

Angel Agnes eBook

Angel Agnes

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Contents

Angel Agnes eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	13
Page 6.....	15
Page 7.....	17
Page 8.....	19
Page 9.....	21
Page 10.....	23
Page 11.....	25
Page 12.....	27
Page 13.....	29
Page 14.....	31
Page 15.....	33
Page 16.....	35
Page 17.....	37
Page 18.....	39
Page 19.....	41
Page 20.....	43
Page 21.....	45
Page 22.....	47



[Page 23.....49](#)

[Page 24.....51](#)

[Page 25.....53](#)

[Page 26.....55](#)

[Page 27.....57](#)

[Page 28.....58](#)

[Page 29.....60](#)

[Page 30.....61](#)

[Page 31.....63](#)



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
Author: Wesley Bradshaw		1
ANGEL AGNES:		1
ANGEL AGNES.		2
AGNES VOLUNTEERS.		3
IN THE MIDST OF DEATH.		6
A STRANGE INCIDENT.		13
AN UNEXPECTED PATIENT.		17
AGNES SAVES A CHILD, BUT DIES HERSELF.		20
AGNES' LAST LETTER TO HER MOTHER.		24
		25
		26
Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm		30
		30



Page 1

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ANGEL AGNES:

Or, the Heroine of the Yellow Fever Plague in Shreveport.

The Strangely Romantic History and Sad Death of Miss Agnes Arnold, the Adopted Daughter of the Late Samuel Arnold, of This City.

Wealthy, Lovely, and Engaged to Be Married, Yet This Devoted Girl Volunteered to Go and Nurse Yellow Fever Patients at Shreveport, Louisiana.

After Three Weeks of Incessant Labor She Met with a Painful and Fatal Accident.



She Died in the Hope of a Blessed Immortality.

Her Intended Husband, Who Had Followed Her to Shreveport, Had Already Died, and the Two Were Buried Side by Side.

Terrible Scenes during the Plague.

by

Wesley Bradshaw.

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* * * * *

ANGEL AGNES.

May God protect you, reader of this book, from all manner of sickness; but above all, from that thrice dreaded pestilence, yellow fever. Of all the scourge ever sent upon poor sinful man, none equals in horror and loathsomeness yellow fever. Strong fathers and husbands, sons and brothers, who would face the grape-shot battery in battle, have fled dismayed from the approach of yellow fever. They have even deserted those most dear to them. Courageous, enduring women, too, who feared hardly any other form of sickness, have been terrified into cowardice and flight when yellow fever announced its awful presence.

Such was the state of affairs when, a short time ago, the startling announcement was made that yellow fever had broken out in Shreveport, Louisiana, and that it was of the most malignant type. At once everybody who could do so left the stricken city for safer localities, and, with equal promptitude, other cities and towns quarantined themselves against Shreveport, for fear of the spread of the frightful contagion to their own homes and firesides.

Daily the telegraph flashed to all parts of the land the condition of Shreveport, until the operators themselves were cut down by the disease and carried to the graveyard. Volunteers were then called for from among operators in the places, and several of these, who came in response to the call, though acclimated, and fanciedly safe, took it and died. Then it was that terror really began to take hold of the people in earnest. A man was alive and well in the morning, and at night he was a horrible corpse. The fond mother who thanked heaven, as she put her children to bed, that she had no signs of the malady, and would be able to nurse them if they got sick, left those little ones orphans before another bedtime came around. In some cases even, the fell destroyer within forty-eight hours struck down whole families, leaving neither husband, mother nor orphans to mourn each other, but sweeping them all into eternity on one wave as it were.



Then it was that a great wail of mortal distress rose from Shreveport—a call for help from one end of the land to another. Business came to a stand-still, the ordinary avocations of life were suspended. No work! no money! no bread! Nothing but sickness! nothing but horror! nothing but despair! nothing but death! Alas! was there no help in this supreme moment? There was plenty of money forthcoming, but no nurses. Philanthropic men and women in near and also distant States, sent their dollars even by telegraph. But who would go thither and peril his or her life for the good of the city in sackcloth and ashes?

Page 3

Praised be the name of that God who gave them their brave hearts, there were some who nobly volunteered for the deadly but loving task. To go was almost certain death to themselves—yet did they go. And most brave, most distinguished, most lovely among those devoted few, was Agnes Arnold, the subject of this little memoir.

We have on our title page called her “Angel Agnes.” That was what many a burning lip named her in the unfortunate city of Shreveport, as with her low, kind, tender voice, she spoke words of pious comfort to the passing soul, and whispered religious consolation in the fast deafening ears of the dying. Many had called her Angel, because their dimming eyes had not beheld a friend’s face since they took sick, till they saw hers. Let us not fill space, though, with encomiums, but let this noble Christian creature’s deeds be recorded to speak for themselves. So shall you, reader, do justice to the lovely martyr, whose form, together with that of her intended husband, sleeps in the eternal slumber far away in Louisiana.

AGNES VOLUNTEERS.

One day Mrs. Arnold, widow of the late well-known Samuel Arnold of this city, sat in the library of their elegant mansion up town, leading the daily papers.

It was shortly after breakfast, and presently Agnes, her adopted daughter, entered the room. The Arnolds had never had any children, save one, a girl, and she had died when she was three years old. While going to the funeral, Mrs. Arnold saw a poorly clad lady walking slowly along with a little girl so strikingly like her own dead child, that she was perfectly astonished,—so much so, indeed, that she called her husband’s attention to the little one. Mr. Arnold himself was so surprised that he had the carriage stop, and, getting out, went and inquired the lady’s name and address.

“For, madame,” said he, as a reason for his doing such an apparently strange act, “your little daughter here is a perfect likeness of our own little Agnes, whose coffin you see in yonder hearse. You must allow Mrs. Arnold and me to call upon you, though we are perfect strangers to you; indeed you must.”

“Very well, sir,” answered the strange lady, “I shall not, certainly under the circumstances, object.”

Immediately after the funeral the Arnolds called at the residence of Mrs. Morton, whose husband had died more than a year before. She was obliged to take in plain sewing, and when she could do so, she gave occasional lessons in French to eke out a livelihood for herself and child. A very short interview resulted in Mrs. Arnold persuading the widow to take a permanent situation with her, as her seamstress. And from that date until her death, which took place five years later, the fortunate widow and her child lived with the Arnolds as full members of the family.

With an exquisite and grateful regard for the sensibilities and possible wishes of her benefactors, the mother of the child voluntarily changed its name from Mary to Agnes.



Page 4

“I know you will approve of my doing so,” said she, on the occasion of her daughter’s birthday—the Arnolds made quite a time of it, decking the new Agnes in all the trinkets which had once belonged to the little Agnes, who was gone—“I know you will approve of my doing so, and I cannot think of any better way in which to express my gratitude to you both.”

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold were moved to tears by these words; in fact, so deep and genuine was their emotion that neither one spoke for some time. They did nothing but fondle and kiss the child they had adopted.

Thenceforward, instead of Mary Morton, the child was Agnes Arnold.

Years went by, and on the day we first introduced her she was twenty-two years old. Her own mother and Mr. Arnold had passed away and were laid away to sleep in the dust close by the little Agnes of old. But like the ivy and the flowers which grew over all their graves, each advancing year made stouter and stronger the invisible ivy that bound Agnes’ heart and Mrs. Arnold’s heart together, and the same advancing year rendered sweeter and sweeter the fragrance of those unseen yet ever-present buds and blossoms, that created a perpetual summer in their minds and affections.

