

of Christmas came as their right—a right enjoyed to the full.

He sat silent long after Bob Windthrop left him. His cigar went out, fell from his fingers to the floor, lay there forgotten and unheeded. Presently, however, he rose slowly to his feet, stretched his tired old limbs, and then slipped into the overcoat Jackson held ready for him, thanking him and bestowing a Christmas gift that made the man's eyes shine. A few seconds later he was starting toward his lonely mansion. As he went up the steps he saw a messenger carrying a huge box into the house next door, and he pictured, mentally, the consternation that would prevail among his pretty neighbors in a few moments. The look of amusement that the thought evoked lingered still as he entered the library.

'Tell Stephen to come here,' were his first words, and the old butler, a little mystified, went at once to the room.

'Stephen,' began Gordon Raymond, 'It is rather late to give orders now, but what arrangements have you made for to-morrow?'

candlesticks, all the carefully-hoarded treasures of the old house spread in a manner to please the eye and the taste of the most fastidious. It was long since the dinner-board was thus decorated. Gordon Raymond looked about him with satisfaction—at the dark oaken walls on which candle-gleam and firelight played, bringing out new shadows and intensifying deeper ones. The scent of the lilies-of-the-valley, sweet and penetrating, filled the air. Stephen lingered, adding a touch here and there, his gaze seeking, off and on, the face of that other old man; not curiously, but with a strange look of pity.

'Is everything right now, sir?' he asked. 'Does it please you?'

Very, very much,' said Gordon Raymond. 'We shall do ourselves credit.'

'At what hour do you and—er—do you expect to have dinner, sir?'

'The usual time. You have so arranged it, Stephen?'

'Yes, sir.'



NORTH DUNEDIN, from the Queen's Drive.

'Nothing out of the ordinary, sir,' answered Stephen. 'You see, you have never—'

'I understand, I understand,' said Gordon Raymond, waving the explanation aside. 'But this time I want you to get up as elaborate a dinner as you know how, and you know how, Stephen. I want the dining-room decorated with holly and smilax, and as many—as many,' he hesitated a little, 'lilies-of-the-valley as you can buy at the stores. Send a messenger out now to order them.'

Stephen, who had been with Gordon Raymond almost all his lifetime, gazed at him in consternation.

'Lilies-of-the-valley? Yes, sir; yes, sir. And—and—an elaborate spread? Places for how many, Mr. Gordon?'

'One guest and myself. My daughter dines with me.'

The consternation on Stephen's face turned to absolute dismay, but he recovered himself quickly, bowed, and went out.

And it was very, very beautiful indeed. The old man moved slowly through the room, his eyes dwelling on the daintily-set table. The silver, the delicate china, the tall

'Then come here; come closer, nearer to the fire. I want to talk to you.'

The old man came close as he was bidden. Gordon Raymond stood at the hearth, his arm resting on the high mantel board.

'Stephen,' he began, very quietly, 'you have had a wife.'

'Yes, sir. The Lord give her peace.'

'Amen to that, Stephen. She was a good woman.' He paused an instant, and when he spoke again there was a different note in his voice. 'And you have had children.'

'Five, sir—still living, all.'

'I know. And grandchildren.'

'Grandchildren—beautiful, lovable, the delight of all who know them.'

'So.' Gordon Raymond looked into the fire with sombre gaze. 'All those things you have, and men, even men such as I, call you blessed. Well, Stephen, you have been with me—we have been together many years.'

'Many years, Mr. Raymond.'

'You know my history. I, too, had a wife—'