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THREE DAUGHTERS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

BY MRS. INNES BROWN

CHAPTER XIII.

One dull afternoon in November, not long after the events detailed in the last chapter occurred, there came a timid knock at Father Gallaher's door.

"Come in," he called cheerfully, as he laid down his breviary, he raised his eyes to meet his visitor.

"So it is you, Marie, is it? But when this troubled look, my child? and wherefore this terrible sigh?" he asked smilingly. "Has that little Patsy Brennan been obstreperous again? Sit down and tell me, child!"

"No, no, Father, nothing of that sort has occurred; but I am in doubt and trouble, and come to ask your advice."

"Tell me all about it, then."

The little speaker's face looked very pure and sweet, in spite of its troubled expression, as she timidly drew forth a letter and handed it to her father.

"Read that, Father, and tell me what I ought to do."

Recognizing at a glance the crest and coat-of-arms, Father Gallaher shrewdly guessed what the contents might contain; but he quietly and patiently read the Earl's not too legible letter through, and then handed it back to Marie.

"I am truly grieved to hear that the poor gentleman is in such delicate health. He will be a great loss if he dies. But upon what am I to advise you, Marie?"

"Don't you see," she asked in astonishment, "that he urgently requests auntie to allow me to visit Beatrice at Baron Court? and you can read from the tone of his letter that they intend being very gay this season."

"Well, what of that, my child? Christmas is a time for festivities, and why trouble yourself about a little gaiety and juvenile pleasure? It does every day at times."

"But, Father, urged the blushing girl, with a troubled look, "how can I voluntarily and of my own free will mix myself up with all this grandeur, levity, and frivolity?"

With difficulty Father Gallaher suppressed a smile; but the grave little face looked so terribly earnest that he replied seriously and kindly—

"Perhaps in this case it is not so much what you will and choose, Marie, as what others will for you. What says auntie?"

"Oh! she begs of me to go, and has already commenced altering and making garments of all descriptions for me; and Louis insists upon it!"

"And what says your old friend Lady Beatrice?"

"Oh! she of course desires it of all things. Here is her letter, Father; read it for yourself."

"Well, Marie," he said, handing her back the letter, which he had carefully read, "I fail to see how you can possibly get out of it. A young Earl, having known your father and aunt, requests as a great boon that you will go and see him. His daughter, your greatest friend, entreats of you as an act of charity to visit her. Your aunt and brother insist upon it; and I desire you most emphatically to do so. Really, my child," he added laughingly, "I fail to see how you can well invent a reasonable plea, with which to excuse yourself."

"Well, it's very obstinate of you all!" persisted Marie, forced to smile against her will, "but if you oblige me to plunge into all this vain and foolish worldliness, you must take the responsibility upon your own selves. I hate and despise all this worry of dress and fashion, and all the false state and ceremony that goes to make up the world. It is all as hollow and corrupt as possible; and you know it is, Father!" she insisted vehemently, and her eyes shone with enthusiasm and earnestness, for she detected a look of amusement on Father Gallaher's face.

"In one sense you never spoke a truer word, my child. But, Marie, you must not be too sweeping in your condemnations, nor fail to remember how many countless hearts, great, noble, and saintly, have lived, beaten, and throbbled beneath the purple. Many, very many, have despised it much more than you do, and yet have been obliged to live amongst it all their lives. And surely their martyrdom will be great before God; for believe me, child, it is far easier to be pure and good buried in the cloister, than amidst countless distractions and temptations, which a life of pomp and luxury entails. And yet how many of God's saints have, from their exalted positions on earth, stood forth from amongst their fellow-creatures as brilliant examples of the greatest virtues united with the deepest poverty of spirit!"

"Oh yes, yes, Father! but they were saints. I was only afraid for myself."

"Have no fear, then, my child; but since God seems through us to wish you to do it, go by all means. Endeavor not to be too much led away by all the splendor and gaiety you see around, but enjoy it innocently, and in your own gentle way try to lead back the heart of your young friend to God; and trust me, there will be plenty of work for you to do, even by silent example; and once for all eradicate from your mind the notion that people in high

positions cannot be saints even amidst the greatest pomp."

Marie rose. She felt baffled again. Why was she always beaten on the subject nearest her heart? No one seemed to encourage her in it. How strange it was!

"Very well, Father," she said quietly and resignedly. "Before I spoke to you I resolved to be led by what you advised; but," she added, with a somewhat disappointed expression and a shake of her pretty head, "I did hope you would say I need not go. You will have to pray hard that I may not be entirely carried away by all this coming grandeur."

