

The Cortlandts of Washington Square

By Janet A. Fairbank
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IN THE HOSPITAL

SYNOPSIS—Returning to her home in a small town, Milton Carter, from a visit to New York, the widowed mother of ten-year-old Ann Byrne, announces her wedding to Hudson Cortlandt, socially and politically prominent. Her husband has not been heard about Ann, and the new wife fears he will be displeased. With Ann, Mrs. Cortlandt returns to New York, to the home of Hendricks Cortlandt, her husband's brother, with whom the latter is living. Hudson practically refuses to have anything to do with Ann, and the child is glad to be adopted by Hendricks Cortlandt. Ann's mother and step-father are lost at sea. Ann fills a gap in Hendricks Cortlandt's lonely heart. The situation is remedied by Mrs. Rensselaer. Hendricks has been looking upon her as the natural heir of the Cortlandt wealth. The Civil War breaks out. A tentative engagement between young Rensselaer and Ann is understood, the youth enlisting. War hospitals are established in New York, and Ann takes up the work of cheering the wounded back from the front.

CHAPTER VI—Continued.

"Oh, yes—I worked. . . . I can work much faster than you, Fanny, when I try. . . . I finished over so many havevels, and—I put a note in the last one."

Hendricks bounced from his chair, his face crimson with indignation. "You did what?" he stormed.

"What made you do a thing like that? What did you say?" the young man demanded fiercely.

"Oh, I said I hoped my havevel would keep him safe from harm. . . . And that I hoped he would kill over so many Confederates."

"Did you sign your name?" Fanny inquired, averted.

"I just wrote Ann."

"Your first name—to a stranger?"

"He didn't seem like a stranger. . . . When I saw them marching away I would have given anything to know which one had it."

"When you saw them marching away," repeated Hendricks in a voice of doom. "Did you go over to Broadway to see them?"

"I did."

"With uncle?"

"Yes."

"Alone in all the crowd?"

"The girl's impatience flared out. "Oh, what difference does it make? . . . I saw a woman crying because her husband had gone. . . . And I stood there, and I waved my handkerchief. I wouldn't have cried—not even if it had been mine. . . . All around me were shouting 'On to Richmond!' She drew a passionate breath, and pressed her hands tightly against her breast. "And there you were, Hendricks, making money. Money!" She threw her hands out in a gesture of desperation. "You never seem to think of the war at all—and I can't get away from it for a minute!"

"You know, Fanny, every morning on our way to the Sanitary commission we go through all that crowd of recruiting officers—young men with no arms—and you have only no pass to the army any time all day long, to see soldiers drilling there."

Hendricks smiled at her with affectionate tolerance. "There are at least sixty thousand men in Washington," he said soothingly. "General Scott can handle it, all right. We are sure to win."

He was cut short by the clatter of horse's feet and the confusion of a sudden stop before the house. Ann leaped to the window to look.

"It's uncle!" she cried. "Something must have happened!" She ran out to meet him, leaving Fanny white-faced.

At the train she pointed him by her articulate depression.

and trembles. It was only a moment before she returned, with her arms through Mr. Cortlandt's belt supporting him.

"What is it?" gasped Fanny, right-ly.

"What?" Ann lunged at Hendricks, and he bowed him with blazing eyes. "What's her condition?"

"I should never have yielded to the thought of a delicate engagement. . . . She isn't even able to walk."

turned a scornful glance on Hendricks. "I suppose you want me to re-enlist?" he demanded truculently.

"Ann, how can you?" Fanny protested, futilely, sheer terror in her un-noticed face, while Mr. Cortlandt laid a restraining hand on Ann's arm.

"I want to go, all right," the boy said. "You know that, don't you, Uncle Hendricks? Do you think I should?"

Mr. Cortlandt was silent for a moment; he entirely disregarded the impatient little pushers Ann gave him from time to time. "Hendricks," he said, at length, "I hate to have you go—God knows, tonight we know what may happen—but the country needs the young men."

