# The Cortlandts of Washington Square

*By Janet A. Fairbank*

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"I CAN'T WAIT!"

SYNOPSIS.—Returning to her home in a small town, Milton Center, 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 told about Ann, and the new wife fears he will be displeased. With Ann, Mrs. Cortlandt returns to New York, to the house 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 gladly adopted by Hendricks Cortlandt. Ann's mother and stepfather are lost at sea. Ann fills a gap in Hendricks Cortlandt's lonely heart. The situation is resented by Mrs. Rennesiyer, Hendricks' sister, whose son, Hendricks, has been looked upon as the natural heir of the Cortlandt wealth. The Civil war breaks out. A tentative engagement between young Rennesiyer 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. With her guardian Ann visits Rennesiyer in his encampment on the outskirts of Washington and meets noted people. Ann devotes herself to Densley Howard, a dying soldier, who tells her she must not marry Rennesiyer.

CHAPTER IX—Continued.

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"My dear, it is—because you are here, and some day some glorified man will make you see it—but not Hendricks Rennesiyer. You must promise me, not Hendricks Rennesiyer."

"But, why? He is very fond of me."

"Is he? How extraordinary! I am fond of you myself, my dear, although it never seems to occur to you. . . . I am mad about you. . . . I think about you constantly. . . . With so little time left I begrudge the few hours I sleep, and long before there is a chance of your coming I stand Maggie in the window there, to watch for you."

"Ah," said Ann wisely, "that is because you are ill, and see no one but me."

Densley Howard looked steadily at her for a moment. "No," he said. "It is because I love you. . . . I love you. . . . Strange, isn't it—at the end, like this? It seems a pity, doesn't it, when we believe that being happy is what counts?"

Ann mused. "Is it, I wonder?"

Howard lifted himself higher on his pillows. "My dear, it is! To be happy—to be free—that's life!"

"Uncle says that doing your duty—taking your place in the community—is the important thing."

Howard laughed. "Your place in the community is a cold comfort! Fill your life full, Ann—full to overflowing—and then at any rate you will know that you haven't missed anything! Look at my life! I used to think that I was a moral to point a tale, and yet, if I hadn't done just what I have, if I didn't lie here dying because I have flung away my strength,—why, then I might never have known you. . . . I should have missed these exquisite moments, Ann. . . . Give me your hand to kiss, dear. I forget what I was going to say."

Ann stretched out her hand unquestioningly; his face was flushed when he let her draw her fingers away; he had a fictitious look of health and vigor. "You are not made for duty, Ann," he said. "You are made for joy."

She gladly flung herself upon the safe ground of argument. "Hendricks expects me to be happy, of course."

"But will you be? That is the question. Will you be satisfied to let his standards govern your actions? Wouldn't you want, ever, to talk to some one about the things Rennesiyer can't understand? Wouldn't you ever have a feeling that you were so hedged in by laws that you must break out just for the fun of breaking? Wouldn't you ever want to live fully?"

"I—don't know," Ann murmured breathlessly. "I am afraid I should."

"Of course you can't marry him! I know you, my dear. . . . I suppose there will be the devil of a row if you break with him?"

"Oh, yes," Ann admitted, and laughed.

"And you are dependent on all these Cortlandts. . . . Listen to me, Ann, darling—marry me, and cheat my smug-faced clergyman brother!"

Ann moved her chair hastily back, and cast a frightened glance at the door. She shook her head violently. "I couldn't do that!" she protested decidedly.

"But why not? You don't need to love me, you know. It would be very simple. . . . We'll just have a minister in here some afternoon, and then, when I am gone, you will come in for something that will enable you to snap your fingers at the Cortlandts."

"But I don't want to snap my fingers at them," she protested. "I adore my uncle. . . . He is the only person I have ever been perfectly honest with—except you."

"And do you adore me—a little?" His tone was light, but his eyes were suddenly tragically intense.