"Neither I nor your poor will forget you, my child; we shall miss you too much for that. But be cheerful; God may have work for you even at Baron Court. Tell auntie I will call round and see her soon. By the way, when are you expected at this terrible place?"

"About the first week in December."

"Well, God bless you, my child. I shall see you many times before that date, I trust, and will promise to look after auntie well during your absence;" with which assurance Marie was fain to be satisfied for the present.

Soon there was a new and altogether novel commotion at the little house in Bracken Park. Auntie had paid a long visit to the old hall, had mounted all the stairs to the very topmost landing, where, securely locked in an old attic, were several ancient caken chests and boxes containing remnants of faded finery and departed glory. How quaint they looked, these old dresses and wraps! Here a robe of pale pink gauze, there another of faded yellow silk, a pair of tiny pointed blue satin slippers folded carefully in a soiled but rich lace cloth, and a handsome velvet workbag, embroidered with pearls, which fell from its long hiding place in the crown of a large coal scuttle bonnet; but Miss Blake handled and touched them with the greatest possible reverence and care, as though their equals would never be seen again. She and Peter spent the whole morning and part of the afternoon selecting what they deemed would be most suitable and most easily altered for Marie to wear during her coming visit to England. With great pomp and ceremony a large box was at last packed to their general satisfaction, and the little bath-chair, containing the little lady, and Peter walking, as he was pleased to term it, in the rear behind—took its departure once more for the humbler little lodge.

The box followed in due time. Dressmakers were sent for, and then Marie's troubles commenced in real earnest, for it was very trying to stand so long and be fitted into garments that were never meant nor intended for her. However, one or two of them, notably a dress of pale sky-blue silk, and one of gold brocade, were perfectly new and of the latest fashion, and with a little clever manipulation made handsome, if quaint, evening dresses for the little maid, and suited well her style of beauty. Auntie was delighted, and even Marie laughed merrily as she opened each parcel of grandeur on its arrival from the dressmakers, and Louis insisted upon her trying each article on to see how it suited and fitted her. He was generally charmed with the result, for the girl possessed that sweet face and figure which looked well in almost anything; and as for Peter, all he could do was to walk round and round the girl, raising his hands and exclaiming, "Well, well! and isn't it nothing less than a living duchess she's fit to be entirely now!"

Young ladies did not require such an extensive wardrobe then as now. One new rich white Irish poplin was added to the number of evening dresses, a present from kind Mr. Barry, and two good dark warm ones for every day; an old green cloak lined with white ermine, but in excellent condition, served as a wrap for cold days, and a thinner and more modern one for finer weather; add to this two good hats and a bonnet, and we have the chief articles of Marie's outfit with which she was to face the big grand world.

Marie had made up her mind, like a sensible girl, to go, since every one appeared to wish her to do so, and to enjoy herself in her own quiet way; above all, she resolved to aid and help every one to the best of her endeavor during her visit.

"I cannot go against the inevitable," she said to herself, "and since it must be, I may as well make the best of it." So she only laughed, and shook her head with pretended displeasure, as each fresh piece of finery was presented to her.

CHAPTER XIV.

"By what train do you expect Miss Blake?" inquired Reginald, turning to his sister one morning as they two lingered over the breakfast-table. He had returned home about a week previously.

"She leaves London by the 12.30 train, and will be due at Ravensbourne station about 3 o'clock; it is a very slow train, and calls everywhere. Her brother may perhaps accompany her all through; at any rate, he was to see her safely into the train from London. I do hope Marie will not be alarmed to travel that distance by herself."

"I shall meet her at Ravensbourne myself," said Reginald with decision. Beatrice made no reply, but her arched eyebrows expressed astonishment.

"Poor Marie," she inwardly thought, "how disconcerted you will

be to see my tall and stately brother waiting attendance upon you."

"James can take the light cart for the luggage," continued his lordship, in the tone of one who had made all the necessary arrangements, and did not intend to have them altered.

"Oh! I replied his sister, and a merry smile lurked in the corners of her small expressive mouth.

"So he means to go alone!" thought Beatrice. "Poor little Marie! the plot thickens, and things grow worse and worse."

"Do you think Miss Blake would prefer an open or a closed carriage, Bertie?"

"I know she prefers the open air always when possible, and she rather enjoys the frosty weather. Oh, Marie loves the keen, cold, frosty air. I remember it well."