“Mother,” said Agnes as she entered the library and drew up a chair close to Mrs. Arnold’s, “I wish to ask your advice about the affair between George and me. Do you think I ought to take any more notice of him or Sophia?”

“Well, I scarcely can speak to you advisedly, Agnes, on such a matter,” said Mrs. Arnold. “You are aware that my first and last thoughts are for your happiness. But, from what I know of the circumstances, I do not see that you can make any move either one way or another without sacrificing your feelings unjustly.”

“I have kept back nothing from you, mother,” replied Agnes; “you know all, just as well as I do myself.”

“Then I think you did perfectly right, Agnes, darling. Your course has my emphatic approval. I can appreciate perfectly that it must cause you to feel wretchedly for some time; but the self-satisfaction it must eventually bring you, will gradually but surely overcome the first disappointment and regret, just as the ever-shining sun pierces and dissipates the heaviest storm cloud.”

“Well, mother, I will await the turn of events, and whichever way, whether for weal or for woe, I shall abide it. But should I lose George through this, I shall never risk a second such mental agony with any one else.”



“Ah,” smiled Mrs. Arnold, kissing Agnes, gayly, “young hearts like yours are not so brittle as to be easily shattered. Better fish in the sea, *et cetera*. You know the old adage—but there’s the postman, dear; you run and get the letters he has.”

Agnes did as her mother requested her, and in a few moments more re-entered the room with four letters in one hand, and one letter in the other. The single missive was directed to herself, in a chirography which she well knew. Giving the four to her mother, she sat down and opened her own. It was couched in cold, formal words, instead of gushing sentences as usual, and to say that it chilled and crushed her is to say only the truth. When her mother had finished her’s, Agnes handed this letter to her with the quietly spoken remark:



Page 5

“That severs George and me forever in this world, mother. With a keen sword he has cut me off from him, like the gardener ruthlessly cuts the vine from the oak.”

As she spoke, Agnes drew from her bosom a gold locket, and, springing it open, she gazed for a moment upon a handsome manly face which it contained. That was George’s likeness.

“Till eternity George, till eternity—”

She did not finish the sentence in words; but the fond, artless, fervent kiss she imprinted upon the picture was such a one as is given to the dead lips of one we love, and are about to part with forever.

She snapped the lid shut again, replaced the closed trinket in her bosom, and said:

“Mother, all is over. I shall never open it again. But in case I die before you, I wish you to have this buried with me.”

Mrs. Arnold tried to rally Agnes about this, her first disappointment of the heart, and had the satisfaction of presently seeing her quite merry. Suddenly Agnes, as she glanced over the newspaper, exclaimed:

“Mother, what a dreadful thing that yellow fever is! Did you read this? Whole families are being swept out of existence, and have no one to help or nurse them. It’s frightful, and yet we boast of our Christianity. It’s a sin and a shame!”

She continued to read the fearful despatches that had first attracted her attention, while her mother remained silent.

“Mother,” she resumed, when she had finished, “I am going down to Shreveport.”

“What do you mean, Agnes?” exclaimed Mrs. Arnold, glancing anxiously at her daughter.

“I am going down to Shreveport, to help to nurse those poor perishing people.”

“Agnes!”

“Yes, dear mother. I believe it to be my duty to go and do what little I can toward alleviating the distress of those stricken sufferers.”

“Why, Agnes, dear, you would surely perish yourself.”

“O no, mother, you forget how I waited on papa and you when you both had the fever down in New Orleans.”



This was true. Several years before, while the Arnolds had been making a pleasure tour in the Southern States, they had been seized with the disorder, and but for the unflagging, heroic devotion of Agnes, they would most likely have perished.

“No, darling, I could never forget that were I to live a hundred years. It is because I do remember the horror of that time that I would not wish you to expose yourself to such another. Besides, what would I do without you?”

“That is the only subject that gives me any pain, mother; but then God would take care of you as well as of me, would he not?”

“Yes.”



Page 6

“I know it, mother. You have always taught me that, and I firmly believe it. God, who sees and notes the fall of even a sparrow, will not let me fall, except it be His gracious will. No, mother, I feel that I must go, and you must consent and give me your best blessing. It is strange that we see no account of ministers or members of any denomination but the Roman Church volunteering to go to the stricken city. All seem to stand aloof but them. How noble are those truly Christian and devoted women, the Sisters of Mercy! And shall I be idle and listless when I might be saving life, or at least trying to do so. O, mother dear, I must go. I will come back safely to you. You must give me your consent.”

Mrs. Arnold was herself a truly brave and Christian lady, and a firm believer in the care that God exercises over all who serve Him. And therefore, after a short consideration, she gave the required consent to her daughter Agnes, to go to Shreveport as a nurse.

During the late war, fond fathers sent their sons to the battle-field, not that they wished to have them slaughtered, but willing that, for the sake of their cause, they should take the risk.

So now, with much the same motive, Mrs. Arnold gave Agnes her approbation to go and perform her Christian duty to the sufferers at Shreveport.

Yet when the parting really came, it seemed as though Mrs. Arnold could never unclasp her arms from about the form of her daughter.

“God will bring me safely back to you, dear mother,” urged Agnes, gently untwining those loving arms; “Good-by.”

“Good-by, darling, good-by.”

It was over—the parting was over—Agnes was gone. Mrs. Arnold was alone—for evermore in this life. Not until the sea and earth give up their dead—not until the Book of Life might be opened and mankind summoned before the White Throne on high, were these two destined to look into each other’s face again. Mrs. Arnold could not foresee the solemn significance of her words as, for the last time, she murmured:

“Agnes, my darling, my angel, good-by!”

IN THE MIDST OF DEATH.

In due course of time Agnes approached Shreveport. While in the cars she had formed the acquaintance of three Sisters of Mercy, who were bound upon a similar errand of kindness and peril to her own.



At first, upon learning whither she was going, and what her object was, these pious ladies were thoroughly astonished; but when they found by interrogation that she was really in earnest, their friendly admiration became equal to their previous astonishment.

“Your services will be most welcome, Miss Arnold, I assure you,” said the eldest of the Sisters. “This is the third time I have been summoned to nurse in yellow fever, and I know that there are never one-half the number of nurses necessary.”

A little short of the stricken city they were all stopped, and it required the positive statement of the Sisters of Mercy that their youthful, lovely companion was really going into the place for the purpose of nursing the sick.

Page 7

"Miss," asked an elderly gentleman, "were you ever acclimated here? Because if you were not, we cannot let you pass, for you would only get the fever yourself, and become a care instead of a help to us. Not only that, but you would surely be a corpse inside of twenty-four hours."

Agnes explained to the firm but kind gentleman, her New Orleans experience, and he relaxed and said:

"In that case, Miss Arnold, I sincerely welcome you, and in the name of the sick and dying people here, pray God that you may be spared to help them. Pass through, and heaven bless your brave and noble heart!"

Reader, if you are a man, possibly you have been in the army, and then possibly you have been in a column, to which has been assigned the task of storming a well-served battery of pieces. If so, you may remember the feelings that were within your heart as you left the last friendly cover of woods, and double-quickened across the open space up hill, and saw the artillery-men waiting till you got close up before pulling the primer lanyards, so as to make sure work of you all.

To Agnes Arnold going into Shreveport, the emotions must have been very much like yours in front of that battery. Yet there was no fluttering of her pulse.

