

circle and bright days forever past. To add misery to misery, Christmas morning had been the time when Agnes was called upon to part with her only remaining relative, her devoted aunt. She had struggled against the gloom that seemed inevitable, and since her marriage Max had invariably arranged some entertainment either in the family or out of it, which would give her little leisure for retrospection. This was the saddest day Agnes had ever known, and she resolved to make it a happy one for her servants; consequently little Tom was with her until his time came for a morning nap and later on only one servant was kept in to do her bidding. There had been a sudden change in the weather the night previous, and a slight fall of snow dressed the earth and chilled the air. Agnes decided to remain at home in the evening, merely sending out her gifts and a note to her pastor saying she could not possibly attend the social gathering as Mr. Dugeddon had been called from home suddenly.

She could not taste the turkey which cook had so daintily prepared and when her waitress expressed surprise she said, "I think I have taken a little cold, and it will be better to diet; I have had cold chills since last evening when I returned from the church."

"Then I'll not take the afternoon ma'am," said the girl who was sincerely attached to her mistress.

"Oh yes, go by all means, I shall read and Thomas will be in, he had orders from Mr. Dugeddon not to leave the house in his absence." They all obeyed her and went their several ways to make merry. How was it with the master of the house? He fully expected to receive some message from Agnes but none came; in order to while away the time he accepted an invitation to dine with some bachelor friends at their club, and although he seemed to be in the best of spirits, he found himself wondering what his wife was doing. "She will have Clara over, I dare say, or mother and the girls will take them both out to Langville; she will not pine for me or she would not have sent me my traps." Thus he argued with himself while making merry with his friends. It was late before they parted. Max had for one brief moment thought of going home on the midnight train, but his friends urged him to remain and join them at a dinner to be given on the following day. Still angry with his wife, as he thought, the more so as no message came, he consented, but did not write or send even the telegram which he had written in his pocket. So the holidays passed until the twenty-seventh of December arrived and Max was glad to find himself on the way home. He had arranged to arrive after dark in order to avoid the questions of curious friends. He had once more tasted the so-called freedom of bachelor life and found himself disgusted. He wondered in fact how he had ever enjoyed "making a night of it," and why, men otherwise sensible, could render themselves ridiculous and consider it either droll or jovial. He could not read or sleep on the train for his mind was occupied in thinking how Agnes would receive him. His mother and sisters would fall upon his neck and nearly smother him with kisses while bewailing his loss; Alice was quite different, he had always rejoiced that she was; her love was full of surprises and yet never failed him. He found himself trying to think how she had dressed for the church affair, and if she sang; they would have her sing and Max was proud of her voice. Then he wondered if little Tom would know him and cry out in that droll way "Mack, my Mack." As he drew near home he saw a dim light in the room where Agnes slept and the gas in the lower hall still burning, and he said they are expecting me. He let himself in and was surprised to see Thomas sitting on a chair in the hall, the man sprang up quickly saying: "Thank heaven you got it sir."

"Got what Thomas?" asked Max as he pulled off his coat.

"The message sir, that Dr. Langdon sent sir about Missis."

"Is my wife ill?"

"Indeed she is sir, it was chills she was taken with but the doctor says how its the Nemomy."

Max went up the stairs like a man racing for his life. At the top he met the doctor. "Hold on Dugeddon, I must speak with you first," said he as he drew Max into the sewing room which Agnes had made a dream of beauty and comfort.

"What ails my wife?" demanded Max brusquely. "She has double pneumonia, Dugeddon, and is very ill."

"When was she taken?"

"I was called on Christmas night, she must have been ailing before, and seems rather run down. I have devoted myself to her especially, knowing how much depends on prompt action, and I hope for

but everything went wrong, nothing was in its place, and what did he care for clothing or appearances with Agnes ill?"

When he went back the doctor said in cheery tones: "Well, Mrs. Dugeddon, your best nurse has come and I shall leave you now, keep very quiet until I see you again. Let your husband talk to you but do not talk yourself." Agnes held out a little burning hand for a farewell. "No you must not move, even to be polite, save as the cough moves you; for the next forty-eight hours imagine yourself in a glass case and then we will let you dictate terms to us. Max knelt down by his wife's bed and kissed her again and again. No words would come at his bidding save "my poor darling, my poor darling." His wife knew that self reproach had taken the place of self will and pride. Never was a man more rebellious, but anger had fled from him, he knew only that Agnes was in danger and his whole soul rebelled against it. He thought of all their happy life together, of her devotion and his selfish exactions, and of little Tom. No, there would not be justice in heaven if Agnes left him. Clara's words came back to him "may heaven send you wisdom," and wisdom had come to him but the price was the life of the woman he loved best. He seldom left her, even little Tom seemed of small importance now, he was eager to have him sent out for his airing lest one cry might distress Agnes. No one saw her but the nurse and himself, while the doctor came in several times each day. Night after night Max lived over the past, night after night he was maddened by her suffering.

"Agnes my love," he said one night after the doctor had suggested that counsel might be more satisfactory, "is there nothing I can do for you, nothing in all the world you can think of? Give me the comfort of thinking I am of some use, dear."

"Such a dear, kind nurse," she said, "don't worry, Max, it is all right, I am not afraid, only for you and little Tom."

"Don't talk that way, Agnes, don't tell me you are willing to, to, never get better; I know I have been a selfish brute, I see it now, but darling do try and get better for my sake and little Tom's."

She put her hand in his and whispered:

"So all God does, if rightly understood, shall work thy final good."

Max was almost broken hearted; it seemed to him that Agnes was even ready to leave him, was too resigned. If she would only make a great effort to live; if she would believe for even one hour in mind cure which he had hitherto laughed to scorn, if she would drink more, or sleep more, or do anything in the world, but rest there, with such a sad drawn face and yet so hopeful. He had always admired the deep spiritual side of her character, because it was wanting in his own, but now he longed to have her "of the earth, earthly." The doctor gave them very little encouragement after consulting with the best medical authorities. Then Max railed at the doctors, they were dolt, they knew how to effect a cure, he would send for others. Good Dr. Langdon understood human nature and let him have his way; all agreed with the family physician. Mrs. Dugeddon had evidently been far from well for a long time. She might rally, youth might triumph, but the chances were against her. Max was nearly beside himself. He had never been thwarted in his life, he had money and friends, youth and strength, he would give all to see that beautiful woman once more moving about his home. He grew so restless that the doctor sent him out for a walk in the garden, but everything added to his misery; each spot and each path was associated with Agnes. If she— he could not in his thoughts utter that dreadful word, if anything happened to her he did not care to live; it was his cruel conduct which had caused all this,



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the best, she is so young and apparently healthy."

"Can I see her?" asked Max in a husky voice.

"She has not asked for you, she is very quiet and takes all the nourishment we can give her. If you will promise not to talk I think I can venture to let you see her, although we must guard against any excitement." Max started toward the door of Agnes' room.

"Wait a bit, Dugeddon, if you will pardon me, I think you had better bathe a bit and get off the travel stain, and by that time I will tell her that you have arrived. Did you get my telegrams, I sent you two?"

"No," gasped Max as he thought of the manner in which he had passed his Christmas, while his wife was alone and in danger, "no, not a word." He went to his dressing room and began to dress,