"Which shows her good sense," rejoined Reginald quickly. "It is only the hot house flowers that fade and shrivel if exposed to a breath of fresh air."

The day was bright and clear; the hedges and trees were gracefully festooned with shining hoar-frost, which gleamed and glistened in the clear frosty air; and the wheels of Lord Reginald's high decorated rang out with a clear, crisp sound, as they sped swiftly along the hard broad roads. "True to his word, he reined in his spirited steed just as the hands on the station clock pointed to the hour of three; and springing lightly from the vehicle, called to James, who had arrived before him, to watch the mare until he returned. Then throwing the reins carelessly to the man-servant, and adjusting the collar of his military overcoat, he walked towards the blank little platform, and paced it rapidly up and down with a firm but even tread. The young lord looked older, and people said even handsomer, than he had ever done before. His sojourn abroad had somewhat bronzed his skin, and as yet the frost had been unable to bleach it through; and there was a bright anxious look in his fine dark eyes as ever and anon he lent forward to look down the long narrow track in hopes of seeing the expected train.

He had not very long to wait, for it was soon in sight, causing the young man's heart to beat more quickly as he saw it drawing nearer and nearer. A few seconds more and it glided silently into the little station, drawing up with a sudden jerk, causing many of the passengers to grumble, as they experienced a decidedly disagreeable feeling of dislocation about their necks.

Reginald passed swiftly down the side of the train, scanning with a severe frown upon his face the occupants of each carriage; but his eyes lit up with eager pleasure, and the frown gave place to a smile, as he recognized the face of his guest peering anxiously through one of the carriage windows. He sprang to the door of it, and raising his hat gallantly, said in tones of genuine delight—

"Here we are, Miss Blake. Allow me to welcome you to Baron Court. All its inmates are longing to see you, and I have stolen a march upon them in my desire to be the first."

"How good of you!" answered Marie, placing her little warm-gloved hand in his, and stepping gently on to the platform. "I am so glad you are here; it is so comforting to feel that some one will help me with my luggage."

"James and the porter will attend to that for us, Miss Blake, if you will kindly assure them if this is all?" asked Reginald, pointing to a moderately sized trunk, one small box, and a little handbag.

"Yes, that is all," she answered, smiling shyly up at him. "Do you think it is a dreadful amount for one little person like me?"

"No," he answered warmly, looking down at the wares before him, which heaped so prettily from under her hat, and was set off by the warm white ermine around her neck. "No, indeed; I am astonished to find any young lady travelling with so little!"

She laughed merrily, and they walked together towards the dog-cart.

Beatrice would never have pitted her little friend so much that morning could she have foreseen the simple, easy manner in which Marie mounted the high-wheeled dog-cart, and unencumbered herself in the easy fur rug provided for her; or the natural way in which she accepted all Reginald's many attentions, and answered his anxious queries as to whether she was certain she would be warm enough and comfortable in every way.

"Indeed I am most comfortable," she repeated earnestly, "and shall so enjoy the drive. Perhaps I ought not to admit it," she added doubtfully and in a lower tone, "but a high dog-cart is one of my pet delights."

"And mine also, so we shall agree well," said Reginald, as he seized the reins, and stepping up seated himself with apparent delight and satisfaction at Marie's side. "Let go her head, James, she will steady directly," and off they set at a brisk trot down the hard brown road, Reginald at least feeling more elated and satisfied than he cared to own. They traversed the same road Beatrice had done on her return from school; and the girl chatted away so freely, asking endless questions about her old friend, praising the horse, and admiring the country through which they were passing, that Reginald found himself wishing fervently the drive could be lengthened by many a mile. As it was, he allowed his mare to walk up every feasible excuse for a hill.

"I hope the Earl is not seriously ill?" asked the little guest, looking up kindly at her tall companion, who, seated on the driving-box, seemed to tower so high above her. "Auntie feared from his letter that he was."

Reginald made no reply but sighed deeply, and looking down gravely and sadly at Marie, shook his head.

"Surely," she said eagerly, "you do not mean that you think he is past recovery?"

"I know he is," he said slowly and mournfully, "and so will you when you see him. But, whatever you think, try not to betray your thoughts, Miss Blake, when you first see him."

"Poor, poor Bertie!" murmured Marie, and relapsed into silence. Yes, she felt sure there would be plenty of work for her to do even at Baron Court.

