

Leader

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POETRY.

IT NEVER PAYS.

It never pays to fret and growl, When fortune seems our foe; The better bred will look ahead And strike the braver blow.

It never pays to weep the health In drugging after gain, And he is sold who thinks that gold is ennobled brought with pain.

Selected Stories.

Agatha's Wooer.

A Hallow 'E'en Story.

Agatha Winthrop, stood alone in darkness, pressing her hands upon her temples to still their throbbing, thinking, wishing, yearning, all her soul astray with the consciousness of her thwarted youth and life.

It had been thought a fine thing for Agatha when her grand Aunt Peyton had selected her from the family as companion and nurse, and the girl had acquiesced, as she would have done whatever arrangement might have been made for her.

"Good, quiet, patient little Agatha!" all the others had said. "Just the person for a sick room!"

The constant confinement, the exactness to which she was daily subjected, had worn her spirit at length to a crisis of absolute agony.

"How long?" she said to herself. "How long?" and then a sudden terror of her own thoughts seized her as she remembered words that Miss Peyton had spoken to her in some of her lucid intervals, and her imagination fevered itself with the fancy of a grim fate, grimmer than ever, and stilled in death.

With her aching eyes still fixed on the dim outlines of the landscape, she began slowly drawing the pine from her satinsmooth hair, putting off as long as possible the reighting of her lamp, a curious scene flashed across the darkness, like the views of a magic lantern.

Suddenly the meaning of this strange scene occurred to Agatha. It was the eve of All Saints' Day, and she could guess at the foolish pranks the neighbors' girls, with their guests, had been playing.

Longing to be of and among them, it entered her head to find relief through the very disturbance of her own mind,

to see, perforce, a phantom husband, and work herself, perhaps, into a frenzy, which might change the sluggish current of her distress.

To "eat an apple at the glass"—that she might do, if she made haste for it wanted some minutes of midnight. There was no one to watch her, or laugh at her, but she laughed at herself as she went into the store-room and chose one from a pile of rosy, delicious fruit.

Agatha laid her apple upon the oakentable before this mirror. She had not yet heard the bell tolling twelve.

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answered mechanically the truth, thinking, knowing nothing of what that truth might say to others. All was to her a dull enigma, until out of the throng there dropped upon her soul, like balm—a look. Its sorrow was an awful revelation to Agatha, but its human sympathy touched her to tears—that bitterest need that human heart can know.

No prison-bars closed upon this woman in her youth. She went free, for nothing could be proven against her; but she knew that others saw upon her forehead the brand of Cain, and whispered together that she had lost the price of her guilt, for Priscilla Peyton's will was nowhere to be found. The law stepped in and did its emotionless duty. The old mansion and grounds and all that had belonged to the dead woman fell into the hands of one man—a man not connected by ties of blood with Agatha's family, but one look had established kinship between him and the suspected girl.

Once settled in his lonely home, the new heir found for Agatha the employment that left her in isolation, requiring no human being to repress a shudder of repulsion at her approach, to offer a reluctant hand. To her lodging-room came piles of paper to be covered by a facile pen—easy work and well paid. There were occasional meetings between the employer and the employed, and there grew up between them a subtle friendship, none the less fervent, perhaps, that the man was by many years the elder. They found that their thoughts flowed together in very peculiar unison; but there was always one subject which was forbidden ground, and sometimes when their companionship seemed gaining a new consistency, a sudden chill and gloom would come between them, and then for days each avoided the other resolutely.

It happened that at this epoch, Agatha met her first lover. Alone and desolate, divided by a mysterious cloud from a friend who might else have been all the world to her, she could not but feel grateful for a love forced and thrust upon her, and yet she did not and could not return that love.

Beside Priscilla Peyton's grave, in the first days of January, she met the stranger who persistently sought her acquaintance.

He fulfilled to the utmost a girl's romantic dreams—young and handsome, brilliant and unknown, ready, if she might believe him, to do or dare anything for her sake. By his persistence he won.

Paul Raynor, the heir of the Peyton estate, looked on and said no word, while slowly and by imperceptible degrees the glow of their friendship waned. When they met he was kind and formal, and Agatha wept for the loss of her friend as she would not have wept for her lover's death.

The time of Agatha's wedding approached. She was to be married in that southern land, far away from home and kindred. In her white dress, she stood before the long mirror in the large house parlor, deemed as for her bride-day, and thinking her own secret thoughts so intently that she had forgotten why she had come to look into the mirror—so intently that she did not hear the door behind her open. The man who was to be her bridegroom came softly in, smiling. At her left side he stood and bowed his head. His steady blue eyes twinkled.

