

AGATHA.

Three ladies were seated in Agatha Forester's parlor; Miss Fortescue, large, dark and of uncertain age, who monopolized the most comfortable arm-chair; Mrs. Becker, shrunken and sandy, who was constantly sliding off the sofa and reinstating herself with a jerk, and Miss Agatha herself, who sat apart from the others, glancing uneasily out of the window, as if distressed by their garrulity. Miss Agatha was a fair young woman, with a noble head and a countenance expressive of all grace and goodness. Yet at this moment she entertained feelings decidedly hostile to her callers, who had run in with the familiar freedom of fellow-boarders in a family hotel, to chat away the afternoon. At heart they were immensely sorry that Miss Nannie Foster had not yet returned from a suburb, where she had spent the day before. Miss Nannie, Agatha's cousin, companion and chaperone in one, was far more to their taste; she was more attentive, more easily impressed, more sympathetic, they thought. She never sat looking out of the window when they were retailing their choicest bits of scandal for her especial benefit. But then she was a woman of years. However, they still lingered; it was a pleasant place. The Fosters had the handsomest suite in the building—and furnished with such taste! Such carpets! Such decorative art! And the Fosters were tip-top people. There was four of them, Miss Agatha, her two bachelor brothers, ten and a dozen years her senior, and Miss Nannie, who, since their parents' death, had kept the children together. The winter day drew to a close, the room grew dusky, and still the ladies lingered.

Agatha could endure it no longer; this, of all days, she was without patience. She rose quickly.

"Ladies," she said, with an indignant quiver in her sweet contralto voice, "you must excuse me. I cannot listen to such conversation!"

There was silence a moment; then Miss Fortescue lifted her cumbersome frame. "Oh, certainly. I quite understand. We will withdraw. We do not wish to offend."

"Oh, certainly," faintly echoed Mrs. Becker, sliding from the sofa for the last time and preparing to follow.

Agatha's impatience only increased. "And allow me to say," she exclaimed, with no compunction, "that I think ladies might be better employed than with their neighbors' affairs."

"Good afternoon," said Miss Fortescue savagely.

"Good afternoon," sneered Mrs. Becker.

"Good riddance!" cried Agatha sharply ere the door had closed.

"To-day of all days," she said, as she walked to and fro in the dusk. Presently the door opened.

"All in the dark, Agatha?" asked a cheery voice.

"I thought you would never come, Nannie," was the swift, unnerfed reply. Then she lit the gas.

"Why, what is the matter, my dear?" "I have just put Miss Fortescue and Mrs. Becker out of the room, and it—it has annoyed me."

"Dear me! What had they done?" "The same old sickening gossip. Miss Bruce flirts on the street; Mr. and Mrs. Brown have shown no marriage certificate; Mrs. Gray holds her step-child to the furnace to burn it, and so on and so on."

"They get their ideas from the morning papers," said Nannie calmly, unclasping her fur-lined circular. "The step-mother holding the child to the fire is a favorite paragraph when news is scarce. Sometimes she heats the flat-iron. For my part, I would never go to that trouble."

But Agatha could not respond to her staid humor. She helped put away the wraps, and inquired after the suburban friends.

"You look pale; aren't you well?" asked Miss Nannie when they were seated.

The girl dropped her eyes. "Nannie, I have some news for you," she said with an effort. "I—last night—I promised Mr. Peters—to marry him." Then she sighed as if relieved of a great burden.

The room was still, utterly still. If Miss Nannie were surprised or shocked she gave no token. She only sat quietly looking at the girl and taking time to collect her thoughts. Agatha never lifted her eyes until, after some moments, her cousin cleared her throat and tranquilly inquired: "Well, dear, are you satisfied that you will be happy?"

Then the girl rose and threw herself upon the sofa. "O, Nannie, I don't know; I can't tell."

More silence. Then Miss Nannie asked if she had told the boys?

To these women George and Lewis would be "the boys" as long as they lived.

"I told George at noon," replied Agatha in a voice heavy with tears. "Lewis was not here. I wish you would tell him."

"And what did George say?" "He only said, 'I congratulate Peters.'"

Miss Nannie leaned back in the chair and meditated, bringing Peters up for a mental review. Poor little whiffet! To be sure, he had money, some social standing and a fair education. They had known him a long, long time, and even felt for him a sort of distant relatives' affection. They would do anything in the world for him. He often took Agatha about, to places of amusement, to church, or riding. But he was at least fifteen years her senior, and they had never dreamed of his aspiring to marry her. His appearance was pitifully against him. Miss Nannie reviewed his bad build, his bowed legs, his 'wild eye,' as she called

it, a suspicious eye that seemed to skir-mish about the room while its mate regarded you with steadfast respect. Then she turned her thoughts to Agatha—Agatha, perfect in face and figure and ennobled by education and advantages—Agatha, for whom a Senator had proposed and a Congressman languished, to say nothing of her lesser adorers—Agatha, who had rejected the Senator because he lacked principle, and the Congressman because he was a widower.