They drove on a little distance ere Reginald broke the silence again. "We all look to you, Miss Blake, to restore Bertie to her old self again. You will find her a little changed. My father, indeed all of us, build much upon your influence over her for good."

"Now come, my lord," said Marie, laughing, but with well-feigned displeasure, "don't try to make flattering speeches. They neither become you to repeat nor me to listen to. But," she continued, after a little pause, "how exquisite it must be here in the summer-time!"

"Yes—we are close to the end of our drive now, worse luck!" he repeated to himself, as the lodge gates flew open, and they swung briskly through them and rattled over the bridge in grand style.

"Lady-bird knows that there is a nice warm stable awaiting her close to, and she is anxious to be there."

TO BE CONTINUED

SHADOWS AND SUNSHINE

The sun went down in flaming glory, turning the ocean into a sea of liquid fire, painting the little cottages on the shore a vivid rose color, and, piercing the window, formed a halo around the golden head of a young girl reclining in a Morris chair. It was a very pale but winsome face, the sunny curls framed and its beauty was more of heaven than of earth.

Slowly the sun sank from view, the crimson glow died out of the sky and the face by the window became marble-like in its pallor. An elderly woman with a kind, sweet face entered the room, looked anxiously at the drooping golden head and then approached the girl with a glass in her hand.

"Here, darling, take a swallow of this," she said gently, holding the tumbler to the girl's lips. "It will put a bit of color into your cheeks against your brother's coming."

The girl drained the glass. "I feel better, Nan, dear," she said with a smile. "You said Edgar would arrive about seven o'clock, didn't you? There! The clock is striking the hour now."

"And here comes your brother, too," added Nan, as the front door swung rather noisily and firm steps were heard in the hall.

A soft glow came into the pale cheeks, and she raised her eyes up with joy, and as tall, handsome, bright-haired young man entered the room, she stretched out her arms.

"Edgar!"

"Agnes, my dear," he said, taking both her hands in his and bending over her with a world of love and concern in his fine, manly face, "how does the salt air agree with my little sister?"

"Very well indeed, Edgar," answered Agnes. "I have been stronger this week than for a long time. And oh! how I love the ocean! I lie here by the hour watching the billows break upon the beach."

"I am glad, dear heart," he said, stroking her shining curls.

"But come, children, supper is ready," called Nan from the adjoining room, whither she had gone while brother and sister were exchanging greetings.

Agnes arose and leaning lightly on her brother's arm was conducted to her chamber. He sat down opposite her and during the meal watched her healthily. Yes, she had better, he told himself. Why, the last week in the city she had been unable to get up. Surely there was hope of her ultimate cure, her case could not be hopeless.

Agnes and Edgar Donovan were orphans. Their parents had been carried off within a week of each other by an epidemic six years ago. With her dying breath the mother gave Agnes into her brother's care. Since then Edgar (who was six years her senior) had been father and mother and brother to Agnes. Her name, always affectionately called "Nan," gladly left her married daughter, with whom she had made her home, to be with her "darling" and watched over Agnes with a mother's care. Agnes, always frail, had begun to fail some months ago, but so imperceptibly, that even Edgar's watchful eyes did not detect her danger until her condition became alarming. Then he heard the terrible truth that she was the victim of an incurable heart disease, and that if he wished to prolong her life he must take her out of the city, either to the country or the seashore. Agnes longed for the ocean, and Edgar therefore rented a pretty little cottage on the shore not far from a small city so that he was able to spend his week ends with them.

After supper Agnes reclined in the large rocker on the porch, overlooking the beach, and Edgar sat down at her feet. It was a beautiful night, calm and warm with a thousand stars mirroring themselves in the heaving ocean, and the billows, musically lapping upon the beach. To the north, between them and the glare of the city, the illuminated cross of St. Joseph's Rest House rose into the star-studded heavens. To the south, the lights of a cottage a mile or so away twinkled cheerily. Beyond all was darkness.

Agnes broke the silence after a while by saying: "Tomorrow is Sunday and I shall not be able to go to Mass."

"Never mind, dear, you can pray in your own little room and I shall pray for you, and beg God to restore you to health."

"It is His will, brother darling," softly returned Agnes. Then, after a pause, she said: "Edgar, I am very much interested in a young lady who passes here every morning to attend Mass at St. Joseph's. Sometimes she is accompanied by an elderly lady, her mother, I think, but more often alone. And, Edgar, she is lame. Usually I am sitting here when she goes by and this morning she smiled at me. She is very beautiful, Edgar, with curly black hair and eyes as blue as the sky, and there is such a patient expression in her face. It seems such a pity that she is lame, but God knows best."

