



ALL of Eleanor Merton's friends declared that she was like to go mad with grief. She had had an unusually bitter experience. The beautiful, willful orphan girl had married a handsome youth who developed into a cruel and dissipated man. For three years Eleanor bore her trials in silence with a splendid pride; then her husband's sudden death set her free, and she abandoned herself happily to her absorbing love for her child, his young mother's delight.

Her friends had laughed, and said that Eleanor Merton could talk of nothing but "Reggie," and they were sick and tired of hearing of the little prodigy! So they came to visit her with less and less frequency, and truth to tell—she never missed their coming.

One friend, at least, was faithful, and that was Godfrey Waring. He was a distant connection of Eleanor's, her friend from childhood and little Reggie's godpapa. Now he was also her chief counsellor in all important matters.

The happiest time of the year for Eleanor was the holiday season, and she thoroughly enjoyed the fun of Reggie's tiny stocking and his little Christmas tree.

The Christmas preparations when Reggie was approaching the mature age of four proved happier than any ever before. The boy was quite old enough to appreciate all sorts of wonderful things, and every evening for almost a week, after he was safely in bed, Eleanor, with Godfrey for an escort, visited the toy shops and bought the prettiest things she saw, and then on Christmas Eve Eleanor and Godfrey dressed the tree. It was nearly 11 o'clock before they had finished, and Godfrey was rewarded for his share of the work by an invitation to "come and take dinner with Reggie" the following day.

When Godfrey reached his rooms perhaps an hour after he left her he found a note from Eleanor awaiting him.

"She forgot to tell me the hour at which Reggie will dine," he said to himself with a smile as he tore open the envelope. But the words he read were these: "Reggie is ill. Come at once."

He hurried back to find doctors coming and going and Eleanor half-distracted, and when he caught the words "malignant diphtheria" he did not wonder at her alarm.

That night no one thought of sleep. Day dawned and slowly dragged through all its awful length, and though all things were done which human wisdom could suggest when night came little Reginald was dead.

Eleanor's grief was frantic, passionate, pitiful. No wonder her friends feared for her reason. Godfrey alone was of any comfort to her, and that only because she could talk to him incessantly of her dead child.

Until Twelfth Night Reggie's Christmas tree stood just as they had dressed it, and Eleanor would not permit it to be removed.

Time went on, and though Eleanor's



"GODFREY SAW HER SWAY AND SEEMED ABOUT TO FALL."

grief was no less absorbing it gradually became more quiet in its form. Godfrey keenly dreaded for her the approach of Christmas time, and he felt greatly disturbed when important business kept him away from the city until late on Christmas Eve. It was too late to see Eleanor on his return, but he went to her early on Christmas

morning and found her, to his horror, gazing with glassy eyes upon a Christmas tree, the counterpart of the one which they two had decorated the Christmas Eve before.

"Eleanor!" he said, "you will delude yourself mad!"

"What then?" she answered, dully. "At least I should be less miserable than I am now."

So during that awful anniversary day she lived over again her agony of grief, and Godfrey was powerless to turn, even for a moment, the current of her thoughts.

The little useless tree, with its bur-

formed, and beckoning to the children he ran and opened the front door.

"I'm not Santa Claus," he said, "but I'm a friend of his—and you haven't had any presents from him yet, have you?"

They grinned, abashed, and vigorously shook their heads.

"Did he bring you any toys last Christmas?"

They shook their heads again.

"I thought not. Well, come in! he's left a double supply for you here." In stupefied amazement they entered, a tattered, dirty crew, whose jargon when their tongues were loosened Godfrey could hardly understand.

Quickly and thoroughly he did his work and the tree was stripped and the toys divided among them in an incredibly short time.

He was just pulling down the last tinsel garland amid their shrieks of rapture when he looked up and saw Eleanor—a tall black figure—in the doorway. Her veil was thrown back and her face was white and shadowy.

Godfrey saw her sway and she seemed about to fall. He sprang forward to support her, but she shrank away from him.

"I thought you were Reggie's friend—and mine," she said hoarsely. "How much I was mistaken. Our bitterest enemy could have devised nothing half so cruel."

With these words she left the room,

With her face still hidden she blindly stretched out her hand and he took it, misunderstanding her.

"Good-bye—forever," he said.

The small white fingers grasped his own, and still he did not understand. Now she was weeping silently and he was filled with pity for her.

"Poor child," he said, "if only some one could comfort you—where I so lamentably have failed."

The small white clinging fingers suddenly carried his hand to her hidden lips.

"Eleanor!" he cried.

"Godfrey," she murmured, still clinging to his hand.

