

washed walls and the absence of a fire yet contained a tolerable bed. Miss Farquhar, removing only her dress, after commending herself to Heaven, lay down on the couch beneath the bed-clothes, and, worn out with the unwholesome fatigues of the day and hardships of the journey, speedily fell asleep.

She had slept—as she afterwards said she believed—nearly an hour, when a rat running across her face caused her to start violently from her slumber, with that feeling of vague horror which we all of us feel—when suddenly roused from sleep in a disagreeable manner in a strange place. Her first impulse of disgust was so great as almost to force a scream from her; but by a violent effort she restrained it. Indeed, the occurrence, which was naturally at first so repulsive to her, she subsequently considered as providential.

It was some moments ere she sufficiently regained her faculties to remember where she was, and when she did so she became conscious that some person near her were carrying on a conversation in subdued tones—yet so close at hand that their voices appeared to issue from beneath her very pillow. Somewhat surprised, and, perhaps, also a little startled although naturally of a brave disposition Miss Farquhar turned her eyes toward the bed's head, and then perceived for the first time that there was a sort of chink or crevice in the wall, occasioned by the pulling away of some of the plaster, which had left a couple of laths exposed. This was the more plainly visible as her own apartment being in total darkness admitted the rays of light from the adjoining one, which she knew to be the chamber, or kitchen, in which the party had sapped.

A little surprised to find that her companions should so far overcome their fatigue as to be still out of bed, and not a little curious to know what could have detained them from their rest at such an hour, Miss Farquhar turned on her couch and applied her eyes to the aperture in the wall.

She then perceived that the sole occupants of the kitchen were the mistress of the house and the supposed grazier, who had formed one of the stage-coach party.

The pair were but a few yards distant from the now rather alarmed governess, and she remarked, with inward misgivings, that a close and confidential intimacy appeared to exist between them. Both appeared somewhat excited, the cause of which might, perhaps, be the brandy bottle which stood on the table between them.

The quick eye of Miss Farquhar however, noticed with extreme surprise that the two glasses of brandy-and-water which she and the coachman had declined taking still stood on the table untouched as did also the half-emptied one of Mr. Hartley, and this notwithstanding the fact that both man and woman continually replenished their own glasses from the green bottle.

A cold thrill of horror shot through Miss Farquhar as her ready wit suggested a reason for this. Were those glasses of which her party had partaken drugged? And if so, was not that the reason why, when the old woman had brought them in on the tray, she had selected two, retaining one, and giving the other to the grazier? Were they, in short accomplices for the robbery and, possibly the murder of their guests?

As these thoughts crowded one after another into the governess's brain, she remembered that it had been the seeming grazier who had brought them to this house, and that, though he all but disclaimed acquaintanceship with its mistress, he was yet evidently on intimate and long-standing terms of friendship with her.

As Miss Farquhar thus reflected, her convictions became certainties, and she felt a deadly faintness creeping over her to which nine women out of ten in her circumstances would have given away. Catherine, however, was not naturally weak of mind, and she remembered that possibly—nay, almost certainly—the safety of the whole party depended on her retaining her presence of mind. Summoning all her resolutions to her aid, therefore, she lay intently listening.

By the red glow of the embers which still remained in the kitchen grate, and which were plainly discernible through the crevice of her bedroom wall, Miss Farquhar could perceive that the old woman Elsie, was resting her head upon her hand and looking thoughtfully into the firelight, as if cogitating some plan of the advisability of which she was doubtful.

She could also perceive that from time to time the grazier threw a glance, half-threatening, at the landlady.

Presently the old woman suddenly exclaimed:

"I do not like it, Joe—I do not like it at all."

"Not like it, missus! Well, you are sop! Why, the furs alone are worth a cool hundred. Why—"

"Yes, yes; I know that," said old Elsie impatiently. "I like all that well enough, but I don't like violence."

Catherine Farquhar shuddered.

