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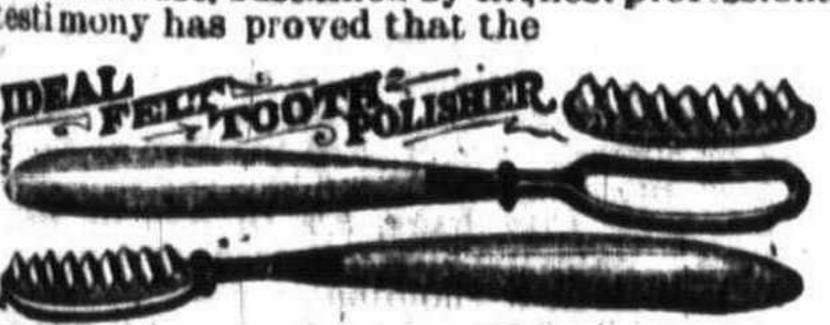
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I must try to remember the beginning of the story I have to tell-the most strange, in comprehensilbe, and I muy add, sad experience of my life. But it has nothing to do with my personal history; I have been merely a looker on, while things beyond all understanding have passed before me.

To fix the point from which a tale has been gradually drawn out is not easy, but in my own mind I go back for the earliest dawn of poor Agatha Broome's tragedy to one autumn

evening at Brighton, years ago. I had been enjoying a superb sunset on the cliff when she came suddenly up to me. My husband met me afterwards, and I remember saying, "The Broomes are here. Agatha saw me and jumped out of the carriage I never knew her so bright, but you know I always think her an odd, volcanic girl,"

Of course Tom smiled incredulously and said he had never found anything in the least unusual about the girl, who was some sort of cousin of his. "She was not original, not in the least clever-only a sweet tempered, helpless young female, who would be a great drag upon a poor man if she happened to make a bad match."

"The sweet temper," I observed, "is a fact, yet it is delusive; it is the vintage upon the quiescent crater. Look at her coloring." "Well, it is a bit of the red chestnut," Tom

replied, assentingly. "We shall see; I think she is in love," I remarked.

He was interested, and wished to know the name of the favored man, but I could not tell him that, neither could I give distinct reasons for my sudden conviction.

The following day was very wet and stormy. I had not thought of going out, neither did I expect any visitors; nevertheless, just as it was growing dusk in camo Agatha Broome, her very tall, slight figure wrapped in furs, her cheeks aglow, her bright hair ruffled by the wind.

She was a very thin, lithe creature, but had she grown stout as years went on she would have been a big, imposing woman, for her bones were not small. She had a round face, full lips, red brown eyes, and an anticlassical nose. She was not in the least beautiful; even her rich, abundant wavy bair was too vividly red to be the right thing. I had always found her pleasant, believed in there being much good in her, and would have trusted her. No small praise, I think.

Whether she meant to confess or not I do not know, but in the firelight, with the rain and the wind beating outside, she became sentimental in her talk, and then in slipped a name I knew well-Capt, Haringfield,

So far as I had heard of this young man ho was a good choice for her to have made, and from what she said he seemed to be as wildly in love with her, as I easily discovered her to be with him. Their acquaintance had been a short one, but in my experience it does not take so long to run up a love drama in real life as it took Coleridge to write "Christabel."

Tom thought I was wonderfully clever to have found out that Agatha was in love in the space of twenty minutes, before she had told me a word about it; he was also glad to hear that Capt. Haringfield was the man. She had not bound me over not to tell, and I appeal to any married woman whether the temptation to do so was not too great to be

Agatha was wild to get back to town, and I had no difficulty in guessing ber reason, but one Sunday Capt. Haringfield turned up at Brighton with some friends, and she had an hour's walk with him on the cliff-an hour of rapture, though I made a third in the party. I could not leave her to walk alone with him. She was a silent girl, and spoke less than usual on this occasion, but he was a good talker, although self conscious, for which I forgave him, hoping that it was the result of his feelings with regard to Agatha, who positively looked handsome, with a luminous sort of brilliancy that I had never seen before.

