

mothers of marriageable daughters, for it was well known Edmund would be Morrison's heir. Nor were the daughters themselves averse to his attentions, which were distributed with praiseworthy impartiality. The joy of Edmund's life echoed to the soul of Morrison. It almost compensated him for the sufferings of the past.

The one cloud on the horizon was the growing indifference to it all of Edmund himself. The sharp eyes of Morrison discovered it almost as soon as Edmund felt it. But it was not until after the return of Edmund from a few days' retreat, which he had gone to make at his alma mater, that matters came to a crisis. He sought an interview that very evening with his guardian in the library. What a comfortable room it was, where the very spirit of home seemed to preside! The young man braced himself for the struggle which he felt was coming, and also strove to think of some form of words in which to announce his decision. He put aside hastily, as of no account, the temptation which assailed him from the very luxury of those externals.

'Mr. Morrison,' he began, and as the lawyer raised his keen eyes and fixed them upon him, he blurted out, after all those words, the full bitterness of which he but dimly understood. 'I have made up my mind, during the course of this retreat, that it is my vocation to be a priest.'

Mr. Morrison, thunderstruck, sat mute and dazed for an instant. Then he spoke with a violence wholly foreign to him:

'Vocation! Rubbish! Understand, young man, that your place is here with me.'

Edmund did not answer, though his face turned pale. The gravity which overshadowed its brightness but accentuated the determination that showed in its every line. Still he strove at least to delay the evil hour.

'Come, come,' said Morrison, 'don't let me hear another word of this nonsense!'

'But, sir,' said the young man, quietly, 'what is there is question of the salvation of my soul?'

Mr. Morrison was startled, but he answered, brusquely:

'You can save your soul here. I don't see that it is endangered; and save it here you must.'

'What if save it here I can't?' said Edmund, in a low voice.

He looked so young, so slender, so boyish, despite his twenty-three years, to be desirous of making so momentous a decision, to be willing to forego all that the world could offer, and presently he continued:

'My intention is, I hope, with your consent, sir, to go as a missionary to the West or South West, where, they tell me, priests are urgently needed.'

'You need not hope for my consent,' was the answer, 'for that you will never have. This decision of yours you will have to reconsider.'

'I'm afraid I can't do that,' said the young man, firmly. 'My decision, firmly made, is irrevocable.'

But Morrison would hear no more. With an imperious wave of the hand he dismissed from his presence that youthful dreamer who must be taught to give up these fantastic ideas—the fruit of religious teaching. He must learn that he could be as Catholic as he liked, as useful as he liked, there in those suitable surroundings, while fulfilling his duty to one who had been his second father. But after he had gone, Francis Morrison's head sank upon his breast and he seemed at once to have grown old. The edifice of hope he had reared on the promise of this boy's life seemed crumbling around him. A missionary in the West! Was that the end of it all? Little as he was informed upon such subjects, he had at that moment a glimpse of what such a sacrifice meant. Also, perhaps, he had a momentary vision of the height to which the soul of his ward had climbed; and, fight against it as he might, an inner voice warned him that that resolution was unalterable, and that, even if Edmund could be persuaded to remain where he was, the soul of him, the only part that mattered, had already gone forth. As the latter had turned and, at his guardian's bidding, left the

room, he had sent back a look, grave, appealing, heart-piercing, from those eyes so like his mother's. It had been her voice that had announced that decision from which there seemed no appeal, just as her voice had once before, in that very room, announced another which had changed Francis Morrison's whole life.

In the lonely vigil that the strong man kept, beside the fire burning to ashes, he seemed to hear her voice pleading in that of her son, and warning him to beware lest, through agency of his, a soul might meet with shipwreck. He had to face the question whether he would or no. What if his ward remained there where he was, stilling the voice that called him by plunging deeper and deeper into worldly pleasures? What if, in that very process, he submerged his better self, his highest aspirations, perhaps even his manhood? It was a long and bitter struggle. The old anguish of the past was renewed and intensified in an agony that only the strong can know. Francis Morrison emerged from that ideal haggard, aged, a broken man.

When next the subject was broached between them, Francis Morrison, in a few terse words, gave his consent. The young man was left free to follow his own way, and that way led Edmund at once to the seminary. The people of their world were astonished and full of regret at the departure of that popular favorite. That he should have gone to be a priest seemed incredible. The affair was quite a nine days' wonder, but, like everything else, it was soon forgotten. The house in Thirty-eight street rarely opened its doors now, save for some formal dinner party, and Mr. Morrison withdrew almost entirely from the social world.

During the years that Edmund Johnson spent in the seminary, his guardian paid all his expenses. Further than that he did not go. He never visited his ward, nor was he even present at the ceremony of his ordination. From the time that the newly made priest was appointed to a parish away down in East Tennessee, he was left to subsist as best he could. Perhaps it was some smouldering resentment in Morrison, who could not forgive the suffering which his ward's departure had cost him, or more probably it was a wise intervention of Divine Providence, to fit the young man for his chosen career, by the succession of crosses that made up his daily existence; for he bore the total deprivation not only of the comforts to which he had been accustomed, but all save the barest necessities of life, and those in the scantiest measure. That pampered child of wealth became familiar with cold and hunger, besides the grinding anxiety of providing for the spiritual necessities of a flock that could not help itself. He was compelled to reach the very limit of endurance; but it seemed to harden him physically, as it enriched him spiritually. He was lifted up to a plane hitherto unreachd, and his brave, indomitable spirit strengthened by its daily wrestlings, went forth to conquer all things.

Frequently his guardian received his letters, glowing with apostolic zeal, and showing between the lines that ardor with which he was inspired. But he purposely refrained from mentioning his difficulties, above all his personal privations. He felt that it would seem like asking for new benefactions from one who had already done so much. Francis Morrison answered occasionally—brief, curt epistles, expressing no opinion, asking for no details.

It was quite by chance that the actual state of the case was made known to him, by a client who had spent some time in that part of the country, and who had told how the fame of the saintly Father Johnson was noised abroad, and what wonders he was accomplishing in that parish of his (which numbered some thousand square miles), under enormous disabilities and with no resources at all. It was, indeed, as the stranger declared, a matter of astonishment to every one how the priest could endure the privations and hardships of his life. The man was naturally astonished when the grey-haired lawyer brought his hand down upon the office table, with something that sounded like a smothered oath. But he did not, as the other afterward declared, 'put him wise' as to the relationship in which the