

THE FAMILY STORY



GOOD : WEIGHT.



LILLIAN SNELL, teacher of the first grade in building No. 3, public schools of Windsor, turned quickly from the blackboard where she had been drawing a pert wren swinging on a spray of clover.

"Who is crying?" she asked in a sweet, firm voice.

"It is little Agnes Gregory," volunteered a dimpled-faced boy who sat near.

Miss Snell crossed the room and bent over the child.

"Agnes, little sunshine lassie, what is it? Can you not tell me about it?"

Sobs were Agnes' only reply. Miss Snell kissed her gently, then went back to her work. When it was finished and the children all provided with work, she lifted the sobbing child and tenderly carried her to the teacher's desk. Here somewhat removed from the curious little ones, Lillian set about soothing her pupil.

Agnes was a pretty fair-faced child of 6. She had sunny blue eyes and hair, a golden chestnut, curled about her face and neck. Her clothing was clean but well worn, and Lillian noticed the gaping hole in the tiny shoe, as well as the thinness of the faded dress. Noticed it with a sympathetic thrill of the heart that throbbled with something of the divine spirit of motherhood toward the children in her care.

Agnes' story was soon told. Her widowed mother had had no breakfast for her little ones.

"I don't care so much about myself, Miss Snell," the child went on, artlessly, "cause I'm mamma's brave girl, but when little brother Royce wakes up he will be so hungry and he is only 3 years old. He does not know he mustn't cry."

A little more questioning and Lillian learned that some one owed Mrs. Gregory for sewing, also that she hoped to have dinner ready when Agnes came home.

Lillian looked out into the driving storm of a January afternoon. She knew Mrs. Gregory and her heart ached for the pale young mother.

Miss Snell was quick of thought and action. Ten minutes later Agnes was in a warm cloak room, feasting on the dainty lunch Mrs. Snell had prepared for her daughter's midday meal. The young teacher had written a note and was at the door of the room across the hall.

The teacher, Florence Fox, listened sympathetically to Lillian's story and to the suggestion that her own 12-year-old brother be called from the sixth grade to deliver the note.

"Of course Fred can go," she cried, "and Lillian, you say you have written to Mr. Davis the circumstances and asked him for good weight. I'll send an order to Cousin Hugh for a half cord of wood, tell him the story and ask him likewise for good weight."

A faint crimson flush stained Lillian's cheek, but she warmly thanked her friend and hurried back to her work.

Mark Davis was a stout, genial-faced man of 38. He sat in his office, his morning's work at his books just finished. Through the open door he could see the brisk clerks stepping about in the grocery store from which the office opened. There was odor of spices, coffee, fruit and fish in the air.

"Eight hundred dollars more profit this year than last," the grocer said to himself. "Somehow it doesn't do a man any good to pile up money when he has no one to spend it on."

Here his reverie was cut short by the entrance of a clerk, who handed him an envelope, saying: "A boy just brought this."

Two papers dropped from the envelope as he tore it open. The first was a list, including a loaf of bread, potatoes, crackers, dried beef and a few other articles. He glanced over it and opened the other. It was Lillian's note.

"Dear Mr. Davis: A little girl in my room is crying because she has had no breakfast. Her name is Agnes Gregory, and her mother is a poor widow, who lives on the third floor of No. 4 Hampton street. Please send the things ordered at once. I will come in after school and pay for them. And, Mr. Davis, please give good weight. Truly yours, LILLIAN SNELL."

Mr. Davis had been a friend of the Snell family for years, and it was not

the first time that Lillian had appealed to him for help in her charitable work. So that was not the reason that so strange a look came into his honest brown eyes.

"Agnes Gregory, and lives on Hampton street," he murmured. "It surely must be Margaret's child. Good God! Margaret and her child wanting bread!"

A half hour later Mark Davis was making his way up the stairs to the floor upon which Mrs. Gregory's rooms were situated. His knock at the first door was answered by a red-faced woman.

"Mis' Gregory, is it you air wantin'?" she asked sharply. "An' it's no bad news you air after bringin' her, I hope."

"I wanted to deliver some groceries a friend has sent her."

The clouded face cleared as if by magic. "Heaven's blissin' be on yer head, then! Mis' Gregory, she's gone out, but I've her key here, and will unlock the door. That's her b'y, an' a swate child he is."

Mark eagerly looked at the pink and white face of the boy. He held out a great, golden orange, and little Royce sprang for it, his childish laugh echoing through the room. Then the grocer followed Mrs. Donovan to the home of Margaret Gregory.