Suddenly Ann melted. She clung to Hendricks as she had never done, and lifted an agonizing cry to his.

"When you come home, Hendricks—when the Confederates are beaten—I'll marry you if you haven't a cent!"

"Well," he said, gloomily, although his arm tightened about Ann, "that settles it."

"Oh," she cried, undeterred by the presence of her guardian and Fanny. "I love you, Hendricks! I do love you, after all!"

Having made up his mind, Hendricks Rensselaer lost no time in severing his connection with the bank, and the next day, while Ann was only beginning to taste the joy of having her uncle to her side, he announced that he had joined the Fifty-fifth New York volunteers. A week later he was under canvas on Staten Island, endeavoring to absorb sufficient information in regard to drills and maneuvers, to enable him to perform his duties as second lieutenant with some likelihood of success.

He was greatly bewildered by his new duties, for his month's service had not, after all, taught him much, but he managed to pick up some useful information from a soldier in his company who had served in Africa, and the Crimea, and when the Fifty-fifth was ready to march, he had a fair parade ground idea of his duties.

Hendricks' second military departure was strangely different from his first. It was only four months since the Seventh regiment had marched away in a jubilee of admiration, but in that time war had become an eminent thing. When the Fifty-fifth broke camp, and started for the front, Ann had an exultant thrill. "Uncle," she gasped, "I don't want them to go!"

She had a sudden clear vision of the front, of the smoke, the firing, and the death, the death, the death, she thought, as she pondered his by her articulate depression. She clung to him desperately, so that he was embarrassed at such public demonstration, and she did not smile nor wave her hand as the train drew away; she only looked at him profoundly.

Back to Washington square Mrs. William Cortlandt was awaiting them. "Hendricks," she said at once, "I have come for some money."

"Sanitary commission again?" Mr. Cortlandt asked, smiling.

"No—this time it is for an army hospital."

"Has it been decided to equip one?" Mr. Cortlandt asked.

"Yes, Hendricks—I don't know what you will think. . . . When we get the hospital ready, I have made up my mind to nurse in it." Mrs. William looked as frightened as a daring little girl.

Ann's eyes widened. To nurse! To bathe brows, and to moisten fevered lips; to read poetry, and to place flowers by sick beds! That was life. She, too, would be a nurse!

"It is a new work for gentlemen," her guardian said doubtfully. "Yes—but so are hardships of campaigning new work for gentlemen!"

It amazed Ann to hear Fanny's conservative mother championing something her guardian thought unconventional, and she hung herself into the talk, eager to help her. "It's the next best thing to fighting, to be a nurse, much!" she declared. "And when the hospital is opened I shall work there, too."

Mrs. William turned on her, hurringly. "Indeed you shan't, miss!" she cried. "What an idea! A young girl!"

"What, young men are fighting?" The girl appealed to her guardian.

"Indeed—I may, mayn't I?"

He shook his head, smiling. She could see that he did not take her request seriously. "Hendricks wouldn't like it, I am sure," he chuffed, and she felt herself flushing up sharply.

"I'd like to think he wouldn't," exclaimed Mrs. William, and swept on with her plans for transferring a dwelling house into a hospital. The subject of Ann's participation appeared to be disposed of, but the girl knew better. As she sat silently by, absent taking in the conversation, she was quite determined as to one thing; when the hospital was opened she would work in it, no matter a not opposition she overcame. She watched Mr. Cortlandt draw a generous check, with exultation; it brought her copper tunity so much the nearer.

Letters came promptly from Hendricks. He wrote that Washington was greatly changed in the two months he had been in New York.

Apparently the Fifty-fifth had made a good impression in Washington, for the crowd had thinned as it marched

up Pennsylvania avenue, and marched off in the direction of new troops already familiar with the rudiments of drilling.

CHAPTER VII

HOSPITALS.

