

all through life. Before Clara Fairfax met her cousin again he had need of heaven's wisdom.

A little portion of Clara's sermon fell on good ground. The next day when Alderman Carew met Max down town he said "See here, Dugeddon, we have just discovered a case of destitution which is appalling, and it is one for women to handle; the woman in case is mother of an infant only three days old, and has two others, mere babies all of them; they were once wealthy, and he is a drunken sot. I have just learned that the woman who is in a very weak condition, says she attended school with your wife. Would it not be well to get my wife and yours as soon as we can to look the thing up? Such people would rather die than be treated like paupers."

"Of course," said Max, "Mrs. Dugeddon is never happier than when engaged in helping some one, I will drive up and bring her down at once and we will call for Mrs. Carew en route."

"All right, here is the address of the sufferer," Pitiful indeed was the case which they found. A woman, delicate and refined, once the daughter of wealthy parents, and a belle, now in a damp basement, scantily covered with clothing. In a cot near her was another child, sick and neglected, and a third had been buried while the mother was helpless. A mere accident had revealed the situation, for pride kept the victims from making themselves known.

Agnes Dugeddon was pained indeed to find an old school-mate in such distress, and the two ladies made many journeys to their own homes before the family were rendered comfortable. The wretched cause of all this misery sat upon the floor in one corner of the room in a drunken stupor until he was removed to an infirmary.

Max entered heartily into all his wife's plans, and opened his purse frequently, always saluted by the plaintive appeal of his wife, "only think if it were dear little Tom." It was very near the holidays, and the Dugeddon voted that every cent intended for family gifts should be used for the Anstruthers. Thus a comfortable tenement was provided, and the sick woman removed there as soon as the physician would permit. Shelter is good, but one must have food and clothing as well as shelter, and Agnes thought of many plans for assisting Mrs. Anstruther without wounding her sensitive nature, made even more sensitive by the sorrow she had undergone. That afternoon the Parish Committee met for the purpose of completing their arrangements for a large Christmas tree. Both Max and his wife were on this committee, the mayor and other official gentlemen would be present, being members of the same society, and although it was stated that they had not three poor people in the parish, a tree had been suggested as a means of promoting sociability or as some one put it "having a good time." Agnes' heart was full of pity for the family she had seen, and all through the evening when Max was at his club, she had been planning something for the further relief of the unfortunate Anstruthers. The meeting was full, every one was eager to share in the 'good time.'

Before His Honor called the meeting to order, Agnes had an opportunity to chat a few moments with the mayor, and to impress upon him the fact that this should be a special case for personal effort and not be made public.

"Certainly," said the mayor, "Mr. Anstruther was at one time prominent here in public affairs, and the city owes him a large debt of gratitude; delicacy demands quiet measures in a case like this; let us keep it in our own parish for the present and await further developments. The mayor said much the same thing when he opened the meeting. No names were mentioned, but he felt that the suggestion of Mrs. Dugeddon that the noblest work of the parish this year would be to spend the money or a portion of it for a noble and good woman who was suffering through no fault of her own. The mayor spoke eloquently, but the man who always objects, and the woman who always doubts, were both present and the matter was debated with some spirit.

"Let them be helped by the city," said one man.

"Place the case in the hands of the overseers of the poor," said another.

"Then the aggressive woman who always doubts rose, and thought 'it highly improper to divert the money from the regular channels; the parish had talked of an elegant Christmas tree which should cost \$1,000 and the plan should be carried out; if people were poor it was their own fault; why did not some one hunt up the relatives of these people and let them take care of their own?'"

The mayor appealed to Mrs. Dugeddon. Had they relatives?

In a low voice Agnes said "No, they had none on this side of the water, if anywhere."

More objections were raised, until Agnes could have wept for humanity's sake. To think of it, she said to herself, so little of the Christ spirit in a Christmas meeting. While she was thinking sadly of it all, she heard her voice called, and her pastor

was saying, "I think friends we must know more of this case, may I not ask Mrs. Dugeddon to come here to the desk and tell us more about it? Any case she is interested in is sure to be one we can all endorse."

