

had agreed to meet. Most men might have felt some delicacy about attending a caucus after having bolted the party, but Post did not let a little scruple like that deter him. He had decided to have the affair terminate dramatically. He would wait till Browne and young Harte had told of their defeat; then he fancied his story would make a rather neat climax. Denby would rave, of course; but, reckless in his victory, Post felt strong enough to snap his fingers in the faces of a horde of creditors.

Denby was sitting up in bed smoking, and young Harte was mixing drinks, as Post went in. He helped himself to a cigar and an easy chair and sat down to wait for Browne, who had last been seen in the wake of his prospective mother-in-law. It was not long before he arrived; he came in without a word, his eyes dark and angry, a savage look on his usually good-natured face.

"What's up, Brownie? You look like an approaching cyclone," said Harte.

"You fellows may think this thing a joke, but it's a pretty serious business for me!" Brownie retorted sharply.

"Oh, you take things too everlastingly seriously, old man. Cheer up—it's nothing to feel acute remorse about," drawled Denby from the bed. "Bring over that fizz, Harte."

Young Harte handed the drinks around, and then sat on a corner of the table, swinging his legs. Denby looked expectantly from one to another.

"Well, begin, Harte. How did it work? Did the lady freeze you dumb?"

Young Harte took a long drink and carefully wiped a budding mustache before replying.

"I hate to disappoint you, Denby," he said, with evident embarrassment; "but honestly I wasn't to blame—I never dreamed that—how Miss Mayland regarded me, you know. But under the circumstances I don't see how I can honorably withdraw——"

Denby raised himself on one elbow.

"What under heaven are you driving at?" he gasped.

"I mean that she accepted, and I'm going to marry her!" Harte shouted, flaunting his triumph in Denby's face with a wave of his glass.

Denby remained as if transfixed, un-

able to speak or to move; but Browne had fallen to kicking himself, swearing softly all the while. Finally Denby turned upon him.

"Browne, are you crazy?" he cried, lurching forward to the edge of the bed.

"No, but Harte is. Oh, man, that girl has made thundering idiots of both of us—she accepted me, too!"

Harte collapsed. Denby sank back weakly among his pillows. Post's comment was brief.

"The devil she did!" he said.

Edyth Ellerbeck

Angels Came

MRS. NEAL was angry. As she stalked into the front room and sank heavily into the creaking depths of the haircloth sofa, her lips were pressed tight together and her eyes were narrowed to mere slits. There was something, too, indicative of extreme displeasure in the harsh rustle of her best black dress as she smoothed its many folds with a black-gloved hand. But Miss Euphemia, stolidly crocheting her endless "tidies" by the front window, was oblivious to all these potent signs of her sister's wrath. She peered over the tops of her spectacles at the bulky figure on the sofa, and observed mildly:

"Seems to me you're back dretful early, Sarah. You ain't been gone an hour. Did everything pass off well?"

Mrs. Neal stiffened. She took off her crape bonnet and deposited it, none too gently, on the sofa beside her.

"I call it ridickerlous," she burst out explosively. "I never heard of such goin's-on to a fun'ral in my life! I always said these folks that build their summer places here never did the town no good."

"Well," said Miss Euphemia placidly, "if I see anything there that I didn't like, I should try to forget all about it."

"See!" sniffed her sister with infinite scorn. "See! That's just it. I never see nothin'."

Miss Euphemia let her work drop to her lap. She leaned forward eagerly in her chair.

"Warn't there no fun'ral?" she inquired, in a tone which showed she was prepared for the worst.

"Oh, I guess there was a fun'ral, all right," Mrs. Neal replied, "but I never see hide nor hair of it." She pushed the bonnet viciously to the other end of the sofa, and began pulling off her gloves. "I got up there about half past one," she went on, "an' would you believe it, when I tried to go in the front door it was locked! So I rings the bell an' waits on the porch. Bimeby the door opens soft like, an' there stood one of them maids with a little white cap on her head.

"'Who did you wish to see?' says she, calm as you please.

"'I've come to the fun'ral,' says I.

"At that she pushes the door to closer, as if she was afraid I was goin' to try to sneak in when she warn't lookin'.

"'The fun'ral,' says she, 'is to be private'; an' she shuts the door with a click square in my face.

"I don't know as I was ever so took back in all my days," the indignant lady concluded. "Did you ever hear of anything so out an' out unsociable?"

Miss Euphemia looked out the window with wrinkling brows.

"I suppose they've got a right, Sarah, to have the fun'ral private, if they've a mind to," she hazarded at length.

"I suppose they have," snapped her sister, "but I call it uppish of 'em, specially since we ain't had a fun'ral since Grandpa Baggs' last December."

"An' they do say," continued Miss Euphemia, "that young Mis' Burton takes it dretful hard."