The first army hospital in New York was no sooner opened than the need for it was evident; the camps were fever-ridden, and a score of men was sent in on the opening day. Mrs. William Cortlandt, who proved to be an excellent nurse, brought home fearful tales of heroic and suffering men to which Ann listened with shivering eyes. Romance hovered over the commonplace building that housed the wounded, and it was not long before the girl suggested that she might be allowed to serve as Mrs. William's assistant. This she was allowed to do, for she was sufficiently chaperoned to be acceptable, but Mrs. William said, flatly, that she wouldn't undertake the responsibility of having a young girl about.

About a fortnight after Hendricks' departure Ann was working at the Sanitary commission when a call came from the hospital for more bedding.

"Let me take it down," she volunteered, eagerly. "I can have the carriage here in ten minutes."

They piled the seats high, but at the hospital it was all quickly unpacked, and Ann had no excuse to linger, fascinated in the parking doorway. In no time at all she was on her way back, lost in gloomy disappointment, when suddenly, while crossing a street, the horses shied violently to one side. Ann roused herself bewildered, and looked hurriedly about her. A man was standing in the middle of the road close beside her; he gazed toward her as she passed, so that for an unpleasant instant she feared that he would be caught by the carriage. She thought that he must be drunk, and she looked back curiously. He lay, a comely blue-bee, in the roadway. He was a soldier, at a moment she was kneeling beside him, turning his pallid face toward her, with hands that trembled.

"Oh, what is it?" she cried. "Did we run you down?"

"No, ma'am. I'm just sick. . . . Light case of typhoid, doctor said."

Ann's tone was relieved. "You can't go on lying here, you know. Where were you going? I'll drive you there."

She signaled to her coachman to come to help him get up.

He closed his eyes wearily. "Hospital," he said weakly.

"Oh, Ann pleaded, "don't faint! Please don't faint!"

"I won't," he said, when she promised, and kept his word, even when the coachman hoisted him up into the open carriage, while Ann stood at the doorway, not to keep them perfectly quiet.

He was a man, when she laid her hand on his forehead, and he lay back against the cushions.

When the hospital was reached the man roused himself.

"I'll see if I can find a stretcher, and can carry you in," Ann volunteered.

"No. . . . I'll walk. . . . I feel better after my ride. And he was better; he managed to descend, with only Ann's eager help, but he clung gratefully to the gate-post when he reached it. He looked wistfully up the walk that led to the door. "I'll never make it," he said childishly. "But don't leave me, will you?"

Ann's eyes filled with unexpected tears. "Never," she promised. She held him up manfully.

An orderly looked out of the open doorway. "John!" he bawled, as he sprang forward. He brushed Ann aside as though she were the merest incident in the rescue of her sick soldier. Almost immediately John appeared. He was a nurse—Ann could tell that, because his apron was bloody from the operating room—but his technique was the same as the orderly's, for he, too, ignored Ann. He put a capable arm around her soldier, and between them the two men hustled him up the steps, and through the open doorway. Ann followed fervently; she felt very superfluous.

"Well," she murmured. "Well!" She was possessed by a feeling of extraordinary fitness, and she was hurt, too, which she knew was unreasonable of her. There were benches against the wall, and she dropped down on one, discommodated. "Men," she said to herself, "how horrid they are!" Her eyes filled again, and she luxuriated in her tears.

"Is trouble?" A great, shaggy man, comfortably shabby and amazingly kind-looking, enquired her in an expansive personality.

Ann looked up at him and nodded gravely.

The stranger sat down beside her, quite as if he had known her all his life. "I'll not about it, sister," he said benignly. "Men," she said, unexpectedly in herself, and she solved the grievance, she knew that what she recounted was not the casual manner of the two attendants; it was being shut out from their paradise.

"And why not?" demanded her new friend.

"But what can I do?"

"I never have."