"Violence!" retorted the man, with a brutal oath. "What, are you turned tender-hearted? Why, they are all as safe as houses and it's only to carry them out and topple them down the well and that'll soon do their business."

"But to drown four people! And then the bodies would be found, and—"

"What a fool you are Elsie! Why, what's easier than to take 'em when they're dead and lay 'em under the snow?"

"But the snow won't last for ever."

"It will last a good six weeks, if I know anything of weather; and when they are found—the bodies I mean—folks would suppose as they'd lost their way and got smothered in the snow."

"But the coach?"

"Well we'll put the horses to it and take 'em about half a mile out, and then make 'em upset it in one of the drifts; and then cut the traces and let the leaders off, and, as for the wheelers, they'd soon get suffocated; and folks, if they should come across the leaders, would think as the coachman had cut the traces to help 'em off, and so—"

"Ah! and so we'll carry the bodies and bury 'em nigh the coach, as folks should think they'd been upset together like."

"That's it old girl!"

The old woman tossed her grizzled locks back from her seamed forehead, and, looking her companion steadily in the face, said:

"Joe, you're a precious villain!"

"Very like," answered the man, coolly taking a whiff at his pipe. "Go on, mother."

"Mother!" thought poor Catherine, shaking as if with an ague.

"And it's what I'd never consent to," continued the old woman, firmly.

The man clenched his fist and half started from his chair.

"No, never!" said Elsie. "Rob 'em if you like, and I'll say nought; but no lives shall pay for it."

It was noticeable that the woman had now entirely laid aside the broad northern accent which she had at first assumed and Catherine, even in her agony of apprehension, did not fail to remark this.

Then followed some words in a low tone, of which the listener could not catch the purport. The man was evidently remonstrating with the old woman and the latter as evidently determined not to be moved.

"Now," thought Catherine, "is the time to alarm my companions."

But how was this to be done?

She did not even know the room in which they slept, and had she done so they would be insensible from the effects of the narcotic which had been administered to them. How devoutly she thanked heaven that she had not partaken of the brandy and water. Then she suddenly remembered that Mr. Hartley had taken but little, and would probably sleep less soundly than the others. But again, she reflected that the coachman, like herself, had taken none at all. The thing to be done, then, was evidently to find the sleeping apartment of the driver. She would have preferred, certainly, to communicate with Mr. Hartly; but this was no time for prudery, when four lives were at stake.

Silently, then, and as rapidly as her cold and trembling fingers would permit her, Miss Farquhar dressed. She dared not strike a light, although she had a tinder-box—matches were not then in common use—so, with an earnest prayer to heaven for assistance, she groped her way to the door. But here an incident occurred which almost caused her to die with fright.

The door being rather old and crazy, and the wind high, it was no sooner opened than it slammed with a jar which shook the apartment. Catherine had the presence of mind to fling herself on the bed, cover herself with the blanket, and feign sleep; and fortunate was it that she did so. Scarcely had she lain down than the door was re-opened, and old Elsie, shading a rushlight with her hand, looked suspiciously into the apartment.

And now for the second time, the rat which had disturbed Catherine previous-

ly again proved her salvation. The animal had been feeding on some scrap in a corner of the room, and startled by the sudden light dashed across the floor, upsetting a small box in its course, and rushing under the old woman's feet into the passage.

"H—sh! h—sh!" screamed Elsie, suddenly retreating. Then Catherine heard her re-enter the kitchen, and say:

"It were only them darned rats a rioting, Joe."

For several minutes Miss Farquhar did not dare to renew her attempt to leave the room, but at last she ventured to do it. Using greater caution than before she succeeded this time in effectually opening the door.

But now what a task was before her! In utter darkness, and in a strange place, she had to find her way to a room of the locality of which she was entirely ignorant.