She looked straight at him, with a troubled gaze. "I don't know," she said. "But I think I could, easily."

Densley put out his hand and held hers for a moment, in a close, dry clasp. She had not known that he had so much strength left as she felt in his clinging fingers. "That's all," he said, weakly, as, after a moment, his hold relaxed, and she drew her hand away.

As the days went on, Ann became nervously anxious about her guardian's return; she was afraid he would not approve of her intimacy with Densley, and she felt that she could not give it up. The day before his arrival Howard detained her with a score of trivial subterfuges; he looked very ill indeed, when she shut out the last of the sunset, and lighted the candles on the mantel shelf.

"Come here," he said finally. "Come closer."

Ann obeyed, and slipped her hand in his, with an affectionate little pressure. She looked down at him miserably, realizing his tragic state, and then she smiled, to hearten him.

"That's right," he murmured. "There's sadness enough, Ann darling. . . . Good-night."

The girl hesitated. There was something in his eyes that troubled her, and made her stoop swiftly to him, and kiss him, very shyly, on his wasted cheek.

He did not try to detain her, nor to return her caress. "Thank you," he said. "You have given me something to think about. . . . Thank you—for everything."

She hated to leave him, lying alone there in the big room, with the flickering candles making scythelike shadows across the high walls, especially as she did not know when she might return, if her guardian should prove obdurate. Her heart was heavy as she slipped out of the silent house.

Immediately after Mr. Cortlandt's arrival, early the next morning, she told him of her escapade, and she was surprised at his calm reception of her news.

"You are not displeased with me, uncle?"

"Displeased? No. . . . If you gave him any happiness—poor boy. . . . Densley Howard died in the night, Ann."

CHAPTER X

Tragedy.

Ann could not tell how much her guardian surmised of her feeling for Densley, but she knew it was for her sake that he, in the absence of anyone in authority, took charge of his neighbor's house, with its sinister knot of crape on the silver knocker. It was he who notified the inheriting brother in Detroit, and who made the arrangements for the funeral, although he left it to her to see that the house was ready for the services.

Only once did she venture into the dear familiarity of the upper front room; the blinds had been closed, and a thin gray light pervaded the spacious white place. Densley lay as she had seen him last, except that the eager blue eyes, which had always followed her persistently, were closed; it was strange not to meet their shining response. . . . His hands were folded on his breast; they were pitiably thin. . . . She put out her own hand to touch them, but shrank back from their cold response. . . . He looked sad, she thought, and older. Now that he had nothing to give her he was subtly changed. He had loved her very beautifully, she knew, but it seemed a curiously long time ago, and she wondered, as she stood, glowing,

"And So, Dear Hendricks," She Finished.

above him, if she really loved him. . . . What was love, she questioned piteously, her eyes fixed on that graven face as on an oracle. She could not tell, nor could Densley Howard now enlighten her.

One thing, however, she did know, and that was that she must break immediately with Hendricks Rennesiyer. She went straight to her own room, after this mute farewell, and, sitting sternly upright before her little desk, she wrote her letter to him.

"And so, dear Hendricks," she finished, "I cannot marry you, because I know, now, that I do not love you, and no one could be sorrier than I am about it."

The specter of her guardian's disappointment stalked in vain before her determination; she sent her letter to the mail and would have told Mr. Cortlandt all about it when he came in, had he not forestalled her with astonishing news of his own.

"Ann," he said, immediately on his arrival, "I have heard from the President. He wants me to go abroad at once—to England."

"Uncle," cried Ann, her personal difficulties forgotten, "may I go with you?"

"I am afraid not, Ann. I considered it, but I am going with other gentlemen, and in London we are to join Mr. John M. Forbes of Boston."

"Mr. Lincoln is sending you to keep those English shipbuilders from letting the Confederates have their iron ships!" Ann guessed acutely. "I am so glad, uncle! I know you will never let them do it."