"No—you are too young. The men—the middle-aged nurses and mothers of families."

"But if I can't nurse, is there anything else?"

"I should say so," he fairly shouted. "I believe the reason I am able to do good among the wounded boys is that I am so strong and well—and so are

you, and beautiful, too. Men come in faint and weak, they need nourishing things to eat. I am going now to buy oyster soup for those that came from the Philadelphia ferry. It will give them an appetite to their dinner. They like little-made biscuits, too, and sweet cookies and jelly; you could go through the hospital every day doing good deeds; you can read to them, and talk cheery talk to them; save lives by keeping men from giving up! You can do wonders for them." Encouraged by these fascinating words, she brought home from his pocket, "I keep a list of things they want, and buy them for them. And so it goes. Want to help?"

"Oh, yes," she gasped.

"Come along then—I'll get you started. What's your name?"

"Ann Byrne."

"Well, Ann, good luck! My name is Whitman—just—ever hear of me?"

"No."

"No—your name spoke eloquently of the perfection of her upbringing."

He chuckled. "No, but you will. All these States will be one quantity," he explained grandly. "No hurry, or no hurry for my boys!" He hurried Ann unceremoniously through the nearest doorway, and



the girl recoiled, aghast. The glare of light revealed mercilessly all the horror of the hospital ward. Rows of cots ran in and down the room; they were crowded close, for a new lot of wounded had just been brought in. There was horrible confusion everywhere. The air was making hospital wards places of torment. The men lay sprawling on the beds, more often than not still in their dirty uniforms, incumbered with crumpled pieces of paper upon which she had scribbled in the day of her list, and read from it, triumphantly. "Licorice, raspberry vinegar—to make a cold drink, you know, uncle—a pipe and tobacco, hornbun candy, a German Lutheran clergyman—that man is very ill, I'm afraid he may not live until morning—tooth-picks, a comb, oranges and apples, pickles, plug tobacco."

Mr. Cortlandt smiled. "Yes," he said, "you may go back."

"But," she said, "I'll be back today," she volunteered placidly, in hopes of creating a happier atmosphere. "Mr. Whitman?" her guardian smiled whimsically. "Not Walt, I presume."

"But yes," said Ann eagerly, "that is just who he was. He says he is a poet."

Mr. Cortlandt demanded sharply. "What did he say to you?" It seemed to Ann that he turned pale, but she knew that she must be mistaken.

"We talked about the wounded men," she said reasonably, "and he told me what I could do for them."

Mrs. Rensselaer cut in here. "You see, Hendricks, what the hospitals mean?" Walt protested. "I liked him. He is a nice man. You don't like him, do you, uncle?"

"No."

"Why not? I did."

"I don't know him."

"That's no reason. He is good-kind. Don't you like his poetry—in that it is a bad poet?"

"No, I think he may be a good one. But his subjects—" He broke off; and Ann thought his face was flushed.

"We won't discuss it."

"I congratulate you on your wisdom," Mrs. Rensselaer said coldly, and Ann held her peace. She realized that the introduction of her new acquaintance into the conversation made her hospital service more bleakly undesirable than before.

"You can stop, now."

The magazine dropped to the floor with a little crash, yet the figure on the cot did not stir. "Is he dead?" Ann whispered.

The doctor nodded, and beckoned an orderly over to him. "We'll get him out while the men are eating their supper. Did you have any trouble with him?"

Ann shook her head. She could not believe that while she had sat so close to him, death had snatched him away. She was tremulous and shaken. He did not look different, she thought, and yet everything was chastened. "I was awful. . . . Her lips whispered the words stupidly. . . . It was incredible."

"You'd better go home," the doctor advised. "You've done a good job here. When are you coming back?"

"I was awful," she thought. The orderly was covering up a sheet. It seemed an indefinitely long time ago that work in the hospital had looked like a delectable adventure. . . . She shivered uncontrollably. "Tomorrow," she said, her voice very low.