Nannie remembered that the girl had suffered and shed tears over refusing these and others. She had a curious disposition, as the boys had said.

At length Nannie roused and spoke. "I will tell Lewis; and now, dear, you had better dress; it is near dinner-time. A little Florida-water will cool your cheeks."

"Hark!" cried Agatha, "there he is now—gone into his room."

Nannie recognized the clumsy step. Lewis has never yet come up those steps without tripping at the top; the rushing, impetuous way of his boyhood would always cling to him.

"I am going at once to tell him, before George comes," said Nannie, rising.

"Yes, do," sighed Agatha. And when her cousin had gone out across the corridor, and her tap had been welcomed by a careless "Come in!" the young girl stole after and listened at the crack of her brother's door.

"Lewis, I have news for you," said Nannie gently, and there was a hidden sob in her fond voice. "Agatha has promised to marry Mr. Peters."

"O Lord!" cried Lewis in open-mouthed disgust.

Agatha crept away from the door; her face was burning and her heart beat hard.

But Miss Nannie remained awhile in her cousin's chamber.

"Lewis," she said quietly. "I suppose we all feel the same over this—matter? Agatha says when she told George he remarked that he 'congratulated Peters.'"

"Well, this is too bad," said Lewis indignantly. "It is a shame if a girl with her face and brains can't do better. She is altogether too soft-hearted. She would have married all the men who ever proposed, if we had let her, and out of sheer pity, not because she cared for them. That is why she accepted Peters; couldn't bear to hurt his feelings—didn't want his strait eye to suffuse with tears! We must do something to prevent."

Nannie smiled deprecatingly: "We must be very careful. Agatha has a curious disposition, and if she thought we were all against him, she would pity him the more."

"If there were only some way to dispose of him," exclaimed Lewis grimly; "if we could send him out with the next Arctic expedition!"

Nannie rose. "You will be very careful what you say, Lewis?"

"Oh, of course."

She lingered at the door. "Agatha has not a forceless nature by any means," she said; "she can get angry if she cares to. She tells me she put Miss Fortescue and Mrs. Becker out of our parlor to-day, because of their vile gossip. I have no doubt she did."

"Humph!"

Agatha came down to dinner with her face composed and her manner gracious as ever. Her inward defiance was not outwardly manifest. Of her family, George was a shade more dignified than usual; and Lewis appeared annoyed, while Nannie put on a regretful look and occasionally sighed. When they left the dining-room Agatha swept haughtily by the table at which sat the Fortescue and the Becker. She was done with the twain, and intended they should see it.

Up in their own parlor, George sat down by his sister. "Agatha," he said slowly and with an evident dislike to the subject, "do you think you did well to engage yourself to Mr. Peters before consulting your family?"

"I was of age three years ago," she said, regarding him with calm dignity.

"Yes, yes, of course. But there is such a thing as advice. Mr. Peters is our good friend, but is he a suitable husband for you?"

"What is there against him?" she asked, unflinchingly. "She was not blind to her lover's bodily imperfections. She had lain awake all night, mentally endeavoring to straighten his crooked limbs, and control his recreant orb. But with daylight they dawned upon her as uncompromising as ever."

But George would not stoop to personalities. "Nothing," he answered quietly. "Only we have looked very high for you. We want you to be happy."

"Then do not speak against Mr. Peters," she said in a way that seemed to dismiss the subject.

George betook himself to his own room and Lewis took his place by Agatha. "I suppose I am to congratulate," he said with a careless disregard of Nannie's injunctions.

"You do not seem very enthusiastic," responded his sister calmly, recalling his secretly-heard exclamation upon first hearing the news.

"I can't help it if I don't," he answered half-impudently. "You know how proud we are of you, Gath, and we can't be expected to think any man good enough."

She smiled.

He went on recklessly: "I don't believe you know what you were doing. You don't love Peters, you only pity him just as you used to pity the Senator and all the rest. This crooked little curmudgeon! Why, he is older than George, and cross-eyed!"

She sprang up in a rage: "Lewis, you have said quite enough. Never speak so again to me; I forbid it!"

Then she sought her own chamber and threw herself upon the bed.

Nannie came to her after awhile. "My

poor darling! Why are you feeling so bad?"