"Where shall I go first?" asked this splendid heroine of the gentleman in charge of the district in which she chanced to find herself.

"Not far; right across the street there into that grocery store at the corner. We haven't been able to send any one there. Just been able to look in now and then and give them all their doses. Please give me your name, and don't leave there till I come, and I'll look after your baggage."

"My name, sir, is Agnes Arnold. I have no baggage except this one small trunk, and I would rather you let this young man bring it along directly with me."

"Very well, take it, Ned, and follow Miss Arnold, and see you don't ask anything for the job."

"Yes, sir," replied the negro porter, and shouldering the trunk he strode on hastily after Agnes. He would not go further into the house, however, than the little room immediately in the rear of the store.

"Surely you are not afraid, you who live here!" exclaimed Agnes.

"De Lor' bless your soul, missus. Youse couldn't haul dis yer niggah funder inter dis yallah house with an army muel team. Don't yer smell dat 'culiah scent. O, Lor', good-by missus. Dat's de rele Jack, suah!"



And without waiting for any further argument or remark upon the subject, the terrified fellow clapped his hand over his mouth and nose, and actually bounded out into the street to where some men were burning tar and pitch as a disinfectant. Nor did he seem to consider himself safe until he had nearly choked himself by thrusting his head into the dense black Fumes.

Agnes would have laughed at the silly man, but at this moment such violent and agonized groaning fell upon her ears, that she started and trembled. But it was only for a moment.



Page 8

In an instant more she had thrown off her travelling costume and hat and bounded up stairs.

There such a sight met her gaze as would have chilled, the stoutest heart. In a narrow rear chamber were four living people and two corpses. The two dead ones were the father, a man of about forty, and a little girl of six years, his youngest child. The four living people were the mother, thirty years old, a little girl, and two boys, of the respective ages of nine, fourteen, and sixteen.

“Don’t take us away to the cemetery yet! for God’s sake, don’t!” groaned the woman in agony. “We’re not dead yet. It won’t be long. But it won’t be long. Leave us be a while, and then you can bury us all in one grave. For God’s sake! please!”

“My dear woman, I’ve come to try and save your lives, not to bury you,” replied Agnes in a low, kindly voice, patting the sick woman’s forehead.

“They take plenty of them away and stick them in the ground while they are alive yet. Heaven help us, for we can’t help ourselves.”

These words were not spoken consecutively, but in fits and starts between paroxysms of dreadful physical suffering. Her racked mind and body prevented the mother from quickly comprehending Agnes. And it was not until the latter had talked to her soothingly and cheerfully for several minutes, that she began to perceive the real state of affairs.

And then the re-action from the depths of despair was like the infusion of new life and strength to the sick woman. She cried and sobbed as though her heart would break for several minutes, which excitement ended in a spasm.

Most women would have been terrified at such a scene as was at this moment presented to Miss Arnold. But she was not a mere fancy nurse. Far from it. Up went her sleeves, and for the next two hours she worked with her four patients like a Trojan, first with the mother, and next with the children. Her next care was to separate the living from the dead. The child she wrapped up in a small sheet quite neatly, and for the father she performed the same sad task, using a coverlet, so that when about three o’clock the dead wagon came around with the coffins, both bodies were decently prepared for interment.

“‘Bout what time d’y’e think I better git back fur t’others, nurse?” inquired the driver of the wagon, consulting a small pass-book that he carried in his side coat pocket.

Agnes was horrified to hear such a brutal question propounded to her in the coolest and most business-like manner.

“What do you mean?” asked she, indignantly.



“Mean jist wot I says! No time to fool round, nuther,” was the answer. “This is the Burton fam’ly, aint it?” he asked, giving his book another glance, and then pitching his eye quickly up around the store, as though looking for a sign with which to compare the note book.

“Yes, Burton,” answered Agnes.



Page 9

“All right, then! They wuz tuk yisterday at noon. There’s a man, a woman, four children!” [He tapped the tip of each finger of his left hand once with the back of the book, and the thumb twice, looking Agnes very convincingly in the face all the while, as though to make her thoroughly understand, without putting him to the bother of a second statement.] “Six—they wuz tuk at noon yisterday. Two dead this mornin’. Four more oughten be dead by—let’s see—why, time’s up now! t’houten be dead now! By—how’s that? You aint foolin’, hey? Big fine fur foolin’ the wagon man, you know. Now say, if any on ’em’s near gone it’ll do, you know. Save me bother, an’ you too, don’t you see? Ef they’re near gone, ’nuff not ter kick nor holler wen we puts ’em in, it’ll do, ’cause then they can’t git better, you know, an’ they’re outen their misery sooner.”

The insinuating leer with which the wretch ended this speech caused Miss Arnold’s blood to run cold.

“You brute! you fiend! ghou! or whatever kind of demon you call yourself, begone! in the name of Heaven, begone!” exclaimed the heroic girl, her eyes flashing fire, and her whole frame trembling with disgust and horror.

Her demeanor cowed the fellow, and he actually cringed as he backed out at the door. But on the sidewalk he seemed to recover his coolness, or at least he assumed to, for stepping in again, he exclaimed:

“Mind, I’ll be round in the mornin’, and I don’t want no gum games! I’ve got too much to do on my hands now.”

Agnes paid no heed to him at all, but hastening back to her patients, she recommenced her nursing care of them.

There was no fire, and in fact none was needed, except for cooking and preparing the one or two simple remedies which Agnes used in connection with the treatment of the sick victims, and which she felt assured would not interfere with the medicine they were taking.

In truth, during the whole epidemic, it seemed as though mere medicine was of no avail whatever, and that really the methods and means used by the natives, independent of the doctors, did all the good that was done.

First, she got out of the store some mackerel and bound them, just as they came out of the barrel, brine and all, to the soles of the feet of both the mother and children.

This simple remedy acted like a charm, for in about three hours the fever began to break. Agnes put on fresh mackerel as before, removing the first ones, which, startling as it may seem, were perfectly putrid, though reeking with the strong salt brine when she applied them.



By nine o'clock that night the noble young woman had the inexpressible delight of seeing her poor patients so far changed for the better as to be completely out of danger.

On the next morning, true to his promise, the dead-wagon man came around. He was one of those in-bred wicked spirits which take delight in hating everything and everybody good and beautiful; just as the Greek peasant hated Aristides, and voted for his banishment, because he was surnamed the "good." This fellow already hated Agnes, and his ugly face was contorted with a hideous grin, as he thrust himself in at the store door and exclaimed:



Page 10

“Hallo! where’s them dead ’uns? fetch ’em out!”

Agnes had not expected him to put his threat of coming the next morning into execution. She was therefore somewhat taken aback on beholding him.

But she was a girl of steady, powerful nerves, and cool temper, and the instant she saw that the fellow had made up his mind to behave the way he did merely to vex and harass her, she made up her mind to “settle him off.”

Paying no heed therefore to what he said, Agnes quietly put on her hat and shawl took her umbrella in her hand, and stepping directly up to the brutal wretch said, in a determined tone of voice:

“Come along with me; I intend to give you such a lesson that you will not forget in a hurry. You have given me impudence enough for the rest of your life. You have got to go back now with me to the office of the Superintendent, where I will have you discharged and then punished as you deserve.”

