

he watched us. God forgive me, I thought him a foolish old man! Well, for a while, we were happy, radiantly happy, as young people are in the first flush of their new life. We would have laughed at the idea of my religion ever coming between us. We used to talk it over in the friendliest of spirits. I think it must have been three or four years before we quarrelled about it. We had been arguing good-naturedly, I think it was in regard to confession. He did not like the idea of his wife telling her inmost secrets to another man—that's the only way he could see it—it strikes you in the same fashion, doesn't it? At any rate, he lost his temper, and flung some sneer at the faith, a sneer that showed all too plainly his real opinion of Catholicism. I answered him, naturally, with some heat, and our first real marital wrangle followed. Of, course, we made it up, we were still too much in love to allow it to drag on, but we discussed religion no more. A constraint crept between us, a feeling that there was one topic we must not touch upon. Our love only made the constraint harder to deal with. I could not fulfil the simplest religious duty without feeling that he mocked it. I could not pray at night in his presence without fearing to catch that sneer on his face if I looked up too quickly. Are you ever going to let Lucy feel so toward you?

'No!' cried Staunton. 'Never that!'

'I pray that you may not!' After a pause:

'We had no serious trouble till our two sons were old enough for school. Then my husband refused to send them to be taught, as he expressed it, by a lot of nuns. He said that the ante-nuptial agreement did not cover the point, and that as long as he did not interfere with their religious training he could send them where he chose. If I had been stronger I might have carried my wish against him, but I yielded. Of course, I saw that they were properly instructed, though even then it was not always easy to explain why, if mother's faith was so plainly true, their father should not believe it. Then they were thrown entirely with non-Catholic children, and, gradually, as they grew up and began to go about with the girls and boys in society—save the mark!—they became ashamed of their religion. First Communion and Confirmation had strengthened their faith for a time, but it was only for a time. Phil, junior, the elder, when he reached eighteen, had begun to be slack in receiving the sacraments, even in attending Mass. I appealed to my husband, finding my own pleas unavailing, but he refused to compel the lad to his duties. Mr. Larned thought his own obligations accomplished in not persuading Phil to adjure.

'No doubt this is a very stupid story to you. You cannot know the agony that a mother suffers when she sees her children drifting away from her, further and further, and doing so under the covert encouragement of her husband. What do you know of the mother's countless pitiful stratagems that fail, the countless prayers that seem of no avail, the tears, the heartache that never ceases. Take care that the woman you love may never come to know of them. I—I have gone down on my knees to the son I bore, and have been asked to please stop fussing, been told that he was a man, not a child.'

The slim taper fingers crushed the lace handkerchief in her palm into a ball; still the voice did not quiver as she went on.

'Phil is twenty-two and has entirely renounced the Church, and John is following in his brother's footsteps, to their father's open satisfaction. I do not blame Mr. Larned. He thinks, as you do, that his son has emerged from intellectual bondage into freedom. He is entitled to his exhortation. For fifteen years there has been a duel between us—for our children, and he has won. I've been defeated at every turn. I've been weak when I should have been strong, cowardly when I should have been brave. Yet even the faith has given me strength to face the world with a smile to hide the tears, and so—ours is an ideally happy marriage to everyone except myself, my husband, and my confessor—and you.'

The low, rich tones ceased, and for a moment even the warm summer night noises seemed hushed in sympathy.

Then Staunton spoke, unsteadily.

'I shall keep your story sacred—always,' he said.

'I knew that you would.'

Another pause.

'I suppose,' remarked Staunton, more easily, 'that theological questions have their place, but as far as I'm concerned, women like Lucy—and you—are the Church's most unanswerable argument.'

An hour afterwards Mr. William Staunton was walking homeward through the night. He was thinking of many things. He wanted to hold his sweetheart in his arms, to assure her with passionate asseveration that there was no danger to be feared, that she would be safe with him forever. As he kept his way the spires of St. Patrick's loomed upon his sight, the gray facade glorified by the moonlight on the stones. Mr. Staunton, passing the high, closed portals, raised his hat in half-unwilling reverence for the unseen presence within.

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Mary Larned watched till he was out of view, then went slowly to her room, and knelt down before the little silver crucifix that hung beside her bed.

'Oh, Ohrist, my Saviour,' she prayed, 'Who sought out the one sheep that wandered, bring back my children to Thy true fold. They are lost and cannot find the way. And if they have merited Thy wrath, oh, I pray Thee, suffer me, through whose weakness they have strayed, to bear whatever punishment Thy mercy shall deem just. And help me, O Lord, to follow wherever Thou leadest, and not to falter nor stumble on the path. Amen.'

As she prayed, a shaft of moonlight, sweeping across the floor, reached her, and seemed to linger lovingly upon her bowed and weary head.—*Extension.*

THE BLUE CORNUCOPIA

Cecilia Wade was very fond of her Aunt Jane, being a sweet-natured creature, and apt to be disproportionately grateful for kindnesses small or great. Seeing that she had had it drummed into her from babyhood that her aunt was her best friend, having done more for her than could be expected in giving her food and shelter from the world, she might well believe it. Her father, Robert Wade, had broken the hearts of all his family, according to Miss Jane Wade, by marrying a little French governess whom he had met accidentally on the Dover and Calais boat.

Other people might have thought that Miss Wade owed something to Cecilia for youth chained to her sofa and tender service most willingly rendered. But that point of view had not occurred to Miss Wade; nor to Cecilia, for the matter of that. Cecilia acted as an unpaid nurse and maid to her Aunt Jane, read to her, wrote her letters, did her shopping and paid her bills, superintended the gardener, looked after the cats and dogs and the canary—in fact, did a hundred things, and had in return just food and shelter, the clothes she stood up in, and the tiniest allowance of pocket money.

A good many people would have been glad to be kind to Cecilia, who was a charming girl to look at—tall, slender, with brown eyes at once gentle and vivacious, a fine, colorless skin, a delightful smile, and the French politeness. The latter was something Aunt Jane never approved of in her niece. Cecilia had few people to show politeness to beyond the servants and the tradespeople, with whom Miss Wade thought her niece's manners sadly out of place. Miss Wade did not welcome casual acquaintances, she said. She had her own old friends—not one under seventy years of age. Living in London, she was not troubled by callers. When any acquaintance was offered to her she rejected it. What did she want with new people at her time of life? She never thought of Cecilia.

Cecilia was quite well aware, and had not grumbled over it, that Miss Wade's money had been spent in the purchase of an annuity, so that when the old lady was gone there would be no provision for her. To do Miss Wade justice, the money had been so invested before Cecilia had come to her—a little black-clad, white-faced orphan of seven. It had not seemed to