"She'll git over it," was Mrs. Neal's grim rejoinder. "They always do, when they're young and good-lookin'. An' I dunno as there's any partic'ler sense in treatin' your neighbors shabby jest because your husband got throwed off his hoss an' broke his neck. You wait. The next time Mis' Burton an' me comes together anywheres, she's goin' to git a good piece of my mind!"

"Now, Sarah——" Euphemia began, but the other cut her short.

"She's goin' to git a piece of my mind, mark that," she repeated with determination. "I'll show 'em how to have their maids slam the door in *my* face when I take the trouble to go to their fun'ral!"

Mrs. Neal arose from the sofa and snatched up her bonnet and gloves.

"You goin' off again?" Euphemia asked.

"Yes, I'm goin' to run in to Mis' Jones' for a minute, an' then I'm goin' up to the cemetery to have a look at the flowers. They say down to the depot there was a terrible sight come last night. I don't suppose the cemetery'll be private, even if the fun'ral was!"

She went ponderously out of the room, and Euphemia, after thoughtfully polishing her spectacles for a time, took up the neglected tidy again.

It was nearing dusk when Mrs. Neal climbed the hill to the cemetery. A great cloud hanging in the west flashed crimson and ocher along its lower edge; by the roadside the trees and bushes flaunted gorgeous autumnal colorings; but she toiled grimly up the slope, with no eye to the splendors of the dying day. She gained the summit, and pushed open the little iron gate.

Close to the entrance was a lot with a single new-made grave banked high with flowers. Mrs. Neal made her way thither, and stood there feasting her eyes upon them in melancholy silence. It was a revelation to her. Her wildest imaginings, stimulated by reports from the "depot folks," could not have pictured as many funereal pieces as were here before her in reality. But before she could take them in by detail, she was startled by a stifled sob from the other side of the lot.

She glanced nervously in the direction of the sound, and there, prone upon the ground with face pressed against the coarse gravel from the grave, she saw a slight, girlish figure, which shook convulsively with great, dry sobs. In a moment Mrs. Neal was beside it, lifting it tenderly in her own strong arms.

"Why, Mis' Burton!" she was exclaiming in surprise. "You hadn't ought to be here, an' layin' there on that damp ground, too! You'll ketch your never-get-over."

The figure stiffened in her arms, and a face was turned to her—an ashen face, haggard and marked by the pitiful grief that had not yet known the boon of tears.

"Please leave me here," the drawn lips pleaded. "Please go away!"

Mrs. Neal drew her yet closer.

"No, I sha'n't, dearie. I sha'n't leave you all alone here. They hadn't ought to let you come. Some one ought to have looked out for you, you poor lamb." Her own eyes brimmed with sympathy. She clumsily stroked the rumpled masses of brown hair, while she racked her mind for some timely word of comfort. "I know how it is," she went on. "It's hard at first—dretful hard; but after a time you come to be reconciled—of course not at first, but after a time, dearie, after a time. I know. I've been through it!"

"Not this," said the other woman hoarsely. "You haven't been through this." Her fingers closed on Mrs. Neal's arm. "The morning it—it happened, we had quarreled. He left me in anger. I don't know why I am telling you this. He said—he was standing in the hall in his riding-clothes—he said, 'Perhaps it is better we should be apart,' and I shrugged my shoulders and turned away. And then they brought him back after his horse had fallen with him."

She stopped abruptly. She was trembling from head to foot.

"I guess I know why you've told me this," said Mrs. Neal quietly. "You better come over to the wall with me. I want to tell you somethin'."

She led the way to the low wall that was the cemetery's western boundary, and, seating herself on a flat stone, drew the other woman down beside her.

"Yes, I've been through even *that*," she said, "an' I guess I know how you feel. It was jest that way with Rufus an' me. We fit somethin' awful at times. An' that mornin'—that last mornin'—we had about the worst spat we'd ever had."

"I wisht I never had to see your face again," he says to me when he set out for the woods.

"It was four in the afternoon when they brought him home. A tree'd fell on him, an' he never spoke nor opened his eyes afterwards. Well, after the fun'ral I was most crazy, dearie, jest as you be now. Seemed as if I'd *got* to see him an' ask him about them last words of his."

"I took to spiritualism; not that I had any real faith in it, but it was a chance. I mortgaged the farm and spent

the money for séances; but all I got out of it was a lot of fool messages that I knew well enough never come from Rufus. Once they said they'd materialized him for me; but law! all there was to it was a spot of light they told me was him, an' when I asked it questions it couldn't seem to answer me noways satisfactory. So I give that up, an' for five years I jest set an' et my heart out."

"Then one night I had a dream. 'Twas almost too real for a dream. Seemed as if I was washin' up the kitchen floor; an' I looked up, an' there stood Rufus, leanin' in the doorway jest as natural as could be. I got up off my knees an' run to him jest as I was, an' put my soapy arms round his neck, an' laid my head on his old blue shirt; an' I was so happy I was cryin' an' laughin' an' talkin' all to once."