Perhaps thoughts of dark and cruel acts he had already been guilty of, flashed across his mind, and made him tremble for the consequences to himself. He evidently believed that Agnes knew more about him than he thought. Or perhaps it was that mysterious influence which a positive mind in motion—like Miss Arnold’s—wields over a vacillating temperament like the dead-wagon driver’s.

Whichever of these causes it was, could of course never be positively known, but, like a flash of lightning, the fellow changed his insolent, braggart manner to one of the most contemptible, cringing cowardice.

“Don’t, Missus, don’t! Ef I’ve ’sulted yer, ’pon my dirty soul I’ll beg yer double-barrelled pardon. Please don’t yer go to complainin’ on me. For ef I’d lose my place, my wife and young ’uns ’ud starve to death in no time. I oughter knowed better then to sass you anyhow, when I seed how good and purty ye wuz!”

“Please don’t leave us! don’t leave us, Miss Agnes, for you’ve been our Good Angel. You have saved our lives!” piteously exclaimed Mrs. Burton and her children in chorus at this moment, fearful that their nurse was really going away, and dreading if she did, that they would all be carried off either to the cemetery or some other dreadful place.

“Now, please go back, and don’t go a tellin’ on me fur a sassin yer. I oughter to be ashamed; and I am double-barrelled ashamed. An’ ef you’ll jest say you’ll furgiv’ me, I’ll go down on my knees. There now, Miss Agony, ain’t that ’nuff? Ef it ain’t, why I’ll do whatever you say fur me to do.”



The fellow pulled off his hat, and set himself in such a ludicrously weebegone attitude, that Miss Arnold had great difficulty in restraining herself from laughing outright. She managed, however, to keep a straight face, and replied:

“Well, this time I will allow it to pass; but never let me hear of such conduct again, or I will not be so lenient.”

“Thank you, missus; and may I ask you a queshun?”



Page 11

“Yes.”

“I want ter ask you, how yer kep’ them there fel’s from a dyin’? ’Cause when they’re bin tuk like they wuz tuk yer could jest bet every muel in the kerral that they’d peg out in twenty-seven hours at furthest.”

“God did it, not I,” replied Agnes.

“Don’t call me sassin’ yer, agin, Miss Agony, but that ain’t so; ‘cause thar’s nuthin’ ’ll fetch ’em, when they’re tuk the way they wuz tuk. It’s magic done it, nuthin’ else!”

“Well, in case you should feel the headache, sick stomach, and chill coming on at any time, or fall in with any person suffering that way, remember the following recipe. Take out your book again and put it down.”

“Yes, Miss Agony, willin’.”

The fellow produced his book and pencil, and holding the former flat up against the door, wrote at Miss Arnold’s dictation:

“Put the feet immediately into hot and very strong mustard water—put in plenty of mustard. Quickly take a strong emetic of ipecac or mustard water. Go to bed immediately, and send for the doctor. While waiting for the doctor, get salt mackerel, directly out of the brine, and bind them to the soles of the feet. And the moment the patient craves any particular article of food or drink, do not hesitate to give it *moderately*. If mackerel cannot be obtained, use strong raw onions or garlic. In a few hours the mackerel will most likely become putrid; if so, remove them, and apply others.”

“Golly! Golly! I knowed it was magic—somethin’ like that, and not medicine at all!” exclaimed the fellow, nodding his head to himself.

“Let me look at your book, to see if you have it correctly written,” said Agnes, stepping partially behind the driver.

“Lor’ bless you, Miss Agony!” he exclaimed, “you’d never be able to read my writin’. Hold on, an’ I’ll read fur you myself, an’ then yer ken tell me ef I’m wrong.”

As Agnes still manifested a desire to look at the book, however, he held it for her inspection. But with the exception of here and there a small word, like *a* or *the*, she could not decipher any of the scrawl. So she expressed her desire to hear it read.

The fellow promptly read it all off without a single mistake, much to the astonishment of Miss Arnold.



“Is that all straight, hey, Miss Agony?” asked he, with a comical expression of mingled pride and curiosity running over his countenance.

“Yes,” replied Agnes; “and,” added she, “my name is not what you call it, but Agnes Arnold.”

“Well, now, don’t think I wuz callin’ yer that fur sass, Missus Arnold, for I wuz not. I’ll hurry along now, for I’ve got a heap to do this mornin’. Things is a gittin’ wuss an’ wuss every day.”

“I hope they will soon mend,” said Agnes, fervently; “good day.”

“Good-by, Missus Arnold, an’ I hope God’ll take best care uv you, anyhow,” answered the driver.



Page 12

"I trust in Him always, and you should also put your faith in Him. He is strong to save."

With this admonition to her rough companion, Agnes turned back into the rear room, and removing her hat and shawl, set herself about kindling a fire to prepare some little nourishment for her sick charges.

As the Burtons happened to keep a grocery store, she had no difficulty in selecting material fitted for her object.

They all continued on the mend until the succeeding day, when the physician having that district in charge made them a visit. He was completely astonished upon finding how favorably the surviving cases had turned out, and he held quite a long conversation with Agnes in regard to what she had done, after which he remarked:

"Indeed, Miss Arnold, I must confess to you that I feel disposed to credit these recoveries entirely to your faithful and intelligent nursing. For to tell you the truth, the modes of treatment which we physicians have hitherto used in cases showing the symptoms that these did, has failed in nearly eighty per cent. of every hundred. But it is true enough sometimes, that many of these 'grandmother remedies' as we call them, are more efficacious than any others."

"This is not a grandmother's remedy, Doctor," smilingly replied Agnes. "It was told to me some years ago in New Orleans."

She here concisely narrated to him the history of her experience when she helped to nurse her father in the latter city.

"Who was it told you, Miss Arnold? was it Dr. Robinson? He was noted about that period for his success in treating bad cases of the fever.

"No, sir, it was a Spanish gentleman, who had lived many years in Havana. Once in Vera Cruz he took the vomito, and was saved by this treatment.

"Most astonishing!" mused the doctor. "I shall not fail to try it."

"I have another remedy which is equally efficient in small-pox, Doctor, that I got from the same gentleman. You might find it useful at some time, and I assure you I have never known it to fail even in the worst cases.

"Thank you, I will accept it with pleasure."

Miss Arnold repeated the following, and the doctor took it carefully down in his note book:



“As soon as the headache comes, and the chill down the back, and the stomach becomes sick, and the limbs begin to ache, clear the stomach with a strong emetic, put the feet in hot mustard water several times during the next twelve hours. Talk very often and encouragingly to the patient as the insanity begins to show itself. As soon as the thirst sets in, give frequently alternate small drinks of cold Indian meal gruel—no butter in the gruel—and moderately large drinks of the best plain black tea, *hot*, without milk or sugar. Occasionally the gruel may be changed and made of oatmeal, and the tea have a bit of toasted bread in it. As the disorder goes through its course, and a craving



Page 13

sets in, humor this at once with moderate supplies of what is craved. Air the room twice or three times each day, taking great care to cover up the patient completely, head and all, while the doors and windows are open. Keep the room dark, and at an even temperature. Pat the face, arms, &c., with warm barley water, and then with a feather oil the whole surface with sweet oil. This prevents all itching and pitting, or marks.”

[Illustration: Poor, noble Anges was so wearied out, that she got asleep while she walked with the baby, and stepping too near the stairway, she fell all the way down.]

“Truly a plain and simple remedy,” remarked the doctor, as he put away his book, “I shall not fail to try it also, if I should ever come across any cases of variola.”