The safe pleasantness of the Washington square house enveloped her in peaceful restfulness. All the way home she had been planning what she could say to the dead boy's mother; that task she had it to do, but before she could sound its friendly jargon the door was swung open and there was Mrs. Rensselaer on the threshold.

"I know all about where you have been, miss," she laid cry, and swept the girl into the library, where Mr. Cortlandt was reading his afternoon paper. Ann thought that there was more of reluctance than reproach in his manner, as he looked up at her.

"I'm glad I went, uncle," she said, defiantly. "You know, yourself, that I was awful."

"Yes," Mr. Cortlandt admitted judicially, "you were."

"Hendricks," his sister said, severely, "don't encourage her! How could you do such a thing. Ann, after we had all agreed it was improper?"

"Because I know you are all wrong," he answered, with a spirited lift of her head. "Uncle—you have been there. Is there anything improper in what I was doing?"

"Well, it was unconventional, my dear, for you to be there at all."

"So is war unconventional!" She swung on Mrs. Rensselaer. "Go there yourself, and look at that soldier, and tell me whether it seems improper if I am conventional or not?"

"I couldn't bear to set my foot in a hospital, Ann—and my boy never set it—and yours shouldn't, either."

"Well," she said, dryly, "I guess I haven't any nerves." Death! She had seen death that day, and they talked to her of nerves! "Uncle, may I go back tomorrow? See what I've promised to bring them?" She produced the crumpled piece of paper upon which she had scribbled in the day of her list, and read from it, triumphantly. "Licorice, raspberry vinegar—to make a cold drink, you know, uncle—a pipe and tobacco, hornbun candy, a German Lutheran clergyman—that man is very ill, I'm afraid he may not live until morning—tooth-picks, a comb, oranges and apples, pickles, plug tobacco."

Mr. Cortlandt smiled. "Yes," he said, "you may go back."

"She will become the talk of the town," his sister warned him.

"In that case," Mr. Cortlandt responded dryly, "it is just as well that there will be something fine to say of her." He drew Ann close to him, and she pressed her cool cheek against his gratefully.

"I met a nice man today," she volunteered placidly, in hopes of creating a happier atmosphere. "Mr. Whitman?" her guardian smiled whimsically. "Not Walt, I presume."

"But yes," said Ann eagerly, "that is just who he was. He says he is a poet."

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CHAPTER VIII

Washington—Sixty-One.

Hendricks had been gone for a month before Mr. Cortlandt found it possible to go to Washington, and by that time Ann was so feebly involved in hospital service, that she had some difficulty in getting away.

Hendricks met them at the station; Ann had been looking forward with impatience to seeing him again, but now that she was meeting her fiancé, she was so wretchedly nervous.

Hendricks embraced her in a huge

embrace, and kissed her; he held her at arm's length, rejoicing. "She looks just-out, sir," he said, as he took his uncle's hand. "Too much hospital nonsense!"

The color flew into Ann's face as she jerked herself free, but she said nothing; she did not even so much as glance at her guardian, for she was afraid lest he, too, might be criticizing Hendricks' address.

They drove in silence to the hotel, in an open barouche which enabled Ann to look eagerly about her.

The hotels were all overcrowded, but Hendricks had reserved rooms for his uncle, and, after a few moments' wait in a swarming lobby they went upstairs. Ann opened her door, and the door swung around the corner with a massive crash of drams and horns, and behind it came a regiment of cavalry.

They marched on, company after company, while the music of the band grew gradually fainter, as they passed a group of mounted negroes, and a long string of baggage wagons, each with four horses and a rear-guard. Ann gasped. This was warfare.

Mr. Cortlandt put his hand on her shoulder. "Hendricks has the day won," he said, "and he suggests we ride over to Arlington."

"Where Colonel Lee lived? Oh, what a heavenly place!"

