

him and spoke to him just now, thinking he was just lying there, and he didn't answer, and then I saw he was asleep. But I never knew him to sleep on Sunday night. He usually reads up to the study.

"Perhaps he is sick. I will go and see."

Mrs. Hardy rose and went into the other room, and just then the younger boy, Will, came down stairs. He said something to his mother as he passed through the room and then came in where the girls were, carrying one of his books in his hand.

"Say, Alice, translate this passage for me, will you? Confound the old Romans anyway! What do I care about the way they fought their old battles and built their old horse bridges? What makes me angry is the way Caesar has of telling a thing. Why can't he drive right straight ahead instead of beating about the bush so? If I couldn't get up a better language than those old duffers used to write their books in I'd lie down and die. I

filled his entire thought was the idea of the present moment. Spread out before him, as if reproduced by a photograph and a magic lantern combined, was the moving panorama of the entire world. He thought he saw into every home, every public place of business, every saloon and place of amusement, every shop and every farm, every place of industry, amusement and vice upon the face of the globe. And he thought he could hear the world's conversation, catch its sobs of suffering—nay, even catch the meanings of unspoken thoughts of the heart. With that absurd rapidity peculiar to certain dreams he fancied that over every city on the globe was placed a glass cover through which he could look and through which the sounds of the city's industry came to him. But he thought that he ascertained that by lifting off one of these covers he could hear with greater distinctness the thoughts of the inhabitants and see all they were doing and suffering with the most minute exactness. He looked for the place of his own town, Barton. There it lay in its geographical spot on the globe, and he thought that, moved by an impulse he could not resist, he lifted off the cover and bent down to see and hear.

The first thing he saw was his minister's home. It was just after the Sunday evening service, the one which Mr. Hardy had thought so dull. Mr. Jones was talking over the evening with his wife.

"My dear," he said, "I feel about discouraged. Of what use is all our praying and longing for the Holy Spirit when our own church members are so cold and unspiritual that all his influence is destroyed? And, you know, I made a special plea to all the members to come out tonight, and only a handful there! I feel like giving up the struggle. You know I could make a better living in literary work, and the children could be better cared for then."

"But, John, it was a bad night to get out. You must remember that."

"But only 50 out of a church membership of 400, most of them living near by! It doesn't seem just right to me."

"Mr. Hardy was there! Did you see him?"

"Yes; after service I went and spoke to him, and he treated me very cordially. And yet he is the most wealthy and in some ways the most gifted church member we have. He could do great things for the good of this community if—"

Suddenly Mr. Hardy thought the minister changed into the Sunday school superintendent, and he was walking down the street thinking about his classes in the school, and Mr. Hardy thought he could hear the superintendent's thoughts, as if his ear were at a phonograph.

"It's too bad! That class of boys I wanted Mr. Hardy to take left the school because no one could be found to teach them. And now Bob Wilson has got into trouble and been arrested for petty thieving. It will be a terrible blow to his poor mother. Oh, why is it that men like Mr. Hardy cannot be made to see the importance of work in the Sunday school? With his knowledge of chemistry and geology he could have reached that class of boys and invited them to his home, up into his laboratory and exercised an influence over them they would never outgrow. Oh! it's a strange thing to me that men of such possibilities do not realize their power!"

The superintendent passed along shaking his head sorrowfully, and Mr. Hardy, who seemed guided by some power he could not resist and compelled to listen whether he liked it or not, next found himself looking into one of the railroad shop tenements, where the man Scoville was lying, awaiting amputation of both feet after the terrible accident. Scoville's wife lay upon a ragged lounge, while Mrs. Hardy's cook knelt by her side and in her native Swedish tongue tried to comfort the poor woman. So it was true that these two were sisters. The man was still conscious and suffering unparalyzably. The railroad surgeon had been sent for, but had not arrived. Three or four men and their wives had come in to do what they could. Mr. Burns, the foreman, was among them. One of the men spoke in a whisper to him:

"Have you been to see Mr. Hardy?"

"Yes, but he was at church. I left word about the accident."

"At church! So even the devil sometimes goes to church. What for, I wonder? Will he be here, think?"