“And you may depend on it, Doctor,” said Agnes, “that it will never fail when properly and intelligently carried out.”

As he turned to leave, the physician said:

“Miss Arnold, please stay here until I send you a note or a messenger, which I will do within an hour or an hour and a half.”

A STRANGE INCIDENT.

In less than the specified time a man came back from the doctor to inform Miss Arnold that her services were needed in a house about two squares away from there, and that he would show her the place. Her little trunk was already packed, her shawl and hat donned, when the messenger arrived. But she found it very difficult to get away from the Burtons. These poor, grateful people could not bear to part with her whom they almost worshipped as their preserver. Children and mother pleaded almost with anguish for her to stay with them.

“I would like to remain, Mrs. Burton,” replied Agnes, “but there are hundreds being stricken down every hour around us, who have no one to wait upon them, and who may perish before help can reach them. You and these darlings are now comparatively safe, while others just taken are in deadly peril.”

Her kind remonstrance had its effect, and the Burtons now consented to let her go.

All kissed her most fondly, bade her good-by, and called down the choicest blessings of Heaven upon her head.

“God bless you, and keep you safe from the horrible fever!” were the words still ringing in her ears, as the heroic and devoted girl followed the doctor’s man out into the street.



It was not raining now, but the murky, mist-laden atmosphere was rendered like a damp, choking, heavy pall of gloom by the dense volumes of pitch and tar-smoke with which it seemed to be perfectly soaked, as a sponge is with water. It caused Agnes to cough violently and continuously until she arrived at her new destination, which was a private dwelling-house, apparently the abode of some one belonging to the middle class of society.

“This is the place, Miss Arnold,” said the man, “a young lady was taken early this morning while she was visiting in the house, and a few hours ago a Sister of Mercy, who was sent in to nurse her, went down sick. And they’re both in bed together.”



Page 14

Agnes could not account for it, but the moment she heard mention of the Sister of Charity, a feeling came over her that it must be one of the three with whom she had come hither in the cars.

Upon reaching the house, she found that her impression was correct. Sure enough, tossing in agony and delirium upon the bed, was Sister Theresa. By some mistake, a male nurse had also been sent to this house, of which circumstance Agnes, however, was very glad, as his services were very valuable until she had administered her first simple remedies to the two patients.

As soon as she could, she thanked the man, and informed him that she could now get along without him, and that he had better report to the doctor for assignment to some other house.

He left, and Agnes now commenced her task of peril and unceasing labor.

The lady whom Sister Theresa had come to nurse was comparatively quiet. But, strange as it may seem, Theresa herself was extremely violent at intervals. Yet when in her right mind, she was the sweetest and gentlest of her sex. Alas! how unlike her natural self was she, now that reason was dethroned.

All through the long, long, dreary night, Agnes never once closed her eyes. All night long, too, she never flagged in her devoted attention to her patients. Minute by minute, instant by instant, inch by inch, as it were, she battled with the demon fever that held so fiercely the two sick women in his horrible grasp.

Ah, noble, noble Agnes, when thy soul appears on that final day before God's judgment-seat on high, how thrice enviable will be thy reward! What hymns of glorious praise shall heaven's choir chant for thee!

It was nearly day-dawn ere Agnes succeeded in getting the Sister of Mercy into a somewhat quiet state, and then, completely worn out, she was herself obliged to seek a little rest. Even her manner of doing this showed how little she dreaded the pestilence, for, instead of going to another room, she lifted Theresa further over in the bed, and laying herself down beside her, placed her arm over her, kindly, lovingly, so that if she should chance to move, though never so slightly, it would awaken her.

Uttering a prayer, first for her patients, and then for herself, Agnes fell at once into a light but refreshing slumber, from which, however, she awakened at about the proper time to administer another dose of medicine. This done, she again lay down as before, and in this way she obtained three or four hours of good sleep, which had the effect to refresh her very much indeed; after which she rinsed her face, hands and neck in cold water, and partook of as good a breakfast as she could possibly get under the circumstances.



By careful attention in such particulars as these, Agnes managed to keep up her health, strength and good spirits, when all the rest of the nurses, both male and female, were completely fagged and wearied out both in mind and body.



Page 15

Just after partaking of her frugal meal, Agnes was obliged to spring to her bedside, for all of a sudden Sister Theresa had started up out of her sleep, weeping most piteously, and Agnes feared she would throw herself out of bed. But in a few minutes, by her kind, soothing voice, she had quieted her patient and got her to lie down again.

Agnes never was without her Bible, and bethinking herself that its holy words would have a good effect upon Theresa, she quickly opened it as chance directed. It was at the twenty-third Psalm.

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.”

Agnes was a magnificent reader, and as her flute-like voice, in clear, grand, musical tones, uttered word after word of this most beautiful psalm, not only Sister Theresa, but the other patient, seemed quickly to alter. And ere she had concluded her reading, Agnes noticed that both, but especially Theresa, looked better, or rather supremely happy.

“You are indeed an angel!” she exclaimed, seizing the hand of her nurse and covering it with kisses. “They told me that the patients you were nursing called you Angel Agnes, and I am sure you are. May God and the saints keep you ever an angel, as you are now.”

“Yes, yes,” added the other patient, fervently, “God bless you! If we had all the rest of the nurses like you, I do not believe any body would die. The hired nurses are nearly all worthless. They work for money alone, and do not care whether the people they nurse live or die.”

“That is horrible. I hope there are not many nurses of that description.”

“O, indeed, all are that way except the Sisters and yourself,” replied the lady.

At this juncture the doctor entered in a hurried manner.

“Well, Miss Arnold,” he exclaimed, “how are you all getting along?”

“O, very well, sir, very well. I think we are all past danger.”

Agnes answered the inquiry in a light, cheery tone, that in itself was worth, as the saying goes, a cart-load of medicine.

“Upon my honor, ladies,” continued the doctor, as he advanced to the bed and took each of the invalids’ wrists at once, in order to save time, “our nurse here, Miss Arnold, is the most wonderful lady I have ever seen. She has not failed to break the worst cases we have had. Now your symptoms were of the most desperate character, and



when you were taken, I never expected to see either of you alive this morning, and yet here you are recovering, and I verily believe beyond further danger. Let me see your tongues. Well, well, well, this is really astonishing. You are both doing splendidly. Just be a little careful, and you are perfectly out of peril. Miss Arnold, you are worth all our nurses; and really I'm afraid all us physicians also put together."

"Ah, Doctor, you flatter me," laughed Agnes, much pleased at the same time to hear the flattery, as well because it seemed to have a brightening effect upon the patients as for any other reason.



Page 16

“Indeed I do not flatter you at all, Miss Arnold. I really begin to wish I was a woman myself, so that if I should get the fever I might have you to nurse me well again.”

“O never mind about the being a woman, Doctor,” archly rejoined Agnes, “if you should be so unfortunate as to get it, I’ll come and nurse you.”

“Will you? well now that’s kind and brave of you, I am sure. And speaking of a man, Miss Arnold, that reminds me. While inspecting a train at the first station, we found a young gentleman aboard, who was coming to Shreveport here, expressly to see you. His name was Harkness”—

“O, Doctor!” interruptingly exclaimed Agnes, as the color left her cheeks and lips. “I hope you did not permit him to come into this danger!”

A far duller observer than the doctor could have seen the intense love of this beautiful girl for the young man referred to.

“He’s out of peril, Miss Agnes,” explained the doctor, “for we refused to allow him to pass in.”