It was a bare place, but clean and neat. Mark sighed as he noted the signs of abject poverty. While the delivery man was bringing up the parcels, Mrs. Donovan volubly explained that Mrs. Gregory had gone to try to get some money due her. The warm-hearted Irish woman had surmised that fortune was at a low ebb with her neighbor, partly because of little Royce's unusual fretfulness, which had been quieted by a huge slice of bread and butter.

"She's worked her precious fingers 'most to the bone," she concluded, "but work's scarce, an' I don't know whatever's goin' to become of her and her babies."

The wood soon came. Florence's half-cord had been re-enforced by a whole cord, perhaps because she had written her cousin that the needy widow was a protegee of Miss Snell's.

As to Lillian's orders for groceries, Mr. Davis had added to it a sack of

man who had been her husband, the father of her children.

He sprang to his feet. There was no need of an explanation. He passed out, pausing for a final word with Mrs. Donovan.

"Tell Mrs. Gregory the things came from the teachers at No. 3."

"To be sure, Mr. Davis," responded the woman, who had recognized Mark. "I'll tell her all 'bout it. And may the blissin's of all the saints rest on your dear head!"

Mark hurried away, leaving a shining silver dollar in Royce's hand.

It was only a few minutes after his departure that a thinly clad woman came toiling wearily up the stairs. It was Margaret Gregory. The woman who owed her was out of town. The needy mother had applied at several places for work, only to meet with refusal. Then she had gone to a store and begged for credit, but in vain.

She had reached the end. There was but one way open. She would ask Mrs. Donovan to give her children their dinner. When she had rested and conquered the bitter rebellion in her heart she would go out again and apply to the city for charity.

Margaret Gregory was proud. She was already faint for the want of food, yet she turned in loathing from the thought of a meal obtained in that way. It would be worse than death, but death doesn't come at one's call, and there were her babies.

A dry sob burst from her lips. She passed Mrs. Donovan's door in silence. She must have a moment to herself before she could ask charity of one so poor as her kind neighbor. Hurrying on she pushed open her own door.

A bright fire was blazing in the cracked stove. Mrs. Donovan had prepared potatoes for the oven and cut slices ready for frying on the ham. The open door of the wood closet showed a huge pile, while the table was heaped high with food.

For a moment she stood gazing wildly around her. Then she dropped on her knees and a shower of tears relieved her overwrought nerves.

The next day's mail brought a letter from Margaret to Mr. Davis. The writer had gone to Miss Snell to thank her. From the young teacher she had learned of Mark's connection with the affair.

It was an earnest, grateful letter, blotted here and there with tear stains. She accepted his generosity; for her children's sake she could not refuse charity. She referred to the friendship that had existed between their parents, but Mark was glad she was too womanly a woman to even hint at the relation they had once borne to each other. When he finished reading the letter his heart was light, for he understood that Margaret knew of the treachery that had blotted the sunshine of his life.

Mark went straight home and told his aunt, who was also his housekeeper, all about it. Mrs. Everts was knitting before the open coal fire. She was a bright-faced old lady, with soft white hair and a serene face. When he had finished she laid down her work and sat for a long time gazing into the dancing flames.

"The only daughter of my old friend, Rebecca Henson, in want of food," she said, a note of pain in her voice. "Mark, you and I both have plenty of money, there is room in this house, and in our hearts, for Margaret and her babies. But she is proud. Go and ask her to come and sew for me. Tell her I am lonely, and ask her to bring her little ones to brighten me up."

Mark bent to kiss the placid face. "Thank you, Aunt Elsie, I see you understand." A few hours later he knocked at Margaret's door. He saw that the years had changed her. The wild rose bloom had faded from her cheeks, tears had washed the joyous light from her blue eyes; yet it was surely that Margaret that he had loved that stood before him.

She met him frankly and with undisguised pleasure. Her voice trembled when she undertook to express her gratitude. Mark made light of the whole affair and insisted on talking of their childhood days. The fruit and nuts he brought proved an open sesame to the hearts of Agnes and Royce, and they were soon on the best of terms with the caller.

Margaret was very grateful for the offer of work. She hesitated a little over accepting Mrs. Everts' kind invitation, fearing lest the children prove an annoyance. But when Mark drew a touching picture of the loneliness of his aunt she gladly consented to come. It was arranged that the carriage come after the Gregories the following afternoon.

One morning, two months later, Florence Fox tripped across the hall at No. 3 and entered Miss Snell's room.