"How do you like me?" he said, between his closed teeth.

Without turning, Agatha looked. From her face every vestige of color was gone, but not an eyelash stirred—only her eyes dilated. It might have been by that swayed her soul, or fear, or any other passion as well; no looker-on could have told; but in that moment there was given to her, as has been given to other women—a revelation. Her hand grasped a slender chair-back until it seemed that the knuckles and sinews must burst through the skin; but when she greeted her guest she was herself again, and never before had she so responded to his wooing. Her lover bowed with delight and flattered vanity before the evening was over.

Agatha and her wedding-company were gathered in a parlor of the old Peyton mansion. The clergyman was ready, and Paul Raynor, with a grave, sweet smile upon his face, waited to give the bride away. Then Agatha started forward, her dark eyes gleaming, her face as white as the dress she wore. Her frame trembled like an aspen leaf, but her voice was clear and steady.

"There will be no wedding here to-day. I will not mock the sacred service by allowing it to begin. This man," she pointed to the expectant bridegroom, who covered and glared now like some hunted wild beast set suddenly at bay—"this man is a murderer! I may have acted a wicked part, but I hope that I am justified. He would have lured me to a marriage with him." She shuddered as she spoke the words.

"It was he who killed my poor old aunt. He stole the will which made me her heiress. See, here is the confession of the theft in his own words, with his own signature."

"She held forward a fluttering paper and a sealed parchment together." The guests were in a sudden commotion. The startled man glowered beneath his bent brows, and his eyes took a murderous gleam. Agatha threw the door of the room open. "Go," she said, "and pray God to have mercy upon you."

"But if this is true—" began the clergyman, in a stern voice.

"Stop him!" spoke Paul Raynor to some one who stood at the entrance.

"Do not! I pray you will not!" pleaded Agatha. "I could not bear it. I have cleared him into confession, but not by his death—not such a fearful death. Let him go—let him have time for repentance!" still seeing hesitation in the faces around her; and such was the force of her persuasions that the others yielded, and the man passed out.

Agatha laid the will upon the table for all to see, and with a note written as to one cognizant and approving of his crime. While the tongues were still busy, she lifted the parchment, and, walking to the open grate, quietly laid it upon the glowing coals, where it turned in a few seconds to a shriveled curl.

When the flames had fairly caught it, her glance met Paul Raynor's. There was exultation in his, but a dawning glory rose and clouded it all away, and Agatha read that the cloud that had dimmed their friendship was gone forever and ever. Something else she read in the clear heaven of his eyes—something whose answer lay deep in her trusting heart.—N. Y. Dispatch.

Keeping Winter Fruit.

The scarcity of apples this year, throughout the country generally, suggests the importance of making the most of what we have. They will keep much better and their decay be retarded if they are not taken to the cellar till the near approach of freezing weather. If to be placed in bins in the cellar, they may be stored in an out-house. If barrelled, they may be placed outdoors on the north side of a building or under a shed. Or, the barrels may even remain in the orchard, kept from the ground by lying on their sides on a couple of rails. If ornamentals are piled over the barrels, they will withstand a freezing night should one occur before they go to their winter-quarters. Sometimes apples have been left in heaps on the ground in the orchard, properly covered, without injury till the ground has been frozen; but in all such instances it is better to err by housing them a few days too soon than to have them injured by freezing. From repeated experiments we find that, as a general average, apples will keep from four to six weeks longer if thus removed to the cellar through autumn than if placed there at once as soon as gathered. The same remarks will apply to late autumn and winter pears.

GRAPE.—There is nearly as much difference in the varieties of the grape as regards keeping, as there is between autumn and winter apples. The thick-skinned, early-ripening sorts, such as the Delaware and Concord, cannot be kept well into winter by any practicable process; while the Diana, Isabella, Catawba, and some of the late Rogers' hybrids, may be had in good eating condition till nearly spring. In selecting such portions of the crop as are intended for the longest keeping, choose those bunches which have grown to the full dimensions and ripened best, as they have the richest juice, which will not only keep best, but will withstand any accidental freezing weather which may occur. A cool upper apartment will be better than in any cellar, which is apt to be both too damp and too warm. Various modes of packing grapes for winter-keeping have been recommended; but the great point is, to preserve a cool and constant temperature at about the freezing point. The best-flavored and best-ripened grapes will withstand several degrees below freezing, where poorer specimens

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