No actress ever trod the stage on whose features the emotions of pleasure and regret portrayed themselves at once, as on the face of Agnes when heard these words.

“Would you rather have had us permit his entrance?” asked the doctor.

“For my own satisfaction and curiosity I would rather have had it so, Doctor. But for his sake, no; a hundred times no.”

“Ah, Miss Arnold, heart disease is sometimes worse than Yellow Jack,” remarked the doctor half-seriously.

“Yes, yes, it is always so,” said Agnes earnestly.

“I am surprised he allowed you to come here, Miss Arnold.”

The doctor was evidently deeply interested in his wonderful and beautiful nurse, and the artificial twinkle he forced into his gray eyes could not mask his sincerity from Agnes, who answered:

“Doctor, Mr. Harkness was my intended husband; but a jealous and mischievous young lady, who envied me I suppose, managed, through deceit, to estrange us. And so”—

Agnes did not know how to finish the sentence. She studied what words to utter in conclusion, until the pause became painfully awkward, seeing which the doctor with much consideration said:



“I can guess Miss Arnold, what you would say, and I fear there has been too much haste on both your parts for each other’s happiness. But Mr. Harkness evidently has for yourself at least a powerful sentiment of something stronger than mere friendly affection, to leave the other young lady and come hither into the midst of such a deadly peril as Yellow Fever. He has found out the deception, and has, I suppose, come like a man, to tell you so and ask your forgiveness.”

“That must be it, Doctor, that must be it,” replied Agnes with much warmth, “that’s his disposition, I know. He has a noble disposition.”

After a short further conversation the physician left, with the same request as before, for Agnes to remain until he sent her a message where to go next.



Page 17

This was not long delayed, as in about half an hour or so a message came for her to go to a house a few squares away, where a whole family had just been taken down with the disorder.

Bidding her two patients farewell, Agnes hastened away to the new scene of duty.

AN UNEXPECTED PATIENT.

The good and beautiful girl, upon arriving at the stricken home, at once set herself to the heavy task she was called on to perform, with cheerful alacrity; but it was the worst case she had yet had. Indeed, it would have been utterly impossible for her to get through, but for the fact that there was an old negress employed by the family, and who, having had the fever last year, was not afraid of it.

Silver, odd as it may seem, was the name of this negress, and she proved herself to be quite as sterling as her name implied. She was also quite intelligent, and carried out all of Miss Arnold's directions to the letter.

Yet, for all this, one of the patients, a little girl of six years, died. Agnes was exceedingly pained to lose the little darling; but the wonder was that it lived and stood the attack of the fever as long as it did, for it had been already suffering several days before with an acute summer complaint.

The rest of the family all recovered, and Miss Arnold received their most grateful thanks. Truly they hardly knew what method to take to show her how grateful they really were. They were pretty well off in worldly matters, but their kind Angel Agnes was twice as wealthy as they, so that neither money nor anything which money could buy was of any use to her.

"I will tell you what you may do to express your gratitude for what little good I have, under the blessing of God, been able to render you. Help your poorer neighbors immediately around you here. There are scores and scores of families who are actually starving, as well as sick. Give them all the assistance you can. Rich people can take care of themselves, but the poor cannot."

This was faithfully promised, and, we may add, just as faithfully performed.

During the next ten days Agnes was kept continually busy, night and day, in her arduous and dangerous duties. But by strict adherence to her original design and method, she kept herself in perfect health and spirits, and in the midst of her labors and anxieties she found time to send daily messages to her mother.



On the succeeding Monday, while nursing a poor woman in the northern part of the city, a note was brought to her by the dead-wagon man—the same genius with whom Agnes had had the encounter.

“Missus Agonyess,” said he, trying to pronounce her name correctly, as he remembered the correction—an effort which betrayed him into a double error—“I wuz asked to fetch this here letter to you. It wuz giv to me by a black feller who’s a nussin’ in the little hospital. A young man guv it to him last night, and promised to give him his gold watch ef he’d find you out and git it to yer.”



Page 18

“Hospital—young man—gold watch!” ejaculated Agnes in a disjointed way, as she took the letter.

A glance at the handwriting was sufficient, and her face grew deadly white as she opened and read:

“Agnes—Angel Agnes, I hear they call you—and they may well call you that—darling, I found out the trick by which we were estranged. I was foolish, I was wrong to treat you so. And when I learned you had come here into this pest-hole, I was crazy with anxiety for fear you would take the fever and die. I did not know how I *did* love you till then. God forgive me, guilty wretch that I am, for driving you to such a desperate piece of romance. I came here to tell you how sorry I was, and to ask you to take me back to my old place in your heart. But now I am afraid it is too late. I have been hanging around the town a week or longer, trying to get in on some train. Not succeeding in my object this way, I have been obliged to walk in by night, concealing myself in the daytime, and walking forward again in the darkness. Thus I have eluded them, and got in. But so far I have been unable to find you, and now I fear it too late, for I am sick with the fever in the hospital.

“I have given myself up to die, for they are not especially kind or attentive to me, as they think I ought to have stayed away, and not come in and added to their labors, as they have more of their own sick than they can attend to.

“O Agnes, what I would give just to see you before I die, just to hear your voice! But this is a judgment upon me for the way I have treated you. Perhaps you are dead too. If so, then I shall meet you very soon in the other world. If you are not dead, and you get this letter, then, for the sake of the olden times, don’t hold any malice toward me, but forgive me in my grave. I have given my watch and some money to the nurse here, to get him to give you this letter. I would like you, to buy it from him and send it, if possible, to mother, for it belonged to my father. Good by, Agnes, good-by. Meet me in heaven.

George.”

The tears were running down the pale face of Miss Arnold, and the dead-wagon man was in a perfect fever of excitement, but he did not speak till she raised her eyes from the letter, when he spluttered out:

“Lor’ bless you, Missus Agonyness, I hope there ain’t no Yaller Jeck in that there letter. But you looks orful sick.”

“I want to go to where you got this letter at once.”

“All right, Missus Agonyness, I’ll drive slower nor usual, and go back on my route, an’ you ken foller the wagon. I’d let yer ride, but there aint room.”



Next door there was a Sister of Mercy nursing, and Agnes asked her to look in at her patient till she could return herself, and then she set out for the hospital where George was lying sick.

Soon arriving there, she went immediately to the nurse and ordered him to give her the gold watch George had given him, which he did very quickly. Then she ordered the nurse to take her instantly to the bedside of the young man. This he did with reluctance, evidently because he was ashamed of the way in which the patient was being treated. Leading Agnes to the darkest end of a small room in which were a number of sick, he showed her George Harkness.



Page 19

Poor fellow! in a sort of stupor, there he lay doubled up like a ball on the bare floor in a hot, close corner.

Agnes was enraged, but there was no time to waste in quarrelling or scolding.

“Bring that man this moment into the best room you have; put him into bed, and fetch the following things. I will stay and nurse him.”

There was an imperiousness and determination about her tones that caused Agnes to be obeyed instantly, and in a few minutes Harkness was laid upon the bed. There was no prudish finicking about Agnes. Taking pen-knife from her pocket, she ripped the boots off George’s feet, pulled off his socks, and in less than three minutes more was laving his feet and legs to the knees in hot mustard water.

Fully half an hour did she continue her exertions with the sick man before he recovered his senses sufficiently to recognize her. As he did so, he started up, and gazed a long time at her—like one in a dream.