Mr. Cortlandt smiled affectionately at her. "My dear, I am flattered at your belief in my powers—but Mr. Forbes has that matter very well in hand; I am only to confer with him informally about it. . . . What the President really wants me to do is to go first to England and then to France and Germany, to acquaint European capitalists with the actual circumstances in this country, and with the resources of the North. He believes it is only in this way that we can destroy their partiality for the Confederates. I don't want to go, Ann. I should prefer to work here. There is more bad news from the front."

Ann's frightened eyes interrogated him. "Chancellorsville?" she whispered, unwilling to voice the possibility of loss at that important point.

"Yes. . . . Another defeat."

"But I thought we had twice as many men there as the Confederates?"

"Lee is a great general, Ann, and the sooner we Federals realize it the better. . . . They say the loss of life is appalling—perhaps twenty-five thousand men killed, and many more wounded."

Into Ann's mind rushed a realization of Hendricks in deadly peril. After all, until they were reassured of his safety in this present terrible battle, she would not tell her guardian what she had written; she would spare him that much.

In the morning the sun shone brilliantly; high clouds moved majestically about a faraway blue sky, and the breeze, even in the city, was laden with the odor of fruit trees in bloom. It was the sort of day that Densley would have loved, and Ann was sorry that he had not lived to see it. After all she thought, it would have been better for him to be buried on the kind of rainy day he hated.

Her guardian went with her to the services in his neighbor's house, but he could not take the time to drive out to the cemetery, so Ann went alone, and stood on the fringe of the small group of mourners. She felt that the ceremony had strangely little to do with Densley, who had talked so much of the joy of life, and so little of this numbing sadness. She wondered at herself for not feeling a more acute grief; she clenched her hands until the nails bit into her soft palms, and still she could not force herself to an emotional crisis. She wished that she were the sort of girl who cried easily; it would be better than this sensation of all the world falling away from her. . . . Floods of tears, she felt, would be inadequate, and she hated herself because she stood, still and composed, with her white lips closely set.

In Washington square a great confusion awaited her; everything was in a whirl of excitement; even old Joseph, who opened the door for her, was tremulous with agitation, and Mrs. Rennesiyer's voice, breathless and shrill, came clearly out to her from the drawing room. She was there, elegantly emotional upon a sofa, while Fanny was wiping her eyes beside her, and Hendricks' father was striding about the room, red-faced and incoherently profane. Mr. Cortlandt was standing, very still, in the window.

There was something ominous in the air, and Ann halted abruptly. "It is Hendricks!" she cried. "He is dead!"

Mr. Rennesiyer reassured her. "Dead? Nonsense!" he burst out. "Hendricks is a hero—that's all—a regular hero! Damme, no one would have thought it when he was a boy! I have a letter from his colonel: Hendricks distinguished himself in a night attack—conspicuous bravery, he says. They've made him a captain—at twenty-two, by G—d!"

There was an instant's silence after this outburst as Mr. Cortlandt came over to Ann and took her hand. She was glad that he stood so as to shield her face from the others.

"You must be very proud, my dear," he said, ceremoniously. "We must all be proud of Hendricks."

The girl sank into a chair, dazed by the sudden reaction. Into her mind came, unbidden, Densley Howard's casual depreciation of Hendricks in action; she had an instant's clear vision of him, red-faced and domineering. . . . But her guardian was right, just now, for a while, she must be proud; she should have no place for any other emotion.

There came a great jangle at the doorbell, and every one already in an emotional state, started nervously. Joseph brought in a note, and Mr. Cortlandt ripped it open. "It is from Horace Greeley," he said. "It is marked 'Important.'" He glanced at the brief inclosure and turned suddenly white.

"What is it?" Ann whispered.

Mr. Cortlandt did not seem to hear her; he might have been alone in the room for any attention he paid to the people gathered there. He reread the note aloud, stupidly, as if he had not mastered its contents.