"Don't know," replied Mr. Burns curtly.

"Do you mind when he"—pointing to Scoville—"saved Mr. Hardy's life?"

"Remember it well enough; was standing close by."

"What'll be done with the children when Scoville goes, eh?"

"Don't know."

Just then the surgeon came in, and preparations were rapidly made for the operation. The last that Mr. Hardy heard was the shriek of the poor wife as she struggled to her feet and fell in a fit across the floor where two of the youngest children clung terrified to her dress, and the father cried out, tears of agony and despair running down his face, "My God, what a hell this world is!"

The next scene was a room where everything appeared confused at first, but finally grew more distinct and terrible in its significance, and the first person Mr. Hardy recognized was his oldest boy, George, in company with a group of young men engaged in what he rubbed his eyes and stared painfully. Yes; they were gambling. So here was where George spent all his money and Bessie's too! Nothing that the miserable father had seen so far cut him to the quick quite so sharply as this. He had prided himself on his own freedom from vices and had at least honor of them, for Mr. Hardy

was not a monster of iniquity, only an intensely selfish man. Gambling, drinking, iniquity—all the physical vices—were to Mr. Hardy the lowest degradation.

The thought that his own son had fallen into this pit was terrible to him; but he was compelled to look and listen. All the young men were smoking, and beer and wine stood on a buffet at one side of the room and were plentifully partaken of.

"I say, George," said a very flashily dressed youth who was smoking that invention of the devil, a cigarette, "your old man would rub his eyes to see you here, eh?"

"Well, I should remark he would," replied George as he snuffed the cards and then helped himself to a drink.

"I say, George," said the first speaker, "your sister Bess is getting to be a beauty. Introduce me, will you?"

"No, I won't," said George shortly. He had been losing all the evening, and he felt nervous and irritable.

"Ah! We are too bad, eh?"

George made some fierce reply, and the other fellow struck him. Instantly George sprang to his feet, and a fight took place. Mr. Hardy could not bear it any longer. He thought he broke away from the scene by the exercise of a great determination and next found himself looking into his own home. It seemed to him it was an evening when he and all the children had gone out, and Mrs. Hardy sat alone, looking into the fire as she had been looking before he fell asleep. She was thinking, and her thoughts were like burning coals as they fell into Mr. Hardy's heart and scorched him as not any scene, not even the last, had done.

"My husband!" Mrs. Hardy was saying to herself. "How long it is since he gave me a caress, kissed me when he went to his work or laid his hand lovingly on my cheek as he used to do! How brave and handsome and good I used to think him in the old Vermont days when we were struggling for our little home and his best thought was of the home and of the wife! But the years have changed him! Oh, yes; they have changed him bitterly! I wonder if he realizes my hunger for his affection! Of what value to me are all these baubles wealth brings compared with a loving look, a tender smile, an affectionate caress?"

"Oh, Robert, Robert! Come back to me, for I am so lonely, so lonely! Would to God all our riches might be taken from us and all our position in society be lost to us, for I am fast losing my love for him who is my husband! Great and long suffering and forgiving God, help me! I feel wicked sometimes. I cannot bear this kind of a life. It is killing me. It is robbing me of all that life contains that is sweet and true. Oh, Father of Mercies, for Jesus' sake do not let me grow insane or without belief! Oh, Robert, Robert, my lover, my husband! I will; I will love you!" And Mrs. Hardy fell on her knees by the side of the couch and buried her face in its cushions and sobbed and prayed.

Suddenly the whole scene changed, and Mr. Hardy, who had stretched out his arms to comfort his wife as in the old days when love was young, felt himself carried by an irresistible power up away from the earth, past the stars and planets and suns and satellites that blazed like gems in space; on, on, for what seemed to him like ages of time, until even the thought of time grew indistinct; on and up and into the presence of the most mighty Face he had ever looked into. It was the Face of Eternity. On its brow was written in words of blazing light the one word "Now." And as he looked into that calm, awful Face and read that awful word Mr. Hardy felt his soul crumble within him. When the Face spoke, it was the speech of a thousand oceans heaved by a million tempests, yet through the terror of it ran a thread of music—a still sweet sound like everlasting love—as if angels sang somewhere a divine accompaniment. And the Face said:

"Child of humanity, you have neglected and despised me for 50 years. You have lived for yourself. You have been careless and thoughtless of the world's great needs. The time of your redemption is short. It has been granted you by him who rules the world that you should have but seven more days to live upon the earth—seven days to help redeem your soul from everlasting shame and death. Mortal, see to it that thou usest the precious time like those who toil for jewels in the mine beneath the sea. I who speak unto thee am Eternity."