"Lewis has been saying such awful things!"

"And are you quite sure you have made no mistake?"

"Quite sure."

She rose and arranged her toilet; Mr. Peters was to come that evening.

He arrived early. Nannie endeavored to be gracious, but soon excused herself, leaving Agatha to her lover, the boys having gone out. And Agatha, with Lewis' cruel criticism still ringing in her ears, felt as if in a dream. Fortunately Peters made no inquiries as to her brothers' opinion of the marriage. Miss Nannie had congratulated him as though all were satisfactory.

Agatha accepted his adoration quite passively, and, at last, when he was gone, retired to her room to pity him and weep for him, and tell herself how much she loved him.

But as the winter slipped away the engagement was announced, and having remained unbroken, Agatha's brothers began to feel resigned.

The quiet, intense devotion of Norman Peters was touching. He worshipped his betrothed; to him she was a very goddess.

"If," thought Nannie, with a softened regret, "if he were only a half-inch taller, to be of even height with Agatha!"

Meanwhile poor Agatha was fretting herself to death. A thousand little heartless sarcasms and glances of ridicule, to which Peters, in his great happiness, was utterly oblivious, were constantly stabbing her. Night after night she passed in wakeful agony, the idea of breaking the engagement never once occurring to her. She was sure she loved him, and she realized the depth of his devotion. She endeavored to rise above morbid sensitiveness, telling herself that people would cease their cruel ways when they saw that she was determined to stand by him. But she grew thin, and her face wore a hunted expression. Mesdames Becker and Fortescue now began to circulate pretty little stories about her—ingeniously constructed but untruthful romances.

Nothing very bad, for Agatha was a woman to whom no doubtful mist could cling for a moment; but whispers of "coquetry," "blighted hopes," "girlish folly" and "last resort," which, blown from lip to lip on the dubious breath of friendship, came at last to vex the ears of the Fosters. Agatha only grew more pale. Stormy Lewis, however, one day confronted Miss Fortescue in the hall before his sister's room.

"I can tell you, madame, that you must discontinue your talk of my sister," he cried angrily.

Agatha came out. "Oh Lewis, dear."

He took her by the arm. "Go back, Gath. I've a matter to settle with this lady. She knows what mischief she has been trying to work, and I intend the talk shall cease, or I will take measures she may not admire."

Without a word Miss Fortescue turned and fled.

"I was sorry for her," said Agatha, "she looked so guilty and helpless."

"I declare I haven't much patience with you," exclaimed her brother, "to think that you would defend her, and she every day assailing your good name. But all your ways of late are provoking. You are going to marry a man you don't love because you pity him. For God's sake, why didn't you pity some one suitable?"

She trembled with excitement and passion.

"Lewis, if you have the least particle of love or respect for me, you will never speak so again. I do love Norman, and it would kill me if anything should break the engagement!"

Lewis quit her presence quite crestfallen.

The days slipped by. There had been no date fixed for the wedding, nor was the subject discussed by the family.

None but Nannie knew the terrible tremor in which the girl existed. She was ever moving about, her hands constantly occupied. Day after day, rain or shine, the two women were out of doors. They had always an errand, usually one of mercy. Nannie, however disinclined, would have felt it a sin to oppose, and so Agatha dragged her off through the flitting sunshine, the moodiness, the chill or storm of the springtime, until one last morning.

It had been raining for three days, and so steadily that the sidewalk flags were cleaned and whitened.

Agatha said they would not be hampered with a carriage, and they took a car for a mile or so, alighting to walk a few squares or so to another line. The storm had abated, and the rain was but a listless drizzle.

Agatha slipped and slid once, and Nannie gave a frightened exclamation.

"My overshoes are useless," said the girl carelessly. "I must soon have another pair. I have a good deal of shopping to do soon."

"Your outfit"—ventured Nannie, and stopped.

Agatha sighed but her sigh was lost in the noise of the street.

A poor little yellow dog limped out from under a passing vehicle, holding up one paw and yelping pitifully.

"Oh, see!" cried Agatha, with her eyes wet. "Poor, poor doggy! I am so sorry!"

The yelps died away in the distance, and the ladies went on.

A blind man, crying, "Cough lozenges!" upon the corner detained them for a moment.

In the next block an old building had been torn away to give place to a new one. Careless workmen had left the sidewalk unguarded in one place, a step from which would have landed one in a deep cellar, where lay a number of loose foundation stones.

Just as they had reached this spot they were brought to a sudden halt by loud cries and confusion. Down the street and directly toward them, came a runaway team dragging a splendid carriage.