Tom has to listen to all my views upon men and women, and I enlarged upon Capt. Haringfield when we were alone. He was what many people call a very handsome man. did not, but for obvious reasons forbear to describe him. Agatha would not have looked at Apollo or Antinous by his side. With all this he was a man of intellect, and belonged to the scientific soldier class of today. However, in my experience of him he was poetic, sentimental and melancholy, and I wondered if he imagined himself understood by Agatha, who had not a grain of intellect.

Further acquaintance explained the matter. He was a very vain man, and the incense of flattery intoxicated him. No flattery can be so unbounded and so flattering as the adoring belief of a woman desperately

He did not go back to town with his friends; the fascination of Agatha's company was too attractive to him. A running fire of telegrams was kept up, and he st pped on to | soon. the very last hour possible. Agatha walked secure in the seventh heavens. Her father was a rich, money loving man; his particular position is no matter. Capt. Haringfield had to make his way, and must probably go abroad. Here, therefore, I foresaw difficulties in the way of the couple, and I was not surprised that Capt. Haringfield had left without making Agatha an offer of that cut and dried description which law would regard as a binding thing.

Love in growth the fond deceit, whereby men the perfect greet.

taken in its strongest form, for the period | when he had been absent on duty for full of Capt. Haringfield's stay. Her indolent | two months, now and then writing to ber. of a mild bee in her bonnet, had not the least idea how many sunset and moonlight strolls the two took together. Whenever I came home from a friend's house just in time for dinner I saw them somewhere, or Tom stumbled across them as he took his after dinner cigar. I can only describe Agatha's condition, when her lover had departed, as one of collapse. For sleep and food she substituted dreams of him. She grew thin in a few days, she became monosyllabic to the last degree except when speaking of him, and she came to me at all hours in order to pour out her heart. Tom remarked that she had "taken it very badly," and we both felt very sorry for the girl. She haunted the house door at post time, falling upon the letter that arrived after a few days like a starving animal upon a morsel of food, and nearly fainting with disappointment when the post passed empty of what she craved after.

Tom was a little bit gloomy about it. His opinion was that if Capt. Haringfield meant it he would have declared himself before he left, but I should have thought so badly of the man if I had disbelieved in the truth of his attachment that I took quite another view. I was sure that he was in love; I was sure be was a man of at least ordinary honor. Agatha returned to town, but Capt. Maringfield was with his battalion of the Royal

engineers-not in London. Shortly after we also went back, and Aga-

tha called. Some casual visitor was with me, and I felt rather than maw Agatha's impationed to get The door was scarcely closed her retreat when the girl rose and came "What do you think -- what does week, and now-now-you see-he is going

"Of course he said he was coming back before he got the invitation," I answered, with genuine wonder (for I had been married some years) that she should not take it for granted that a man would jump at any chance of sport.

"He might have come, if it was only for a day -a few hours."

"Oh, my dear, it seems to me that you are a little bit unreasonable." But as I spoke saw the rising of that little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, that comes before the deluge. What would bring the deluge I did not know, probaby her own jealous, exacting temper. I gave my opinion at large upon the matter. Such discourse is like nothing but trying to compose a good anagram out of impossible letters. I was frightened for the girl when I saw that the mere fact of ber lover having put off coming was an earthquake shock to ber whole nature.

"You may be sure he will come, and you really must not grudge him his shooting," I said at last.

"Two months ago he would not have gone -so," she muttered. "But be is such a good thet-of course they want him. Perhaps be will only stop a few days," . "It is sure not to be a few months at any

rate," I said comsolingly. I sent her away finally a little cheered and

more composed. I told Tom that there was something more than an understanding between the two. It amounted to a private engagement, thought; and yet, perhaps, not quite that. "If Agatha isn't a fool she'll drop the man,"

Tom said. He was at times sententious, and then I knew that argument was thrown away upon him. It was the end of January before Capt.