A cool breeze suddenly swept over the ocean and Agnes shivered slightly. Edgar, ever watchful, brought her a blanket and she snuggled up for a while talking to Nan, but before the clock struck ten the cottage was shrouded in darkness.

The next morning, after Nan had returned from early Mass, Edgar went to St. Joseph's chapel, leaving Agnes reclining on a couch near the widow with her rosary and prayer-book in her hand. The sun had risen luridly and even so early in the day it was very sultry. The heat affected Agnes greatly and she was very pale and languid.

Edgar had been gone about half an hour when heavy black clouds rising above the western horizon denoted the approach of a storm. Ever and anon forked lightning gleamed across the darkened sky and the distant rumble of thunder was borne on the still oppressive air. Agnes was getting anxious about her brother when she saw him coming across the sand assisting her unknown lame friend. In a few minutes they arrived at the house.

"Come right in," said Edgar, drawing the girl into the room. He had scarcely finished speaking when a blinding flash of lightning rent the sky followed by a terrible peal of thunder. At the same time the flood gates of heaven were opened and the rain fell in torrents.

"How fortunate that you arrived in time," said Agnes as Edgar carefully placed the girl in a rocking chair near her and then closed the windows as the rain poured in.

"But for your brother's assistance I would most certainly have been caught," returned the girl with a bright smile. "I cannot walk fast by myself."

"I am glad the storm came," said Agnes, "because it brought you here. I have been wanting to make your acquaintance some time." "And I yours. Many a time I felt like stopping to speak to you, but somehow I didn't know how to go about it."

And while the storm raged outside, three young hearts were drawn into the bonds of an eternal friendship. The lame girl's name was Valeria Audrey and she lived with her widowed mother in the little cottage down the beach. Her father, a sea captain, had perished in a storm on the treacherous Indian ocean. An accident in childhood had injured Valeria and she had been lame ever since.

Thus an hour flew by with astonishment rapidly and they were surprised when suddenly the sun came out, and looking out of the window they saw that the storm was over and that a sky of deepest blue now arched overhead with the tumbling spray shone with colors of the rainbow. Valeria took an affectionate leave of Agnes, promising to see her the next day, and was escorted home by Edgar.

The days that followed were very happy ones for gentle Agnes. Valeria visited her every day and the girls became endeared to each other. Agnes generally reclined on a couch or sat in the big rocker with Valeria at her side. Sometimes they chatted together, at other times Valeria read aloud in her clear, well modulated voice, and often they sat in silence, hand in hand, gazing across the ever changing ocean, absorbed in beautiful and holy thoughts.

Edgar became more deeply interested in his sister's than every time he saw her and he began to wonder whether or not her lameness could be cured. She had revealed to Agnes the fact that they could not afford to have the attention of a specialist and the young man finally decided to ask Dr. Leigh, Agnes' physician, and a great friend of the family, to give the girl an examination. Accordingly, when the doctor accepted an invitation to spend a short vacation at the cottage, Edgar spoke to him about Valeria. That afternoon the girl came for her daily visit and submitted to an examination.

"My dear Edgar," said Dr. Leigh, after Valeria had gone home, "I am almost certain an operation would entirely cure Miss Audrey. I do hope she and her mother will consent to have it performed."

"I am so glad, doctor," returned Edgar. "Do your very best for her, and send the bill to me."

"No bill in this case," returned the doctor. "Great Scott, man, haven't I made enough money in my day to afford doing something gratis? Besides, I'm in love with the little lady myself," and he looked meaningfully at Edgar, who actually blushed under his tan.

The next day Dr. Leigh paid a visit to Valeria's mother and finally obtained her consent to the operation. A week later the doctor returned to the city accompanied by Valeria.

Then followed a very anxious time. Agnes became ill from the nervous strain and Nan was very much worried. One day, however, came a telegram containing the welcome news that the operation was a success and the patient doing nicely. Agnes at once rallied and began counting the days for Valeria's return. Edgar visited the hospital every day and wrote to his sister concerning the patient's condition.

A month passed away and Valeria was expected home any time. It was a calm, clear Saturday evening and Agnes sat on the porch watching for her brother. Soon she saw him coming over the sand in the sunset glow. A girlish figure was clinging to his arm. Agnes rose to her feet and a cry of joy escaped her lips. The girl broke away from Edgar and ran rapidly across the intervening sand. The next minute the friends were clasped in each other's arms.