"Dear Friend: It is my sad duty to inform you that in the official list, sent me for publication, of men who have gloriously fallen at the battle of Chancellorsville, the name of your nephew, Hendricks Rennesiyer appears. I can say nothing to soften your grief—nothing to . . . ." His voice trailed off into silence as Mrs. Rennesiyer interrupted his reading with a loud scream, and Joseph burst into lamentations. The room was suddenly filled with a clamor of sorrow. Ann stood very still, half-stunned by the shock. She looked over at her guardian, and saw his face become old and gray under her eyes. She went over to him and put her arms around his neck; she was trembling violently, and Mr. Cortlandt slipped his arm about her, and drew her close to him.

"Poor child," he whispered. "Poor child."

The girl's convulsive clinging suddenly went slack. Behind her Mrs. Rennesiyer's shrill grief arose, and Fanny's outburst of sobs, but she disregarded them. Standing there with her cheek against her guardian's, she thought with the extraordinary clarity. The [illegible] not she [illegible] wished had [illegible] her, was miraculously [illegible], and in its place a conviction [illegible] that there was something important she could do for the kind old man she adored—for whom she felt that she could never do enough. For his sake, she could pretend she had loved Hendricks as well as he undoubtedly had deserved—as well as these people wanted to believe she had loved him; it seemed at the moment not too difficult to carry off, because she was, after all, as sorry to lose Hendricks as she would have been had he been a well-loved brother. Standing with her face hidden, she could feel that her guardian, and all of them, even Mrs. Rennesiyer, assumed that of all grief-stricken persons in the room, she was the one most concerned. She accepted this position willingly, and the moment passed in which she could have confessed the real situation between herself and Hendricks.

The Great Eastern Sailed the Day After the Receipt of the News of Hendricks' Death.

CHAPTER XI

Alone.

The Great Eastern sailed the day after the receipt of the news of Hendricks' death, and Ann dogged Mr. Cortlandt's footsteps during this interval. She drove about the city with him while he put his affairs in order, waiting patiently outside office buildings and banks, and he talked to her in snatches of Hendricks.

Everywhere people stopped to offer him condolences, for Hendricks' name among the dead had given the family the sympathy of the entire city. Ann hated this public display of grief, and when she said good-by to her guardian on the dock, she pleaded that she might sail with him, and escape from it all. There were tears in her eyes when he kissed her, and his hands on her shoulder clung regretfully. "God bless you," he said, and he kissed her again before he hurried off on the gangplank. Almost immediately the ship began to move, and there was a great confusion of getting under way. Ann looked up and saw Mr. Cortlandt leaning over the rail on the upper deck, waving down to her. It seemed to her but a moment when the figures on board the Great Eastern became indistinct and merged into the general bulk of the ship. There was nothing for her to do but return to Washington square.

There Ann found herself facing new obligations. Mrs. Cortlandt and her daughter came to live with her while her guardian was away, and Fanny talked of living by the hour. Ann had a curious sensation of being pushed into permanent affirmation, because the other girl seemed wistfully to demand it; Mrs. Cortlandt proved herself an authority on the etiquette of grief, and Ann submitted willingly enough to her decree that she should submerge her gold youth in crape and veils, for this was a part of her obligation to the Cortlandt family which she willingly assumed, but when Mrs. Cortlandt suggested that she could not continue her service at the hospital, as though nothing had happened, Ann rebelled. Three days after Hendricks' death she was back at her post, but the discussion in regard to her work arose at every meal, insistent and acrimonious. It seemed to her that she could never get away from it.

In the meantime, the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia marched triumphantly across Maryland, and into Pennsylvania, and the North awoke to a shock of real fright. The Army of the Potomac, although weakened by losses and dissensions, advanced pluckily to meet the invading enemy, but New York was crowded with refugees from Baltimore and Harrisburg, who spread the fear that Washington might be taken. Continual engagements made the hospital situation acute. Emergency tents near the front were filled to capacity and Washington had become a city of the sick, but still there was not a sufficient number of beds, and in order to relieve the congestion, the wounded were sent on to New York in great numbers.