Agatha took an irresolute step forward, and then sprang back as the horses dashed up against the sidewalk.

The women were thus separated, and in a second Nannie was reaching forward, cold with horror.

"Agatha!" she cried, but too late. The girl had lost her balance, and had fallen backward from the unguarded sidewalk down into the deep cellar, and there lay upon the stones limp and unconscious.

She would live, sadly crippled and helpless; the spine had been injured and one hip dislocated. So said the best of surgeons. She would henceforth require all care and tenderness.

"Thank God, she is not poor!" cried Nannie. As for the boys, George was completely crushed, and Lewis paced the floor for hours, crying for "his poor, poor, sister!"

Agatha insisted upon hearing the worst, and, when it was made known was very silent. By-and-by Nannie could see great tears trembling under the long, dark eyelashes.

"I would not mind," faltered the sufferer, "but for him. Who will love and care for him now?"

Then she asked that he be sent for at once. When he arrived, Nannie and the boys were in the room, but they withdrew to the window. Peters' face was pale as Agatha's own.

"Norman dear," she said without preface, "I am a cripple for life. I may never walk again. I sent for you—to give you back your freedom."

A frightened expression overspread his countenance; his lip quivered, and he sank on his knees by the bed and buried his face.

"Agatha, darling!" he cried with real pathos, "don't, don't cast me off! You are a thousand times dearer to me now. All I ask is the right to care for you!"—his voice broke, and he fell to weeping.

By the window three persons heard it all. They looked in silence at each other, then Lewis strode swiftly across the room.

"Peters," he said, "we haven't done right by you. I, myself, have acted deprecably. But if you will forgive and forget, it will be very different in the future."

Then Peters, who had risen, stood silent and bewildered till, through the mist, the room grew suddenly bright, for they had encircled him and were clasping his hands with loving warmth.

And as Agatha lay watching she raised a feeble hand to stay the tears that coursed her cheeks.

"I never thought," she sobbed aloud, "I never dreamed I could be made so happy!"

The Sponge.

To understand this subject you must have a sponge before you. You will see that it is of a brownish color, is soft and will absorb water very readily. It is made up of fine fibres which easily bend and are very elastic, or will spring back when pressed, and is pierced with many holes or pores. These fibres are made of three different substances—silex, which is an earth of which flint is formed, lime and a horny substance, (horn is composed of glue, phosphate of lime and albumen). The home of the sponge is the ocean, but it grows to its greatest perfection in the tropical waters. It originates from the mother sponge, and first appears as a pear-shaped jelly-like body about as large as a small pea. This is called a gemmule, from *gemma*, a bud; it looks very much like a drop of the white of an egg, without head, feet, arms, eyes or ears. This young sponge floats about for three days; it moves by means of a large number of fine threads, called cilia, which cover its body; these are whirled about rapidly, making quite a commotion in the water, and with the roundest part of the body foremost of the little thing goes. These cilia are not used to produce motion wholly, but by them the food is drawn into the body. After about three days it becomes tired of wandering and prepares to settle down upon some shell or rock, from which it never moves. The narrow end is attached to the substance they have found. Their cilia continue to move for some hours after it becomes fixed, but then they grow quiet and lay down flat on the rock and quietly suck in their food. After a short time dark spots are seen in the sponge; these are the sponge fibres beginning to grow in the live jelly and are what the cilia have drawn into the body out of the sea water. These little spots of sponge soon grow together and form a sort of framework for the live jelly to rest on, and as this frame grows the jelly grows too, and fills up the tubes and pores in the sponge.

After the sponge has grown to a pretty good size a great many fine spikes are seen to shoot out of the side of the sponge tubes; it is thought that these are to prevent the weight of the growing sponge from pressing too heavily upon the jelly. As the sponge grows on the rocks it throws up many round heads with large holes in them. The water from which the sponge obtains its nourishment is sucked in through the little holes or pores in the sides, and after running through the whole structure, is thrown out through these large holes with considerable force.

Sponges grow in many different forms. Some grow like shrubs, some like tubes, vases and trumpets. In some parts of the Pacific Ocean it grows like the most beautiful branches of trees.

They are fastened so securely to the rocks upon which they grow that the most furious dashings hardly ever tear them off.

HISTORICAL.

Addison, who wrote a good deal about female fashions in the "Spectator," very much ridiculed the hoop-petticoat, which was so large that a woman wearing one occupied the space of six men.

Anne Boleyn was remarkably dainty about her gloves. She had a nail which turned up at the sides, and it was the delight of Queen Catherine to make her play at cards without her gloves, in order that the deformity might disgust King Henry VIII.