"Valeria," almost sobbed Agnes in her joy.

"Ob, dearest, I am cured, entirely cured!" cried Valeria, kissing her again and again. "Oh, how can I ever thank God enough for His wonderful goodness to me!"

Edgar watched them with tears in his eyes. Then he said: "Valeria, I know Agnes cannot bear to have you out of sight this evening, so I will run down for your mother and we will have a grand reunion."

It was indeed a happy party that sat around the supper table. Mrs. Audrey was almost beside herself with joy. She could hardly believe that her daughter was really cured and could walk and run again like other girls. Never had Valeria looked so beautiful as the soft lamp light shed its ruddy glow upon her glossy dark tresses and flushed, animated countenance. At least so thought Edgar, and he could scarcely take his eyes off her. Agnes noticed his glances and smiled to herself.

Edgar was home on a fortnight's vacation. These were happy days indeed. Valeria and her mother spent most of the time at the Donovan cottage, Agnes, to the joy of all seemed to rally. There was a faint wild rose bloom on her cheeks and she was even able to take a short walk on the beach when the weather was exceptionally fine. How merry were the meals and how delightful the evenings. All too quickly the time passed and the day dawned when Edgar was obliged to return to the city. Agnes had begged permission to go to Mass that Sunday and as it was a glorious day and she seemed so much stronger, Edgar consented. When she knelt between her brother and Valeria in the beautiful chapel of St. Joseph's, tears of joy filled her eyes at being once more in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Edgar left shortly after supper. At the last moment, Agnes clung to him with passionate tenderness and suddenly burst into tears, to his surprise and consternation. He soothed her tenderly, and in a few minutes she became calm and bade him good-bye smiling through her tears.

As they sat together in the lamp light after he had gone, Valeria noticed all the pretty color had left Agnes' face and that she looked very white and ill. A foreboding of approaching sorrow stabbed her heart.

Her presentiment was fulfilled. From that day Agnes failed rapidly. The sudden strength and the energy of the past two weeks had been but the last flickering of the fast fading life. When Edgar came out for the weekend he was shocked at the change in his darling sister. But in his presence Agnes managed to hide her suffering and weakness to a great extent, and as the doctor from the town (Dr. Leigh had unfortunately gone South) thought his duty not to reveal the girl's true condition, Edgar really had no idea of her danger.

But Agnes herself knew. One evening as Valeria sat beside her couch looking out at the sunset sea, Agnes laid her hand on her arm. Valeria, turning around, was startled at the heavenly expression in her friend's face.

"Valeria, dear," began Agnes softly, "soon I shall be beyond these glowing heavens, which give but a faint glimpse of the glory of paradise. Soon I shall be gazing upon the beautiful face of Him whom alone I have loved."

"Oh, Agnes, don't talk like that," cried Valeria, tears starting to her eyes. "This is but a passing weakness and you will recover. What would Edgar do without you?"

"Poor Edgar! He will miss me very much. He has always been so good to me." Agnes spoke so meekly, but she went on. "I think, however, there is one who will console him and come to be even nearer and dearer to him than I. Valeria, I know that my brother loves you, and I think that you return his affection. Is it not so, dearest sister of my heart?"

"Yes, I love him," acknowledged Valeria softly, hiding her blushing face on Agnes' shoulder.

"I am so glad, doctor," returned Edgar. "Do your very best for her, and send the bill to me."

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Her presentiment was fulfilled. From that day Agnes failed rapidly. The sudden strength and the energy of the past two weeks had been but the last flickering of the fast fading life. When Edgar came out for the weekend he was shocked at the change in his darling sister. But in his presence Agnes managed to hide her suffering and weakness to a great extent, and as the doctor from the town (Dr. Leigh had unfortunately gone South) thought his duty not to reveal the girl's true condition, Edgar really had no idea of her danger.

But Agnes herself knew. One evening as Valeria sat beside her couch looking out at the sunset sea, Agnes laid her hand on her arm. Valeria, turning around, was startled at the heavenly expression in her friend's face.

"Valeria, dear," began Agnes softly, "soon I shall be beyond these glowing heavens, which give but a faint glimpse of the glory of paradise. Soon I shall be gazing upon the beautiful face of Him whom alone I have loved."

"Oh, Agnes, don't talk like that," cried Val