

**MOTHER LOSES 4 CHILDREN  
IN 10 DAYS; 2 NEAR DEATH**

"Saddest Christmas" in Prospect for Plucky Widow Who Has Felt Full Weight of Misfortune's Power

In the small stationery store on the corner of Media and Redfield streets there are boxes of bright toys and holly and a colorful little sign bidding one and all be of good cheer in the Christmas season; on the silent house at 1509 Redfield street, across the way, lies the shadow of the swift death that has claimed four of the seven children of Mrs. Marie Pieper within the last ten days.

Her youngest and her oldest lie between life and death from diphtheria in the Philadelphia Hospital for Contagious Diseases, her fifteen-year-old son, George, is missing, supposedly having wandered to the Far West, and she sits alone with her grief today in the darkened house which she has maintained by her own efforts since the death of her husband four years ago.

The sudden tragedy which has broken the life of this unfortunate mother has revealed the story of her long struggle against circumstances, in which she has never faltered or sought aid before.

**Left Widow Four Years Ago**

When her husband died in 1917 Mrs. Pieper was confronted with the necessity of providing for her seven small children. She obtained a room's position in a downtown restaurant, to which she went every evening after caring as best she might for the needs of the children. Her husband was a hand in the extremes, but never did she give any intimation to her neighbors of the critical plight in which her family stood.

She managed to keep her young ones clothed and fed on her meager earnings, and they all went with the other children to the Hiram School, Fitzwater and Media streets. But her scanty funds were insufficient to provide the proper nourishment which their growth bodies demanded, and this is believed by physicians to have been one of the chief causes of the dreadful toll which was exacted by the disease which so recently fastened upon her home.

A week ago she noticed that the faces of several of the children were swollen. She believed that they had mumps, but being unable to attend to them properly, she asked advice of her neighbor. The latter sent a physician to the house, and he immediately diagnosed the case as diphtheria in an advanced stage. He sent all six of the children to the

Municipal Hospital and the house was quarantined.

Two days later the anxious mother received word of the death of Emma, her second daughter. Among the children's effects which had been her dolls, her trinkets and small treasures—was hidden away a receipt for ninety cents in a Christmas savings fund, with which she had intended to buy a present for her mother.

Shortly after Agnes, her seven-year-old daughter, succumbed, and before the quarantined mother could arrange for the funeral she was informed that Anna, nine years old, also had died. The children were buried together Monday in Arlington Cemetery beside their father's grave.

Yesterday morning Elizabeth, aged eleven, was laid away by her three sisters, leaving her mother prostrated with grief. The news of the loss of her fourth child was too much for the distracted woman. She collapsed, and her shrieking sobs were heard by her sympathetic neighbors all through the night.

Straight from the grave side she went to the hospital, with the dreadful

clutching at her heart that the same tidings would await her again. But there was a respite in her sufferings, for she was told that Charlotte, sixteen, and little Carl, five, her youngest and her oldest, were holding their own in the battle for life, and that hope might be entertained for their recovery.

And so she sits today alone in the silent little house, from whose door the quarantine sign has been but newly scraped away, waiting for the word which will mean renewed hope or absolute despair.

In the small back yard stands a toy express wagon, just as it was abandoned by childish hands, now perhaps forever still. In the nearby houses her neighbors, who have come generously to her aid with supplies and abundant sympathy, talk of the sad case with hushed voices; and in the window of the shop across the street

the cheery red sign voices its message to the world: "Merry Christmas."



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