Poor Agnes. Never had she opened her lips in that church. She had worked hard, had given money freely, had sung again and again at their various gatherings, but how could she speak. Something seemed to say, "for little Tom's sake." She rose in her seat, but her pastor came and kindly led her forward, whispering as he did so, "Courage little woman it means help for another." Agnes never did quite know how she stepped upon the small platform in the church vestry; she never did quite understand why her voice had a strange, far off sound, or why her lips seemed so dry and hard. In a few well chosen words she told the story of this suffering woman, of the visit she had made with a lady of another church of the broad sisterhood, which knew no limitations, because it was the sisterhood which had its home in the fatherhood of God, and as she related some things which she had seen in that home, many eyes grew moist and one and another said "she shall have my money for them."

Even the men who had objected withdrew their objections as soon as she sat down. A vote was taken, and to the delight of Agnes, a pleasant social evening with a modest tree would suffice, while the bulk of the money should be invested for Mrs. Anstruther.

The aggressive woman never hesitates to continue a contest even when apparently vanquished. While Agnes was receiving the congratulations of her friends, the aggressive member went out with her head in the air. At the door whom should she meet but Max Dugeddon who had hurried up, hoping to speak a word before the close of the meeting.

"Ah, Mr. Dugeddon," said the A. G. with one of her positive smiles, "you are just a little too late; I declare I never knew you had married a female orator, your wife has just captivated them all by her eloquence, quite a woman's rights' speech I do assure you." Max was thunderstruck. Could it be possible that Agnes had done such a foolish thing. Agnes meantime was hearing her friends say "I would give the world to be able to express myself as you do" and "how noble it was in you dear Mrs. Dugeddon, I am proud of you." Even the venerable pastor pressed her hand reverently and said "Ah, child, I never thought when I christened you, what a comfort you would be to me as well as to the church."

"It was so hard at first, said Agnes, until I thought of little Tom and then I forgot everything but that other poor baby."

As Max turned from the aggressive woman with a bow, he encountered Mr. Cortellis the superintendent of the Sunday School who also put an arrow into his flesh by saying "I declare Dugeddon, your wife has conquered us all, she should take to the platform and make herself famous." Poor Max was nearly beside himself by this time, and therefore thought only of himself, that being his usual custom first; other people might follow. He walked down the church path to the carriage gate like a man in a dream. Agnes had really defied him; she had listened to Clara and disregarded his wishes; well, he would teach her a lesson; when Max Dugeddon said a thing he meant it. He was too discreet to wound his wife openly and he did the first thing which entered his head. Thomas was at the gate with the horses. Taking his card from his pocket he wrote upon it "Shall not be home to dinner." Then he ordered Thomas to wait for his mistress while he hurried away to his club.

Everyone wondered what was the matter with Dugeddon; he scarcely spoke, and at last, spent a long time in the writing room, where he prepared and sent away the following note. It was cruel and brief; but a selfish man does not consider the hurts administered to others, he cares only for his own:

AGNES: You knew my wishes and my views, and you have disobeyed me. I shall not be home to-night and may possibly go to New York to see end Christmas.

Agnes read this unloving and cruel note in her own parlor surrounded by friends who had called to congratulate her upon her "maiden speech."

"I quite long to see Mr. Dugeddon, said a motherly woman, I think my dear he must know how proud we are of you, and what a victory it was."

"Yes," said Agnes not knowing a word the lady had said. She needed time to think, and the moment her friends left her, she went to the nursery to see little Tom.