Haringfield came to town. Agatha's appearance and nerves had both suffered by that time-that is to say, the brilliancy of her first youth was dimmed; but in my eyes her face had gained by additional expres-

The passive expression-there was no active expression but a rare smile-had been almost sullen. It was now sad expectant, and her complexion far more transparent than it had been.

It was partly my native philanthropy and partly a burning desire to see what would come of it, that made me invite Capt. Haringfield to dinner as soon as I heard of his arrival.

Agatha was the first to appear of my eight guests. Her dress, poor child, was a little bit



Agatha was the first to appear of my eight

too sumptuous for the occasion, but quite n picture to look at. Bhe was fond of heavy,

rich materials, and they suited Ler. Capt. Haringfield was the very last of the arrivals, and I had barely time as I handed Agatha over to him to take down to dinner to make mental notes upon his behavior. However, I saw a flash of pleasure in his cyes and reflex joy in Agatha's, so I left them with my blessing and inward satisfaction.

I am sure that Agatha's dinner consisted of two spoonsful of soup and a nibble of iced pudding, yet all her color came back and her eyes gave out light. Her companion had a great deal to say to her, and when she wished me good night her squeeze of my hand told

"Well," said Tom a day or two after, "are they engaged yet?" "Not yet," I answered; "but it must be

"Oh," commented Tom, "Agatha is a fool if she don't drop that man."

I really felt quite disturbed. There was something terrible, I thought, something repulsive in a woman giving this unmeasured love to a man. Here Tom did not agree with me; he suggested that women were just as much human beings as men. considered this, and felt there was something in it. All the same, there are morbid exhibitions of emotion in man and woman which are not the outcome of sound natures. One day I asked Agatha if she considered herself Agatha intoxidated herself with this drug, engaged to Capt. Haringfield. This was

mother, whom moreover I always suspected | "Before heaven, I am," she exclaimed, wildly. "He is just the same, but he knows papa's fancies, and he fears he may be ordered to some bad climate. How horrible if he should be sent on active service. I should die if he went to Africa."

"Don't talk nonsense, Agatha. You are just at the mercy of your nerves now because you est nothing," was my grossly practical answer. But I knew that the body must infallibly knock under when the mysterious lord of it, the mind, is racked and overstrained.

"Do men know how women suffer?" I asked

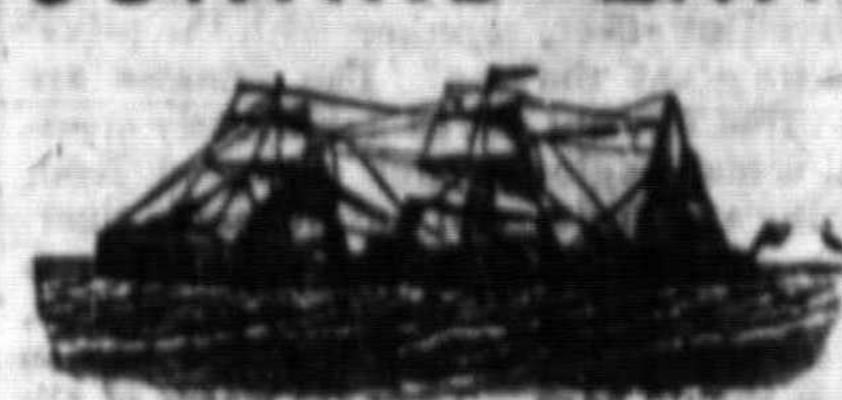
"No, nor women know how men suffer, he replied gruffly. Then, after a pause, he resumed: "There's only one thing for it; we will go abroad, anywhere you please, an take Agatha with us." This was extremely kind of him, but unhappily Agatha refused

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