The new year was still young when Eleanor Merton became Godfrey Waring's wife.

But when the next Christmastide drew near Eleanor said to her husband with a tremulous smile, "Godfrey, I want to ask your indulgence. Will you take me out to-night and again help me to select some toys and a little tree? I have found some poor, neglected children—some of 'God's little ones'—who will have no merry Christmas otherwise. And I want—I want you to help me dress the tree, and to let me have them all here and make them happy, on Christmas Day—for Reginald's sake—"

And Godfrey did not say no.—The Household.



den of pretty toys, was kept in its place until Twelfth Night was over, as before. And then it vanished, Godfrey hoped, forever!

Another year went by and Eleanor, still a recluse and unrequited, mourned for her boy.

As Christmas again drew near Eleanor said to Godfrey, "I shall dress Reginald's tree as usual on Christmas Eve. Will you help me—or must I do it alone, as I did last year?"

"Eleanor!" he protested.

"I shall do it!" she said firmly, and he saw that there was no appeal.

"Then I will help you," he promised, and together in tragic silence they performed the awful task.

"For the last time!" Godfrey told himself as he helped her cold and trembling fingers tie on the toys which had been bought for little Reginald so long before. It seemed monstrous that these playthings, made for a child's delight, could be thus perverted from their purpose and used again and again as instruments of torture for a woman's heart.

It was late when their task was finished and he bade her good-night. Her face haunted him all night, and in the morning he went to her again.

Before the house he saw three tattered, wistful little vagrants loitering, and as he passed them he heard one say, "Gee! wisht I cud git in dere wunst—jist ter see dem tings clus to!"

He glanced up, and where the draperies had been pushed aside he caught a glimpse of Reginald's Christmas tree.

"Mrs. Merton is out!" he said in surprise, repeating the maid's words. "Gone to church, you say! Yes, I'll come in and wait."

He was glad. He glanced at his watch; it was a full hour until the service would be over. He went to the window and pushed the curtains aside to look out, and a shrill cry of delight came from the urchins outside—whom he had forgotten—as they caught a better view of the gayly decorated tree.

In an instant his resolution was

and Godfrey turned back to complete the ruin he had wrought.

Full an hour passed before he heard her step descending the stair. She thought that he had gone, and she started when she entered the room and saw him there. Her quick eyes noted the absence of the tree.

"How dared you do it?" she cried at last—"how dared you give away the toys I had bought for my own dead child?"

"They have made three living children happy, Eleanor—"

"Dirty beggars from the street. It was an insult to me and to Reginald's memory even to bring them into my home—"

Godfrey flushed. "Is it their fault that they were born in the gutter, that they are dirty, ignorant and half-clad? In the eyes of God, Eleanor, I believe those children are as dear as your spotless Reginald."

She looked at him aghast. "I shall never forgive you," she said. "How dared you do it?" she cried again.

"I dared because I thought—I hoped—it might save you from this useless brooding, this awful misery—"

"What do you know of misery?" she said in scorn. "You, who have never loved and buried a child."

"I know only the misery of a hopeless and lifelong love," he said, after a moment's pause. "Eleanor, I would have given my life to give you back your child—whom I loved, too—or to help you in any way, and I thought you knew that. And I thought that what I have done might make it easier for you in the future, that was all. Instead, it has proved a blunder, and in place of your indifference I have earned your hate."

She had seated herself with her arms resting upon the table before her and her face turned from him.

"Even now I am not sorry it is done," he said slowly, "and I hope in time you may come to believe I did it in all kindness to you. And now, at least, you will not refuse to say good-bye."



"THE HOLY NIGHT." H. GRASS.

Oddities For Christmas.



TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE

Here is a group of Christmas novelties. Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee are dolls and Humpty Dumpty is a pin cushion. A very pretty present for a baby is a silver spoon, with a loop handle, and which has in the chased bowl a representation of a nursery rhyme. These loop handles make the spoons very safe and comfortable for little fingers. As for the tiny balloon, that is an ornamental pin cushion.

Had a Fine Time.



Papa—"Well, Bobby, did you have a good time seeing Christmas down town?"

Bobby—"Yes, sir; I busted three drums an' broke some tin horns an' music boxes."

A pretty doll in a stocking hung,
While near her a soldier-doll bravely swung,
When lo! the lime-piece struck twelve o'clock,
And gave the mistletoe quite a shock.
Then the startled doll heard the soldier say
"All right, little neighbor!
It's Christmas Day."

After the gifts are all given,
After the feasting is done,
In front of the Christmas fire
Is time for the Christmas fun.