Then Robert Hardy thought he fell upon his face before that awful Face and begged in bitterest terror for a longer lease of life.

"Seven days! Why, it will be but seven swift seconds to redeem my past! Seven days! It will be a nothing in the marking of time! O mighty Power, grant me longer! Seven weeks! Seven years! And I will live for thee as never mortal yet lived!"

And Robert Hardy sobbed and held his arms beseechingly up toward that most resplendent Face. And as he thus stretched out his arms the Face bent down toward him, and he thought a smile of pity gleamed upon it, and he hoped that more time would be granted him; and then, as it came nearer, he suddenly awoke, and there was his own wife bending over him, and a tear from her face fell upon his own as she said:

"Robert! Robert!"

Mr. Hardy sat up confused and trembling. Then he clasped his wife to him and kissed her as he used to do. And then to her great amazement he related to her in a low tone the dream he had just had. Mrs. Hardy listened in the most undisguised astonishment. But what followed filled her heart with fear.

"Mary," said her husband with the utmost solemnity, "I cannot regard this as a dream alone. I have awakened with the firm conviction that I

have only seven days left to live. I feel that God has spoken to me, and I have no more time to do my worldly work."

"What was it only a dream?"

"No, it was no dream, Mary. You know I am not imaginative or superstitious in the least. You know I never dream. And this was something else. I shall die out of this world a week from tonight. Are the children here? Call them in."

Mr. Hardy spoke in a tone of such calm conviction that Mrs. Hardy was filled with wonder and fear. She went to the curtain, and, as we have already recorded, she called the children into the other room.

Mr. Hardy gazed upon his children with a look they had not seen upon his face for years. Briefly but calmly he related his experience, omitting the de-

tails of the vision and all mention of the scene where George had appeared, and then declared with a solemnity and impressiveness that could not be resisted:

"My dear children, I have not lived as I should. I have not been to you the father I ought to have been. I have lived a very selfish, useless life. I have only seven more days to live. God has spoken to me. I am!"

He broke off suddenly, and, sobbing as only a strong man can, he drew his wife toward him and caressed her, while Bess crept up and put her arms about her father's neck.

The terrible suspicion shot into Mrs. Hardy's mind that her husband was insane. The children were terrified. Only Alice seemed to catch the reflection of her mother's thought. At the same time Mr. Hardy seemed to feel the suspicion held by them.

"No," he said as if in answer to a spoken charge, "I am not insane. I never was more calm. I am in possession of all my faculties. But I have looked into the Face of Eternity this night, and I know, I know, that in seven days God will require my soul, Mary," he turned to his wife with the most beseeching cry, "Mary, do you believe me?"

She looked into her husband's face and saw there the old look. Renson, the noblest of all gifts, shone out of that noble face, now lighted up with the old love and standing on the brink of the other world. And Mrs. Hardy, looking her husband in the face, replied:

"Yes, Robert; I believe you. You may be mistaken in this impression about the time left you to live, but you are not insane."

"O God, I thank thee for that!" cried Mr. Hardy.

Often during the most remarkable week he ever lived Mr. Hardy reposed in that implicit belief of his wife in his sanity.

There was a pause. Then Mr. Hardy asked George to bring the Bible. He then read from John's gospel that matchless prayer of Christ in the seventeenth chapter, and then kneeling down he prayed as he had never prayed before that in the week allotted him to live he might know how to bless the world and serve his Master best. And when he arose and looked about upon his wife and children it was with the look of one who has been into the very presence chamber of the only living God. At the same moment, so fast had the time gone in the excitement, the clock upon the mantel struck the hour of midnight, and the first of Robert Hardy's seven days had begun.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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