Every mother finds her baby a source of strength in time of trouble. Nothing soothes a heart ache like the beating of another heart which is part of our own life. How could Max upbraid her for defending that other poor baby and its mother? If he had waited she might have explained it all, but Max never waited, his way was the way, and the worst of it was, his world, must follow it. Agnes gave the nurse an extra evening out and devoted herself to Tom. He had never been cruel to her and never,

never, could think that she had disgraced him. Agnes could not even cry as some women can; the hurt was too deep. Max was not quite the noble man she had thought him; she had not succeeded in making him less selfish and exacting as she had prayed to do, and in her heart she felt humiliated because he was the man she had chosen from all the world, and dear little Tom's father. The recording angels were busy that night writing down the prayers which this mother breathed over her sleeping child. The only answer to them came in a resolve to do what seemed right and trust to God for results. Max had never left her even for one night since their marriage; she had travelled with him everywhere, and now he voluntarily stayed away because she had simply performed a christian act. She spent a long time in prayer before she wrote one word, and then sent Thomas down to the club house with her husband's portmanteau and a note. If Max would be foolish he must not appear so to others; he was her husband, and little Tom's father; whatever came she must remember that.

"Thomas, she said in the gentlest tones, your master may possibly be called away to New York and I have packed some things for him, I want you to take them to him as soon as you can, and give him this note also."

"I hope the master will not be away and spoil the Christmas for you ma'am."

"We will hope not, Thomas."

Half an hour later Max Dugeddon was rejoiced to hear that his man was enquiring for him. "Ah, he said to himself, Agnes has repented and the moment she is sorry that ends it, and I will go home. It is the first time she ever opposed me and it will be the last." He opened the note and read:

"DEAR MAX: Judge not, I only did my duty by a suffering woman and at the request of my pastor. There can be no disgrace without sin, and your wife has not sinned, either against you or the proprieties. I could not let you go from home without your toilet comforts, and I have put all the necessary articles in, I trust; if more are wanting send Thomas back. Little Tom is in my arms while I write, and I have kissed him good night for you. Your devoted wife."

AGNES.

Never was an imperious man more surprised. She was not sorry in the least, and seemed to take it for granted that he would go away. In fact she seemed willing to have him. He could scarcely believe his eyes and ears; his Agnes, who never left him, and whose every word and look was loyalty, was actually willing to leave him away in the holiday season, when, to his certain knowledge, she had planned a tiny Christmas Tree for little Tom and had sundry surprises for him which had been hidden away for months. Max was not quite ready to give in and go home, he was not the sort of man to allow any one to thwart him, least of all a woman. "There is no answer, Thomas," he said crossly.

"Nothing special sir, if you be gone over Christmas, sir?"

"Nothing, I may not go, everything depends on my despatches." Thomas bowed and went out. For two mortal hours Max Dugeddon fumed alone and then suddenly seized his portmanteau and hurried into a cab, he had just five minutes to catch the night express to New York, if he caught it he would go, if not; at all events he would let Agnes see that he was not to be trifled with. He caught the train. Retributive justice had Max well in hand that night, and never thought once of the little woman who vainly tried to sleep with little Tom by her side.

The day before Christmas a telegram came from Max, it was even colder than telegrams usually are, and merely said, "Arrived safely, address Murray Hill Hotel." Agnes spent most of the day preparing for the Church festival and in providing for Mrs. Anstruther. She had little time for despondency, although her heart ached for Max.

It was their first separation and she felt it keenly; but being a brave woman she went about her duties, looking a little paler than usual but kind and cheerful to all. She dreaded Christmas day more than she could well say, but her heart ache must be kept from the servants and especially from Tom's mother and sisters. They were much surprised to hear of his absence and said it must be something about those bothersome stocks he had been buying and hoped he would get home before Christmas day was quite over, as they had invited guests to meet them.

Would not Agnes come and stay with them? "No," she felt it her duty to remain at home, especially as Max might arrive at any moment. They left her with many regrets to enjoy little Tom's company, and the mother was the only one to think Agnes was doing quite the proper thing. "It is delightful to see them so fond she said and Max would be furious if he should come and find her gone."

Clara Fairfax had also gone away to spend the holidays, so the young wife was quite alone. There is nothing quite equal in dreariness to a holiday spent in solitude when memory calls up the absent