Ann made a new acquaintance who had just returned from field hospital work in Virginia; after her experiences there, she found New York nursing tame, and said so. The girl drank in her reminiscences eagerly, and immediately developed an ambition to nurse at the front herself.

She was peddling lemonade through the wards late one afternoon when the doctor in charge, an old friend who had seen her through the various ailments of childhood, came up to her and took her heavy pitcher away.

"I have something to tell you," he said. "Come outside for a moment."

He led the way to the high steps of the building, where they might overlook the little square courtyard filled with the white tents of convalescents.

"I wonder if you can stand a shock?" he questioned.

Ann turned frightened eyes upon him. "Not uncle?" she gasped, with a sinking memory of the tragedy, years ago, of the Arctic.

Doctor Small shook his head. "This is good news," he said, "or, at least, a chance of it. You know that lad who was brought in yesterday? The leg amputation case?"

"The one who died in the night?"

"Yes. He talked to me before he died. It seems he knew you."

"Knew me?"

"Yes. He was in the Fifty-fifth. He was, he says, Captain Rennesiyer's orderly."

"I wish I had talked to him. He might have told me something about Hendricks."

"He did tell me. He says he saw him, at Culpepper."

"At—Culpeper. But that was after Chancellorsville!" Ann put both hands on the doctor's arm to steady herself. "Was he—himself? Did he know what he was saying?"

"I think so. But, of course, I can't be sure of it."

"Could they have made such a mistake?"

"The first casualty list of every battle is incorrect. You know that."

"But, Doctor Small, how can we find out?"

"You can telegraph."

"That's useless. We've been telegraphing ever since the message came, trying to get particulars of Hendricks' death."

"Then you can only wait."

"Wait? Doctor Small, I can't wait! If my guardian were at home he would find out, if he had to go down to the Army of the Potomac himself!"

The doctor nodded. "I suppose so, but as he isn't here, we must be patient."

Ann's thoughts were chaotic. . . . If Hendricks lived her guardian would be happy again. . . . Every one would be happy. . . . She remembered how old and broken her guardian had looked, there on the dock before he sailed; she had cried looking at him. She felt she must send the good news to him as quickly as possible.

"I must write to my uncle," she said. "I must let him know at once."

Doctor Small put a restraining hand on her arm. "I wouldn't do that," he said gently; "wait until you are sure. You will only make it harder for him if you encourage him to hope, and then disappoint him."

This was good advice and Ann nodded soberly as she received it. She went home at once. It was, she decided, imperative that she find out whether Hendricks lived or not. There must, she thought, be some one who could go to Virginia.

As she hurried through the streets she tried to fix her mind on the person, but in vain. She knew enough of conditions near the front to realize that it required intense personal interest to accomplish anything there; it was not an errand which one could intrust to a clerk. . . . Hendricks' father was ill—he had had a bronchial cough all the late winter, and had finally allowed Mrs. Rennesiyer to take him over to Washington for a cure in that more balmy air, with the result that she was miserably laid up there, in the hotel. . . . All the young men she knew were off fighting. . . . It was a pity that she was a girl. . . . She considered, for a moment, putting the matter before Mrs. Cortlandt, and urging her to take the trip, but at once the knew that lady would only echo the doctor's sane judgment that all they could do was to wait. Ann felt that it would be more than she could endure if she was forced to hear that unanswerable statement again. Her tired nerves shrank miserably from the prolonged emotional crisis into which her news would plunge the women of her family. . . . If only she might go herself to look the matter up! She half paused, breathless with desire, at the idea. . . . Once at the front, too, it would be strange if she could not make some connection with a hospital there. . . . She had no conscious plan, yet time seemed curiously precious, and when she reached Washington square she broke into a run.

