace Granger?'

'I couldn't marry him in the Church.'

'Humanly speaking you have everything to gain and nothing to lose by the change. Permit me to say that in the case of converts from the Episcopal Church mat-

ters are the other way round. They generally sacrifice much of earthly good, if not all—home, friends, fortune, fame, even love itself, have all been given up for the faith. The value one places on a thing can usually be gauged by the price one is willing to pay. Where a person is bribed to change his creed, religious or political, the world is apt to be sceptical. If Benedict Arnold could have looked forward to wealth and fame in the Continental army no doubt he would have remained a sound patriot.'

Annie flushed angrily. 'Then I suppose you won't come to my wedding?'

'No, I shall not go to your wedding, Annie.'

'I didn't know that you were so narrow-minded,' came as a parting shaft as I turned down another street.

I was not as indignant at the girl as I should have been.

The poor little moth caught by the glamor of the candle somehow seemed to invite sympathy. Slipping the leash from my fancy as I walked on in the spring sunshine, I wondered if beautiful young girls in splendid, pagan, pleasure-loving Rome in those olden times had not occasionally turned back from the lions crouching in the Coliseum to drop swiftly a bit of incense before Jupiter's shrine; and in dropping it whisper to their souls, 'What matters it, a little incense before a senseless piece of carved stone! And life is so sweet—ugh! to be torn to pieces by the hungry lions!'

Annie's wedding was a brilliant affair. From my window I watched the throngs of guests going into the church. Mrs. Desmond, in a renovated black silk, made festive by splashes of lavender velvet, alighted from a dilapidated livery carriage, and with her two sons hurried into the church. Mrs. Granger, in an imported toilet of gray crepe de chine with rare lace and diamonds, her good-looking husband at her side, paused a moment at the vestibule. The mother of the groom is not expected to be quite as pleased at a wedding as the mother of the bride, and on the present occasion the inequality was so great that sackcloth may have presented itself to Mrs. Granger as a suitable material for a wedding garment.

I levelled my opera-glasses at the bride-elect, a vision of loveliness in white satin and tulle, with her levy of maids. Edith Granger was maid of honor, and Rose Allen, a girl who had made a valiant and very open campaign for Horace, was among the bridesmaids.

The organ, which had been playing a soft accompaniment to whispered conversation, broke out into a joyful strain as the cortege formed; then there was a silence—Annie Desmond was pronouncing her marriage vows. The triumphant notes of the wedding march pulsed on the warm June day and the bridal pair came out of the church. The Granger carriage bore them swiftly out of the way of the laughing, chattering throngs that pressed closely in their wake.

The couple were going abroad for their wedding tour, and I recalled Annie's childish longing for Paris and London.

I did not see the bride again until November, when we met at an afternoon party; she was charmingly gowned and more beautiful than ever. Much to my surprise, she greeted me warmly, almost with affection. She had evidently forgiven me for Benedict Arnold.

The couple went to housekeeping in a handsome colonial home built and furnished by Mr. and Mrs. Granger. When Annie wrote a graceful note asking me to luncheon, I gave myself the pleasure of accepting. My motives were mixed. I wanted to keep some hold on the girl, and I wanted also to see her house, her presents, her clothes, and above all, to hear again of the lights and sounds of Paris.

Edith and Maud Granger were at the luncheon, and I noticed with amusement that they no longer took the tone of patronage with Annie; the wife of their only brother was plainly a person of consequence in their estimation. And deference seemed, indeed, to be the keynote to Annie's reception everywhere; people who had scarcely been aware of Annie Desmond's existence were only too anxious to entertain and be received by Mrs. Horace Granger.

'Poor human nature!' I said to myself. 'How you repent your weaknesses in great and in little. Mrs. Radcliff has her satellites just as sycophantic as Mrs. Granger's, only more urbane. The difference is in method rather than in intention. And the dear Christ has patience with us all!'

A week later Annie took me for a long ride in the automobile.

A second invitation found me a prisoner on my lounge. I had a glimpse of her in a Paris gown during the Christmas holidays, at a crowded reception. Lent came early, and in May I went east for the sum-