It is not generally known that the custom of keeping birthdays is many thousands of years old. It is recorded in the fortieth chapter of Genesis, twentieth verse: "And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants."

Bushrah is the name of a noble fortress in Syria, once a great stronghold, but now abandoned, but occupied only by roving bands of Arabs. It contains within its enclosure a great theatre, portions of which are still perfect, and which dates, without doubt, from Roman times.

It may be of interest to those who make the subject a study, to know that there are only five genuine signatures of Shakespeare known to be in existence. One is in the London Library, the other in the British Museum, one attached to his will at Doctor's Commons, and two in possession of private collectors.

In President Lincoln's last inaugural address occurs the following instance of involuntary rhyme:

Fondly do we hope,
Fervently do we pray,
That this mighty scourge of war
May speedily pass away;
Yet if it be God's will
That it continue until—

And here the rhyme ceases. Cicero's prose shows, in places, similar instances of involuntary rhyme.

Catarrh—A New Treatment.

Perhaps the most extraordinary success that has been achieved in modern science has been obtained by the Dixon treatment of Catarrh. Out of 2,000 patients treated during the past six months, fully ninety per cent. have been cured of this stubborn malady. This is none the less startling when it is remembered that not five per cent. of the patients presenting themselves to the regular practitioner are benefited, while the present method and other advertised cures never record a cure at all. Starting with the claim now generally believed by the most scientific men that the disease is due to the presence of living parasites in the tissue, Mr. Dixon at once adapted his cure to their extermination; this accomplished the cure. It is practically cured, and the permanency is unquestioned, as cures effected by him four years ago are cures still. No one else has ever attempted to cure catarrh in this manner, and no other treatment has ever cured catarrh. The application of the remedy is simple and can be done at home, and the present season of the year is the most favorable for a speedy and permanent cure. The majority of cases being cured at one treatment. Sufferers should correspond with Messrs. A. H. DIXON & SON, 305 King-street West, Toronto, Canada, and enclose stamp for their treatise on catarrh—*Montreal Star*.

The bread baked at Naples is the same size and weight and shape as was baked 6,000 years ago, but we are glad to learn that street beggars are a new generation.

Important.

When you visit or leave New York City, save Baggage expressage and Carriage Hire, and stop at the GRAND UNION HOTEL, opposite Grand Central Depot. 600 elegant rooms fitted up at a cost of one million dollars, \$1 and up wards per day. European plan. Elevator. Restaurant supplied with the best. Horse cars, stages and elevated railroads to all depots. Families can live better for less money at the Grand Union Hotel than at any other first-class hotel in the city.

The female base ball club of Philadelphia is now in New Orleans, and the girls are receiving so many offers of marriage that the organization will probably fall to pieces.

How They do it

So-called respectable people would hesitate considerable before pilfering your pockets in a crowded thoroughfare. That would be too too. The same discrimination is not indicated by the so-called respectable druggist when that wonderful corn cure, PUTNAM'S PAINLESS CORN EXTRACTOR, is asked for. He will pilfer your pockets in the most genteel manner by substituting cheap and dangerous substitutes for the genuine Putnam's Corn Extractor. Watch for these gentlemen, and take none other than Putnam's Corn Extractor. Sold by druggists everywhere. N. C. Polson & Co., Kingston, props.

Opium and sawdust enter largely into the ingredients of the cigarette, and these things were never known to have any bad effect on the soft-headed class who suck cigarettes.

The Raw Cutting Winds.

Of winter bring to the surface every latent pain. It is one of the strange things associated with our physical well being that the very air, without which we could not exist, is heavily laden with the germs of disease. Rheumatism, neuralgia, lumbago, and other complaints of a similar character hold revel at this season of the year amongst human nerves and human muscles. There was a time when fortitude alone could make life tolerable, but now with the advent of powerful, penetrating and nerve-soothing remedies pain becomes a thing of a moment. The best, the most powerful and most certain pain cure is Polson's NERVILINE. Nothing equals Nerviline for penetrating power. Nerviline is beyond comparison the grandest discovery for the relief of pain offered to the public. Druggists sell a sample bottle for 10 cents; large bottles only 25 cents at any drug store.

An Indiana husband who is seeking divorce claims that his wife scalded him with the teapot on eighty-four different occasions. There are some "patient" men in this country.

Yes you can get something to stop that cough. "Pectoral," will do it in no time. Try Pectoral, it never fails. The great 5-cent Cough and Cold Cure.

An Italian Count has offered to marry an Ohio girl, if her father will come down with \$50,000 in cash, but the old man thinks that he will wait for a cheaper bid from an American "Hon."