

Her husband, noticing the change in her, asked in alarm if she were ill.

'No, she replied, 'just a little worn from excitement. You know my nerves,' she added, with a slightly forced laugh. 'I shall feel better shortly.'

The act had reached the terrible church scene and she was suddenly keenly aware that her daughter's voice was rising sweet as that of a seraphim. 'Behind her work is a heritage of religion.' Was he who uttered that truth an accusing angel set there to torture her? The words seemed to bring the dead to life, and for the moment in her mind's eye she saw her own mother as a husband's love had often pictured her—dead in the June-time of life, because she would not withhold her beauty and accomplishments from the Church in an hour of need. It was three weeks after the birth of her baby when the sudden illness of an engaged soloist made it necessary for her to take the singer's place or witness the failure of a church undertaking from which great financial results were expected. In spite of her physician's warning, she decided to sing, and paid for it with her life. Such was the religious heritage to which her daughter had proved recreant.

Of what avail had been ambition and wealth, when they failed to drown these memories that shrivelled and scorched? Mrs. Cathro cowered in her seat as if shrinking from an avenging spirit. She struggled to shut out the vision of her mother that was so relentlessly bringing her face to face with the consequences of her apostasy.

'A flower without perfume.' At that moment, above the swelling harmonics of the priest's chorus, she seemed to hear the words. It was the voice of her own soul shouting its accusation. Startled, she raised her eyes to where Constance poured forth her song for mercy, in throbbing, plaintive notes, like the rhapsody of a nightingale. 'A flower without perfume.' Was that what her weakness and indifference with regard to things spiritual had made of this glorious creature in the eyes of God? She had never before viewed her course in the light of its results upon her child, and as she did so, she felt weakened, stricken.

At no point in her tragic journey from love and belief to apathy and renunciation had she been so tormented. Her mother and her child stood up before her to wage battle in her soul. The noise of the conflict was in her ears, its voices clamoring in her heart. Her pulses throbbed and her head ached. Then, suddenly, her whole nature seemed to escape from the leash in which she had held it during the years of her married life, and to rush back to the past—the past with its passionate love and zealous service of God and the wondrous joy and peace which these gave. An interval in which she knew the blackness of utter despair followed this with the thought that her child, whom she loved more than her life, might never know the inner beauties and exquisite experiences of the faith which was her heritage. In spirit she sank to her knees. 'O God,' she prayed, 'give her not of the kingdom of this world, only to abandon her to the outer darkness resultant from her mother's choice for her.'

She shuddered at the jeopardy in which her sin had placed the soul of her gifted child.

And then—just then—when her sense of the abject weakness of her own faith and of her utter unworthiness to shake doubt from another soul overwhelmed her, the vision of her mother rose before her. The eyes were no longer accusing and wrathful, but soft and full of light, and she felt suddenly strong—strong to take the journey back, upon which she must not go alone.

But, as her soul found strength, her body seemed to weaken. She touched her husband's arm. To turned toward her and stared at sight of her face.

'What is it, Helen?' he exclaimed. 'Are you ill?'

'Only a little faint,' she replied. 'I must get some air.'

He reached for her cloak, and hastily arranging it about her shoulders led her from the box. Inquiring eyes followed them as they made their way out, and solicitude stamped itself on many countenances at sight of the pallor of Mrs. Cathro's face. Her husband

looked for the air to revive her immediately, and when it failed to do so insisted on taking her home.

'Oh, no, indeed, dear,' she remonstrated, 'you could not do that and be back in time for the finale. It will be disappointing enough for Constance not to have me here, but it you should be absent, too, it would break her heart.'

'But I cannot let you go home alone. You look far from well.'

'It's simply one of my old heart attacks,' she returned weakly, 'and you know they always seem more serious than they really are. James can take me home and bring the car back for you.'

Seeing that any other arrangement was only likely to disturb her, he made her as comfortable as possible in the machine. 'It's just too bad, dear, that this had to happen,' he said as he kissed her. 'Our little girl has had an unparalleled success to-night, and your absence from any part of it will dim the laurels for her.'

'I know it will, she's like that. God bless her!' returned the mother as the car rolled away.

The last phrase in his wife's reply repeated itself unpleasantly in Senator Cathro's mind. 'It was one long foreign to her lips, and her use of it now troubled him and made him doubt the wisdom of having sent her home alone.

When he regained his seat the final curtain was descending amid plaudits that shook the walls. Greater voices Washington had heard; but never a rarer, more perfect 'Marguerite.' And her voice, that took captive the senses, seemed to hold all earth's sweetest sounds.

Of course, there was to be a supper afterward, and, of course, the young prima donna, radiant and joyful in the first flush of her triumphs, must needs run home for a minute to assure herself that her mother's indisposition was nothing serious. 'I shall enjoy myself so much better if I do,' she said, with a winning firmness that silenced all remonstrances.

When the rush of the big machine was heard in the driveway below, Mrs. Cathro dismissed her maid in order to receive her daughter alone. She was not surprised that she had come. Somehow she felt that she would. The hurry of light footfalls sounded on the stairs, the swish of draperies along the hall, and Constance, her arms full of exquisite floral offerings, stood in the doorway.

'Oh, mother,' she cried, 'it was a success!' The flowers dropped to the floor and her strong young arms went round her mother in a rapturous embrace. 'You are better now, mother, dear?' Her clear, dark eyes regarded Mrs. Cathro anxiously.

'Yes, Constance, darling, I am better.'

'You were satisfied?' she whispered.

'Satisfied! I was exultant. You were your grandmother over again, except—and here her voice trembled and again her eyes were shadowed with the poignant reflections that had companioned her during the preceding hours—'except—that your grandmother was a Catholic.'

Constance stared at her mother with her soul in her eyes. 'My grandmother—a—Catholic!' she cried. 'And you, mother?'

For the second time that night it seemed to Mrs. Cathro that her own soul rose up to accuse her. 'I—I sold my birthright for a mess of pottage,' she moaned.

For an instant the turmoil of the girl's thoughts held her as by a spell. In the interval her brain pieced out the whole sad story and took in the significance of her mother's sudden illness. Then, with a glance as shining as the flash of a seraph's wing, she touched her mother's arm.

'Mother,' she whispered, 'would it please you very much if I would go back to my grandmother's faith?'

Her mother looked at her curiously, eagerly. Vague hopes gripping her heart set her breathing rapidly.

'Please me? Why, child, it would open the gates of paradise for me!'

'Then they are already ajar, dearest, for I am to be received into the Church next week. I wanted to wait until to-night should be over. I knew your prejudice and father's against the Church, and hoped that