At the door Joseph told her that Mrs. Cortlandt and Fanny had responded to a call from the Sanitary commission ladies, and had gone there to work. "Miss Fanny, she say to tell you to come too, Miss Ann. They's a supper prepared by de ladies, and she say dey need you."

The girl's first sensation was relief at postponing the telling of her news; it would, she thought, give her that much more time to find some one to go to Virginia. . . . There was a train at nine o'clock. . . . Every one away, like this. . . . It was providential.

"I can't go, Joseph," she amazed herself by saying. "I am leaving tonight—for Philadelphia."

"Philadelphia, Miss Ann?"

"Perhaps Mr. Hendricks isn't dead, Joseph. I have to go to find out."

There was a great flurry of exclamation and excitement, while Ann ate her supper, and packed a small traveling bag. Old Joseph insisted on accompanying her to the ferry, and in the carriage he began to have a change of heart. "It don't seem right to me, Miss Ann—you going off all by you'self, dis-a-way," he protested from time to time, unavailingly, and at the last moment, when he had carried her bag on board the ferryboat, he refused to leave her. "It's getting too dark, Miss Ann, honey, for you to be on de water by you'self. I'll see you on to de train." Ann was touched in spite of herself, and was glad to have him with her, too, as the water was very black away from the dock, and almost all the passengers were men, who stared at her persistently. She would not have admitted that she was nervous, but she was grateful to the old negro.

He found a seat for her in the crowded car, and stood beside her, bareheaded, as long as he could, fending off any one who might have wished to share her seat, and talking of Hendricks when he was a little boy. People looked curiously at the elegant young woman attended by her deferential old servant, but neither Joseph nor his mistress noticed them.

"Good luck, Miss Ann," he said, as the conductor shouted "All aboard." "De Lord be wid you, an' Mr. Hendricks!"

All along there were delays and rumors of trouble. Twice they were side-tracked for a train of cavalry—cars filled with shouting men and stamping horses—and once for a load of lowing beef cattle, en route for the Army of the Potomac. Ann could not sleep. After her fellow-passengers had settled themselves into strange grotesques of repose, while the candles in the spring sockets guttered dimly, she sat looking at the full canals of New Jersey, placid and unreal, in the dim light of a waning moon. . . .

Ann knew that she had involved herself in a fine mess, running off in this way. . . . If her guardian had been at home, of course it wouldn't have been necessary. Surely, once Hendricks was found, she could manage to get into a field hospital, if only for a few days. . . . He must be alive—she was sure of it. . . . How overjoyed her guardian would be—and Hendricks' mother, who could lay aside the black which made her look so pathetically old. . . . She wondered if Hendricks had her note yet. . . . She smiled reluctantly at the ridiculous figure she would cut, in her weeds, should he actually face her with it.

She was wide awake when the dawn came; for a long time the blank sky was faintly streaked with mauve, then all at once the whole east burst dramatically into rose color, the sun soared up with a rush of light and movement, and the trees in the fields beside the track flung long black shadows after the escaping train. Ann watched the transformation eagerly. She was not sleepy, and she wondered if Hendricks were miraculously awakening to welcome this new day.

Philadelphia was a vastly different place from the staid town she had known before, when visiting there with her guardian. People thronged the streets, as though it were a holiday, and bands playing martial music promenaded through the crowd, followed by huge canvas signs on which were pasted the names of the various regiments which men might join; it was an enormous advertising campaign in the interest of enlistment.

"I want to find someone, if I could only have this pass."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Crabbe the Realist.

How many of us who write, want to write only about the things that please. How differently did Crabbe act. He did not like at all the conditions under which he was obliged to live and work, but he recognized that it might be of great use to record them in literature, artistically, truthfully, and dispassionately. And he became a great artist by writing about the things he detested. . . . to work in this way requires more than self-denial: it requires immense force of character.—Kalamazoo Gazette.

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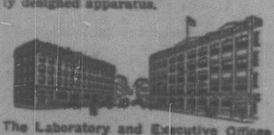

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