"Of course you are going to the wedding reception Thursday evening," she began. "I think it is such a lovely marriage, don't you?"

"Indeed I do," replied Lillian, warmly. "Yes, I am to go in the afternoon and help with the decorations. The whole house is to be in green and white, smilax, ferns, roses and carnations. Mrs. Everts says Mr. Davis cannot do too much for his bride; our dear Margaret, the sweet old lady calls her."

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It was an earnest, grateful letter, blotted here and there with tear stains. She accepted his generosity; for her children's sake she could not refuse charity. She referred to the friendship that had existed between their parents, but Mark was glad she was too womanly a woman to even hint at the relation they had once borne to each other. When he finished reading the letter his heart was light, for he understood that Margaret knew of the treachery that had blotted the sunshine of his life.

Mark went straight home and told his aunt, who was also his housekeeper, all about it. Mrs. Everts was knitting before the open coal fire. She was a bright-faced old lady, with soft white hair and a serene face. When he had finished she laid down her work and sat for a long time gazing into the dancing flames.

"The only daughter of my old friend, Rebecca Henson, in want of food," she said, a note of pain in her voice. "Mark, you and I both have plenty of money, there is room in this house, and in our hearts, for Margaret and her babies. But she is proud. Go and ask her to come and sew for me. Tell her I am lonely, and ask her to bring her little ones to brighten me up."

Mark bent to kiss the placid face. "Thank you, Aunt Elsie, I see you understand." A few hours later he knocked at Margaret's door. He saw that the years had changed her. The wild rose bloom had faded from her cheeks, tears had washed the joyous light from her blue eyes; yet it was surely that Margaret that he had loved that stood before him.

She met him frankly and with undisguised pleasure. Her voice trembled when she undertook to express her gratitude. Mark made light of the whole affair and insisted on talking of their childhood days. The fruit and nuts he brought proved an open sesame to the hearts of Agnes and Royce, and they were soon on the best of terms with the caller.

Margaret was very grateful for the offer of work. She hesitated a little over accepting Mrs. Everts' kind invitation, fearing lest the children prove an annoyance. But when Mark drew a touching picture of the loneliness of his aunt she gladly consented to come. It was arranged that the carriage come after the Gregories the following afternoon.

One morning, two months later, Florence Fox tripped across the hall at No. 3 and entered Miss Snell's room.

"Of course you are going to the wedding reception Thursday evening," she began. "I think it is such a lovely marriage, don't you?"

"Indeed I do," replied Lillian, warmly. "Yes, I am to go in the afternoon and help with the decorations. The whole house is to be in green and white, smilax, ferns, roses and carnations. Mrs. Everts says Mr. Davis cannot do too much for his bride; our dear Margaret, the sweet old lady calls her."

"And I believe it all came about from your begging him to give her good weight," Florence cried merrily. He is obeying your request in an extravagant manner. And, Lillian, is not that pretty pearl ring and the beautiful expression on Cousin Hugh's face the result of my efforts along the same line of charitable work?"

The bell rang then, and the blushing Lillian was spared the necessity of a reply.—Ulta Globe.

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He sprang to his feet. There was no need of an explanation. He passed out, pausing for a final word with Mrs. Donovan.

"Tell Mrs. Gregory the things came from the teachers at No. 3."

"To be sure, Mr. Davis," responded the woman, who had recognized Mark. "I'll tell her all 'bout it. And may the blissin's of all the saints rest on your dear head!"

Mark hurried away, leaving a shining silver dollar in Royce's hand.

It was only a few minutes after his departure that a thinly clad woman came toiling wearily up the stairs. It was Margaret Gregory. The woman who owed her was out of town. The needy mother had applied at several places for work, only to meet with refusal. Then she had gone to a store and begged for credit, but in vain.

She had reached the end. There was but one way open. She would ask Mrs. Donovan to give her children their dinner. When she had rested and conquered the bitter rebellion in her heart she would go out again and apply to the city for charity.

Margaret Gregory was proud. She was already faint for the want of food, yet she turned in loathing from the thought of a meal obtained in that way. It would be worse than death, but death doesn't come at one's call, and there were her babies.

A dry sob burst from her lips. She passed Mrs. Donovan's door in silence. She must have a moment to herself before she could ask charity of one so poor as her kind neighbor. Hurrying on she pushed open her own door.

A bright fire was blazing in the cracked stove. Mrs. Donovan had prepared potatoes for the oven and cut slices ready for frying on the ham. The open door of the wood closet showed a huge pile, while the table was heaped high with food.

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