"Rufus, oh, Rufus, I've wanted so to see you to ask you somethin'," says I.

"He was lookin' down at me jest as he used to sometimes, only his face seemed to be kinder more shinin'."

"Well, why don't you ask it?" says he, sorter laughin' like.

"Rufus, tell me about them last words of yourn," says I. "Tell me you didn't mean 'em."

"I was clingin' hard to him, I was so afraid he'd leave before he'd answered."

"Them words?" says he. "Why, if you'd had a grain of sense you'd 'a' figgered it out for yourself. Hain't we always been a fightin' an' a makin' up? Don't you suppose we should 'a' made up that night when I got home, same's we always done? Don't be foolish, Sarah. Them words never meant nothin'. You know that 's well as I do."

"An' then I was wide awake, sittin' bolt upright in bed, an' my face an' my pillar was all wet. I got up an' lighted a lamp an' set down in the old rocker, an' I was that happy I begun to laugh all to myself. It was the first time I'd laughed for five years. It had come over me all to once that even if it was a dream it was the truth. An' that, dearie, is jest the way it's comin' to you one of these days."

Mrs. Neal got up from the wall, and, slipping her arm through the younger woman, led her gently along the path and through the little iron gate. The

first stars were showing feebly in the sky as they made their way down the hill. It was some time before Mrs. Neal spoke again, and then, as she did so, she tenderly patted the small, white hand that lay confidently in her own toil-hardened palm.

"There, dearie, there, you cry all you want to," she whispered. "It don't hurt so much when the tears come, does it?"

When she reached home again, Euphemia was hovering fretfully about the supper-table.

"Seems to me you've been gone long enough this time, Sarah," she complained. "How was the flowers? I suppose there was oceans of 'em."

"Yes, there was lots of 'em," said Mrs. Neal, "but I didn't look at 'em very close. I met Mis' Burton up there," she confessed.

Euphemia's brow clouded in a doubtful frown.

"Now, Sarah, you didn't go and pitch into her up there, did you?" she asked anxiously. "Be just like you, though," she added.

Mrs. Neal favored her sister with an enigmatic smile.

"I told her some things I had on my mind," she said; "but I guess they warn't the ones you're thinkin' of."

John Barton Oxford

Try, Try Again

"WHEW, that was a hot one!" said Napoleon Applegate to his partner, Ironface Craig, at the close of the market.

Applegate tilted his chair, and flung his feet upon the window-sill. From the skyscraper window he looked out at the diminutive shipping that floated on the bay. The light shot brightly back from the afternoon sun, and Napoleon Applegate squinted. He heaved a sigh for oxygen, and said:

"Bill, I don't think I can stand much more of this. Twenty years ago, when three o'clock came, instead of flopping down here and gasping, I used to wish the market would run along till midnight, so that I might have it out again. Say, young fellow, are you aware we are getting old?"

Ironface had as many years as Applegate, but he was not so old. What

except fate could fell that bronze bull of a man? He had been a college gladiator. After these twenty years, when his tense friend was all but begging for quarter, Craig still looked the leader of Roman legions. He had cavernous eyes, a prominent nose, and a lower face like a plain, with a scarcely discernible line for a mouth. The jaws fitted into a neck that bulged all around.

"John," he replied, "if I had thrown into it not only my days, but my nights and all my nerves as you have, I don't think I should be here at all. Old man, I think you'd better call it evens. You've got forty times as much as any Christian is entitled to. Why don't you quit?"

"Yes, that's it. Why don't I quit? Why don't I quit?"

Applegate thought of the exciting campaign that he was waging, and how all the opposing forces purposed sweeping down upon him on the morrow. What joy would be his, in those five delirious hours, in crumpling back their wings and shoving them into the hidden road!

"I can't, Bill, I can't! You know I can't. They're after me hard, Bill, and I've got 'em, I've got 'em! Say, do you know where that coup of Ellison's is going to land? Poor Ellison, and he has such a nice family! Let me tell you how I have things lined up. Ellison, you know——"

"Stop!" roared Craig. "That's just it. Can't you forget Ellison and his outfit for half an hour after the market's closed? That's what is killing you. You carry this market around like a body of death. You've done your share and you've got your share, and by Jove, I'd quit, if I were you!"

For twenty years they had worked together. Applegate, as it were, was the eagle, and Craig the rock. How much prey they had heaped up! How many a foe, in those twenty years, had shrunk back in defeat from those talons and that aerie! To this day, when white fringed the shining head of Applegate and snow fell about the black crag of Craig's peak, how the rabbits and sparrows of the Street showed heel and wing to them!

Applegate's vision wandered far behind the gleaming sails, and he thought of the day when the human rock and he