“George, do you know me? I am Agnes,” said she, in a very soft, but trembling voice.

He reached his hands along the bed-clothes to take hers, apparently to ascertain if she and he were still in the flesh, or were spirits of the other world. There was magic in the warm eager pressure of her hand, for instantly Harkness appeared to gain his full senses.

“Agnes! Agnes! have you found me? Thank God for this. I am so glad to see you before I die. It takes the thorn out of my pillow, and puts felicity into my heart to see you again. I know by this you have forgiven me.”

“Hush, George, there’s nothing to forgive. Do not talk, you are too sick. I have come to nurse you. And, with God’s help, you shall soon be well again. With God’s help—there, dear, you are all the world to me!”

There was an intensity of love in the whispered words that thrilled George’s heart. Agnes’s lips touched his ear as the last accents were breathed, so low that he alone could hear them.

“Thank you, O, my darling, my Angel. Twenty fevers shall not kill me now,” said George, but in a very weak voice.

Brave heart, George! Loving heart, Agnes! But fate willed otherwise. You were to be united, but not then, not then; not until you both had crossed the mysterious river which has but one tide, and that ever flowing in at Eternity’s gates, but never returning.



Hour after hour Agnes battled with the demon fever which was gnawing at the vitals of her beloved George. At intervals her care seemed to get the better of the disorder, and to cause it to loosen its grip. But, alas! after twenty-four hours of unceasing toil and anxiety, poor devoted Agnes was forced to endure the mental agony of seeing Harkness die. The last thing he did was to smile up in her yearning face, and try to thank her for all she had done for him. His voice was gone; but she knew what the slowly moving parched lips were saying for all that.



Page 20

Slipping her arms under his shoulders, Agnes bent down, and raising him up ever so gently, she pressed him to her bosom and kissed him. Even as she did so Harkness breathed his last. With a deep sigh, Agnes allowed the corpse to sink gradually down again upon the bed, composed the limbs, closed the eyes, and bound up the fallen jaw. These sad offices finished, her next care was to see that the body was properly interred in a separate grave by itself—a matter which was quite difficult of accomplishment. But she succeeded in having the burial so effected.

The death of Mr. Harkness under such circumstances was, of course, quite distressing to Agnes Arnold, and somehow or other she could not banish from her mind a presentiment of an additional calamity that was about to befall her. Yet her mind was perfectly at ease, so far as she herself was concerned.

Never at any moment could death surprise her; for, from early years, she had lived up to the admonition of our Saviour, “Be ye also ready.”

Yet this gloom, that wrapped itself around her like an ominous pall, she could not penetrate, nor cast from her, no matter how strenuously she tried to do so. More devoted even than before, did she now become in her ministrations to the sick and suffering people of Shreveport.

AGNES SAVES A CHILD, BUT DIES HERSELF.

The last family which Agnes nursed lived in the northern portion of the city, and consisted of a mother and three children; the youngest a baby twelve months old.

Ordinarily they had been in middling circumstances, but having lost her husband by a railroad accident six months previously, the widow was reduced to quite a straightened condition. And when the fever seized her, she was in utter despair at the thought of being taken away from her dear ones.

But when they brought Agnes to nurse her, and told her of the wonderful good fortune that always attended the heroic girl, she seemed to take fresh spirit and gain strength.

As yet the baby was unscathed by the dreadful plague, And it would have been sent away, could they have got any person to take it. That, however, was impossible.

“Never mind, Mrs. Green, do not let that subject worry you any more. I will take good care of the baby. They shall not take it away from you,” said Agnes, hugging the infant to her.



“O, God bless you! God bless you, always,” exclaimed the poor mother, thrilled with the deepest gratitude. “My darling! my baby! my baby!”

True to her word, Agnes never neglected the little thing, though sometimes, between it and her patients, she was nearly beside herself. Reader, if you are a woman, and have ever had even an ordinary sickness in your household, you can easily comprehend the position in which Agnes was placed with her three patients to nurse, and an infant to care for at the same time. Yet she never murmured, never became impatient.



Page 21

But, in the mysterious workings of Providence, it was destined that the good, the beautiful, the angelic girl should not be long of this world.

“De good Lord ob hebben has tuk her away to her reward!” wept an old negress, who had been saved by the kind and tender care of Agnes, a short time before, and who had waited on her in her dying moments, and closed her eyes when all was over.

This poor old creature was only too happy when they gave her permission to prepare the inanimate form of her late benefactress for the grave. When she had done all, she did not know what to do for some ornament, till at last a brilliant thought came across her mind, and she adopted it.

Wherever Agnes used to go she always carried a small basket containing little useful articles, together with a pocket Bible, out of which she was ever reading some portion of God’s holy word, appropriate to the mental condition of the patients she might be nursing. Out of this basket old Rachel took the pocket Bible, and, with the tears coursing down her wrinkled features, she placed the sacred book in the clasped hand of the quiet sleeper, and laid both gently back on the still pure bosom.

“O, honey,” she groaned, “ef ye could on’y open dem hebbenly eyes ob yourn, an’ see dat book dar, wot you used to lub so well, how you would bress dis poor ole niggah fur puttin’ it in dat pooty white hand ob yourn.”

The manner in which Agnes lost her life was as follows:

During the day the three who were ill with the fever were exceeding troublesome, fairly overtaking the strength of Agnes in attending to them. Shortly after noon, also, the baby began to exhibit symptoms of being ill. It steadily grew worse, and became exceedingly fractious. The only way in which Agnes could pacify it, was to keep walking with it in her arms constantly. The moment she would attempt to sit down to rest herself or lay it in its crib, so that she might do something for the others, it would scream dreadfully till she began to walk it again.

In this way Agnes worried along for the greater portion of the night, never closing her eyes nor sitting down. Just before daylight, however she became so utterly wearied out with fatigue, that she actually got asleep several times while walking.

During one of these overpowering moments she stepped too near the top of the stairway, lost her balance, toppled over, and fell heavily all the way down to the bottom. There she struck the small of her back upon the edge of a water-pail that happened to be standing on the floor.

Had she not been encumbered with the baby she might have saved herself. But the instant she awoke, and found that she was falling, her first and only thought was how to



keep the infant from going down underneath herself and being surely killed. To prevent this, she endeavored to hold it up, which effort caused her to twist or turn round in her descent, and so fall as to inflict on herself the dreadful and fatal injury.

Page 22

She must have screamed as she went down, because two men who were passing by, ran in immediately, and carried her into the next room. The pain she suffered was most excruciating, yet the first words she uttered were:

“Is the baby safe? poor little darling!”

“Yes, ma’m. I hope you aint hurted any worse than the baby,” replied one of the men, with genuine, though unpolished sympathy.

“Thank God, the baby’s safe,” said Agnes. “I am hurt; but after awhile I think I will be able to get up. I would be deeply obliged to you though, gentlemen, if you would stay till daylight—that is, if you are not afraid of the fever. There are three sick with it up stairs.”

“No, ma’m, we’re not afeard of it. I’ll stay with you, and, John”—the speaker turned to his companion—“you go up to the house, and ask one of the Sisters to come right along with you, for it’ll be more nicer for this lady to have a female with her than men. It’ll make her feel more natural and easy, won’t it ma’m?”

“O, thank you a thousand times, sir,” replied Agnes, most deeply affected by the considerate gallantry of the kind-hearted, manly fellow, who was hugging the baby up to him just like a father, and keeping it quiet by all sorts of baby talk.