In half an hour they were riding through the streets on their way to the long bridge. They rode on between white drabs whose grays stood in shocks, and woods whose the air quivered with the glint of yellow falling leaves, until they came to the gate of what had been Robert E. Lee's estate.

The house loomed up ahead, a huge place, with an ample veranda and wide-winding stairs. It was Ann thought, the sort of place a man would build for future generations—for his sons—to inhabit, and looking at it, she felt sorry for Colonel Lee, as she called him, giving him the title he had borne in the United States army.

"It must have been hard to give all this up," her guardian said, voicing her unspoken thought. "He must have cared a lot."

"Dirty traitor!" Hendricks said briefly.

Mr. Cortlandt frowned. "He did what he thought was his duty, Hendricks. Make no mistake about it. He is an honorable man—mistaken, but a pentennan, although an enemy."

Ann's eyes shone on him for his generosity; she felt inexpressibly melancholy, as she slipped down from her horse quickly, before Hendricks could touch her.

General McDowell was glad to see them, and showed them over the lower floor of the house. Here and there a heavy damask curtain had been torn from a window, and lay in a crumpled heap on the floor, and in almost every room some plates of the delicate Stuart furniture had proved insufficient to the repairs of heavy soldiers' created chairs were shoved into a corner, or lay broken in the fireplace, and glass from secretary doors lay in shattered piles where it had fallen. Traces of men's occupation were everywhere. The dining table was littered with soiled glasses, empty bottles, rinds of cheese, and pipes, while newspapers lay about, spread open, everywhere.

Ann opened her window.

showed up white and raw, here and there in the cushions of Washington. "What are they?" she asked, curiously.

A grave-faced captain answered her. "The barracks over yonder? The government is building hospitals."

"But—there are acres of them!" Ann cried, aghast.

"It'll be bloody business, us'ann, before we're done. The trouble with you Northerners is you underestimate them."

He turned away as he spoke, and Ann whispered. "Who is he?"

"He's from Tennessee. There's no better Union man in the army, though."

"I am sorry," he said humbly. "Really, Ann. . . . I didn't mean to."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

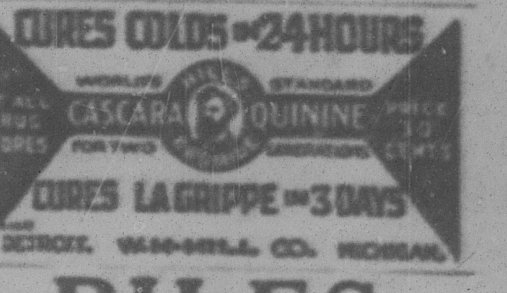
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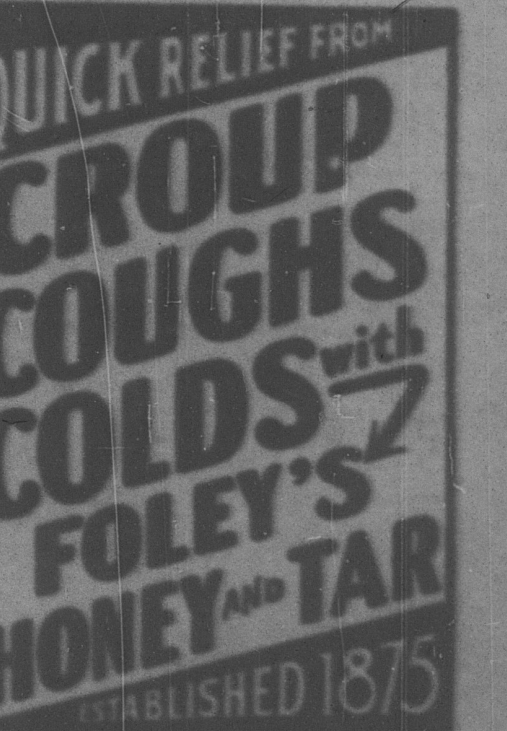
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