

he fit to appear at her wedding; he would see her in her beauty, may he touch her hand; he would see, too, this man who had gained so much, because he had already been blessed with wealth and knowledge, and position; he would hear the words said, which would bind them to one another for life, and he would find strength to wish them happiness. And then—they would go away, and he would come home, and never more would he mingle with his fellow-men, neither would he have cause to envy them.

And so the evening came, and she had been put out of his reach for ever.

He felt no passion now, no anger, no fear. All that was spent. He was only very, very tired. His face, as he took down the bottle, was white and set. He did not care what anyone would say or think of him; he did not care if there were a future state, or if he would find God awaiting him in judgment; he was only so weary of living, so unfit to struggle, so anxious to be still. He knelt and said the Lord's Prayer in obedience to an instinct; then he poured the liquid into a glass, drank it, and lay down in his bed; he put out the light, folded his arms across his breast, and closed his eyes.

His last thought before he slid into unconsciousness was a trivial one. He missed the ticking of his watch, which he had pawned to buy his "wedding garments."

There was noise in the street without; but his room was all still. And he fell asleep.

At eight o'clock the next morning the postman delivered some letters into the hands of Miss Polly Winter, who, in her morning gown, was taking the air on the door-step. One of these letters was for Thomas J. Cheadle, Esq., and Polly thought she would take it up herself, and, together with it, as the morning was somewhat frosty, a jug of boiling water. She fetched this with great sweetness, and made her way up to the top story.

There was no answer to her knock, nor yet to the repetition of it. She opened the door and went in. Tom was a light sleeper, as a rule he did not stir. Polly's heart beat a little quicker than usual, as she put the jug down on the table. There was a sound as if it touched something, and then a small thing rolled on to the ground. She stooped and picked it up. It was the empty bottle. Then she realized from what she had saved him. But had she saved him? How still he lay! A fear seized her. She ran to the window and pulled up the blind to let in the sunlight; then she came back to the bedside and dared to look at him. He lived—he breathed. She had averted a tragedy. She burst into tears, and flung herself on her knees by the bedside, praying aloud.

Tom heard her before he had the strength to open his eyes.

"Oh, God! Thank you for sparing him. Help him to live his life bravely. Make him happy. Let him one day rejoice that he was prevented from doing this thing."

He was not dead, then. The laudanum had failed to do its work. What did it all mean?

"Sir," said Polly. "Mr. Cheadle! are you awake?"

Oh, the dreariness of it! There was a weight upon his heart as he gazed about him. He was utterly depressed and wretched. He pushed away the letter she handed him. His effort to die had been in vain.

"Go away," he said; "let me sleep."

She looked at him sadly.

"Sir, it is late. Are you going to take a holiday to-day, sir?"

He opened his heavy eyes again, and sighed.

"No," he said in a dull voice; "I will get up."

He sickened at the thought of the old dull routine, from which he thought he had escaped.

Polly rose. She still held the bottle in her hand. He caught sight of it, and a quick red flushed his face. He remembered the words he had heard her say, and the tears were still on her cheeks.

"What—what is that?" he stammered, as she laid the empty bottle on the bed.

"I think," said Polly, hesitatingly, "it must have held the sleeping draught you took last night."

He knew then that she had guessed the truth. He looked away from her honest eyes, and began fumbling with the letter, mechanically opening it, and reading it. Suddenly he gave an exclamation and set up in bed, his eyes shining; and then he broke into hysterical laughter.

"I—I shall not go to the city to-day," he said, in almost incoherent tones. "I think—I shall never go back. I am rich."

"Mr. Cheadle—Sir," cried Polly, wondering if he had taken leave of his senses.

"My uncle died yesterday evening," said Tom more soberly, though he could not pretend to any grief.

"Oh, sir!" cried Polly, taking hold of his hand. "Be happy with the money—and good. And thank God for saving your life!"

"What do you mean, Miss Winter?" said poor Tom, awkwardly.

The landlady's daughter was not good at deception. She went down on her knees, and told him all the truth.

"I couldn't bear to think of it," she sobbed; "I knew you were unhappy, and I believed you had a use for the horrid stuff, and so I took it to the chemist's and I made him change it to a sleeping draught. There's—there's laudanum in it, but there wasn't enough to hurt you. And—oh, I hope you will forgive me!"

"Polly!" said Tom, and then he gave a great sob, and hid his face on the pillow.

The landlady's daughter patted his shoulder in a motherly manner.

"You will thank me one day" she said, "when you are very happy. Never think God deserts us. If he takes away one thing He gives us something else to comfort us. Don't / know!"

"Have you ever cared for some one?" asked Tom, sheepishly.

"I have," said Miss Winter, "and I wouldn't marry him now for the world."

"Why not?" asked Tom.

"There are reasons" said Miss Winter, "and one is, that I have found someone else I think I shall be happier with."

"Are you going to be married?" he enquired, with interest.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," said she, with a twinkle in her eye. "He hasn't asked me yet, but I should make him such an excellent wife, that I believe he will. He is the sort of person," she continued, moving towards the door, "that needs looking after."

"Polly" Tom cried, for she was blushing so furiously that there was no mistaking her, "come back!"

It might have been forward of her, but he did not think so. He needed love so sorely.

Polly shook her head.

"Not yet," she said.

"Polly," Tom urged, "you have saved my life. It belongs to you. Be my wife."

"I will," said Polly, "when you have learned to love me."

Just think of a penny-in-the-slot machine which furnishes hot water! It is in successful operation in various parts of Paris. Nine quarts are delivered for five centimes (about a halfpenny). A coil of copper wire inside the machine is connected with a street main, and is heated by gas-burners. Housekeepers use the water for making tea, washing and other purposes. A similar machine supplies a glass of hot wine.

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