In about half an hour the other man returned with a Sister of Mercy, who at once recognized Agnes. She was one of those with whom Agnes had come on the cars into Shreveport.

The injured girl whispered in her ear how she was hurt, and Sister Mary dispatched the man who had brought her hither, for additional help, which in a short time arrived.

As soon as the doctor came and examined the injury Agnes had sustained, he found that, independent of the fracture of the spine, she was much hurt internally. He had no hopes of her recovery, and he commenced, in a roundabout way to break the opinion to her; but she saw it already in his face, and interrupted him:

“Ah, Doctor, I know all. Do not hesitate to tell me exactly how long I have to live. I have no fear of death, I am prepared for it.”

The physician thereupon informed her that she might possibly survive forty-eight hours.

“Forty-eight hours!” she rejoined, “that is much longer than will be needed for what I wish to do.”

Then, in the most composed manner, she dictated to Sister Mary a letter to her mother, narrating all which had occurred since her previous letter, including an account of the accident.



This done, the heroic girl prepared to pass whatever of life remained to her in pious conversation with Sister Mary, and advice and comfort to poor old Rachel, the negro woman, who hung over her, constantly weeping.

As it became apparent that dissolution was close at hand, Sister Mary asked Miss Arnold:

“Agnes, is there any matter relating to your worldly affairs that you have not already thought of, or that you wish attended to.”



Page 23

“No, Sister, I believe not. Ah, yes, there is,” she quickly added; “I would ask, that when I am gone, you will put my poor body in a grave immediately beside that of Mr. Harkness. He was my intended husband, and died only a short time ago with the fever. Also, will you add a postscript to mother’s letter, and say to her that it was my dying wish, that if she lives, she will at some future time have us both taken up and brought home, and bury us in one grave there?”

“Indeed, I will do so. Is there nothing else, Agnes?”

There was a great sadness in her voice as Sister Mary asked this, just as though, years ago, when her own face was young and pretty, and her own heart happy and free, she had been loved and had lost her love in the grave.

“No, Sister, nothing more of this world. Come, Death, O come,” said Agnes, as she was seized with a paroxysm of pain.

“In God’s good time, Agnes, dear,” suggested the Sister.

“Yes, yes, in His good time, Agnes!” repeated the dying girl, as though chiding herself for her impatience to be gone; “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

“Pray, sweet Agnes, pray to Him for strength to keep you, all unfearful, while passing through the Dark Valley.”

“Give me, O, my Heavenly Father, give me strength in this mine hour of tribulation and suffering? Not my will, but Thine be done!”

Surely “Angels ever bright and fair” bore away these half-whispered words to Heaven like sweet incense.

For awhile Agnes seemed to be wandering, or perhaps she was dreaming; for her eyes were closed as though in slumber, and a smile like she used to smile, flitted over her pale face, as she stretched out her arms to embrace some one, and exclaimed:

“Come, mother dear, a kiss! I am going to bed. Kiss me good-night mother darling.”

Sweet girl, noble young soul! You were indeed going to bed, but it was in the dust of the valley.

Sister Mary bent down and kissed her fondly. Her hot tears falling on the cold face roused Agnes, and she opened her eyes. Bidding all about her, O such a farewell! such a farewell till eternity, she crossed her hand peacefully over her breast and murmured:

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”



The words had not left her lips ere she was in God's presence, a pure, beautiful seraph of light.

Angel Agnes, farewell!

Sister Mary, during the very short intercourse she had had with Agnes Arnold, had fallen in love with the sweet, good girl, and when she died she wept over her as an elder sister might have done.

She was particular to see that the last wishes of Agnes, in regard to her being buried in a separate grave beside young Harkness, were carried out to the letter. No mourner save herself was at the funeral, for there were more sick people than well ones to attend to them. And even Sister Mary could not linger by the grave of her dear young friend as she would have liked to do. She was obliged, after seeing the coffin lowered into the sepulchre, to hasten back to her patients.



Page 24

AGNES' LAST LETTER TO HER MOTHER.

Never was there a more touching, more loving, more solemn epistle written from a daughter to a mother than that which Agnes Arnold, while dying, dictated to Sister Mary to be forwarded to her mother after her death. Sister Mary, in concluding her own letter, in which that of Agnes was enclosed, writes:

"I assure you again, Mrs. Arnold not merely myself, but no one else here who has come in contact with your noble and self-sacrificing daughter, will ever forget her, but will ever hold her memory most dear. No words would suffice to accurately describe the love and almost veneration with which we esteemed your sweet, departed daughter. She was so heroic, yet so quiet and modest; she was so prompt and decisive, yet so winning and amiable; she was so devoted to religion, yet never melancholy or austere. Ah, no! she was like God's own bright blue sky and genial sunbeam. Her very presence in the chamber of the sick appeared to have an instant and magnetic effect for the better. She was God's own dear child and handmaiden, and He has taken her home to himself. I only hope that when I come to die, my death may be so completely beatific as your daughter's was.

"Just before she passed into immortality she asked me to let her kiss me. 'Now,' said she, 'if you ever see my dear mother, give her that kiss, and tell her she was the last one I thought of when I was dying.' And believe me, Mrs. Arnold, I shall endeavor to fulfil your daughter's tender request should it be the good will of God for me to escape from the pestilence which is raging around us. Mr. Harkness's gold watch I have placed with the Express Company, which will carry it to you for your disposal.

"Most affectionately, madam, I am ever yours,

Mary."

Agnes' letter, which, as we have said, was enclosed in the above, was worded as follows:

Shreveport, La., Oct. 2d, 1873.

My Darling, Ever Beloved Mother:

You will notice that this letter is written by another hand than mine. The reason you will find further on. You will remember when I left you to come here I told you that I had resigned myself to the will of Him in whose merciful service I enlisted.

I have devoted myself to the work with my whole soul, my heart being thoroughly in the good cause. And I believe that I have been the humble means of saving several lives.



I have not got the fever, but night before last, while nursing a child, I carelessly fell asleep—being very much wearied—and fell down stairs. Thank heaven, I saved the little one's life. I struck the small of my back causing a fracture and some internal injury. The doctor has done all he could for me, but it will not avail, and I must go away from you, at least on this earth.



Page 25

But sweet, good, kind mother, I will meet you again above, in that better land where there is no sin, no pain, no anguish, but where all is light and love and immortality. My dear friend and nurse, Sister Mary, who writes this for me, will see that I am buried beside George, and mother, this is the great wish of my heart—that if possible, at some time you will bring our bodies both home and bury us in one grave. I forgive Sophia the wrong she did me and George freely from my soul. Sister Mary has a kiss I gave her for you.

Pray do not grieve for me that I am thus passing away; but, in the future, always be comforted with the knowledge that I shall be waiting with papa and the others, at heaven's gate, to greet you home when you follow us from earth.

I would have so much liked to see you, mother dear, before I died; but it has been ordained otherwise, and God does all things well.

Give my love to all my acquaintances and tell them I thought of all when dying; and my Bible class scholars, I do not know what to ask you to say to them. Try and tell them how deeply I love them, and how I wish to meet them all around the great white throne on high.

And now, mother, you who are dearer to me than all other earthly treasures, to you I must say—good-by, till we meet again in heaven.

Ever your own loving
Agnes.

[Illustration: "Dear little darling!" said Anges, tenderly, pressing the infant against her bosom.]

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