She remembered somewhere to have read that to pause under such circumstances is only to perplex the mind and to render a difficult task yet more difficult; so she turned resolutely to the right down the first passage which presented itself. She felt gradually along the wall, which was wet and clammy with ooze, of what description she knew not, and suddenly descended a step with a velocity that nearly threw her on to her face. Recovering herself, she became aware that she was standing almost up to her knees in some warm, thick substance, which she judged to be heather.

Where, then, could she possibly have got to? she asked herself.

Another step forward served to enlighten her, for cautiously as she made it, she stumbled over the back of a cow who was lying digesting her night's supper. The alarmed creature uttered a sort of surprised groan in remonstrance, but a few soothing words spoken in a low voice reassured her.

Catherine, then, had found her way into the cow-house, which in many rural districts is under the same roof as the dwelling-house, and divided from it only by a long-stone passage. The poor governess paused and reflected. It seemed to her that there was nothing for it but to turn back and try the passage to the left. She resolved to do so, but she no sooner formed the resolution than she became aware of the sound of footsteps advancing down the stone passage, and perceived a light looming gradually nearer and nearer. Poor Catherine felt her blood run cold. Discovery was certain; and discovery was death!

In an extremity of horror she crouched down between the two nearest cows, covering herself as far as she could with their litter of heather, which, as has been said, was fortunately very deep and abundant. Then she prayed fervently, scarcely venturing to breathe.

Nearer and nearer came the footsteps, and brighter grew the light. The governess's heart almost stopped beating, so intense was her fear. At last, with that singular feeling which impels the criminal on the scaffold of the guillotine to glance upwards at the axe which is about to destroy him, Catherine raised her eyes, and, oh, joy! It was the coachman!

The reaction was too great and she fainted.

The driver of the coach, with that restless regard for his horses in a strange place which distinguished all good drivers, had resolved after he had retired to rest to get up again and see in person after their comfort. He could not rest without seeing that his horses were also at ease. His companions were sleeping soundly; but to accomplish his purpose was very easy, since none of the men had thrown off their clothes, but were merely covered with rugs and plaids for temporary accommodation.

The guard's dark lantern was conveniently close at hand, and so up got honest John Dodson. However, when he gained the passage, he, like Miss Farquhar, mistook the way.

No sooner had the horse-loving John entered the shed where he expected to find his steeds, than he rubbed his eyes and stared around him with an air of utter bewilderment.

"Well, I'm darned!" he muttered, "if the horses ain't turned into cows."

And advancing his lantern towards the nearest "milky mother," who sat upon her haunches like a dog, regarding him with a look of unmitigated astonishment, he became aware of poor Catherine's pale insensible face, as it lay farther back, on the side of the neighboring cow.

"Lord, ha' mercy on us!" ejaculated the coachman, "if it ain't the young lady! What the prophet be she doing here among the cattle, nigh crushed to

death? A walkin' in her sleep, I do say." Muttering which, he raised Catherine gently from the ground, and proceeded to administer to her a dose from his private flask, of which mention has already been made.

Thus stimulated, the governess revived, and in a few words made her companion acquainted with the dangers which encompassed them.

The good man listened with a countenance in which surprise and indignation struggled for the mastery.

"The murderin' ruffian!" he cried. "But never mind, miss; if they have physicked 'others, I'm as good a man as that sneak with the flash pin any day."

"Ah! but," said Catherine, "that woman is a match for two men."

"P'raps you're right, miss," returned the driver, ruminating. "When a woman is a fiend, she is a fiend, and no mistake!"

"So that," continued Miss Farquhar, "you must try and rouse Mr. Hartley."

"He's a snorin' like a rigament, miss."

"No matter, you must try. He took very little of the spirits, and may be roused with some effort."

"And you, miss?"

"I will stay here," said Catherine, firmly. "Cover me up with the heather. I'm not afraid of the cows, poor things!—Then hasten to Mr. Hartley, and bring him here."

The driver looked at her admiringly.

"Well, you are a plucky one, miss!"

"Lose no time, but go!" said Catherine, entreatingly.

And the coachman departed.

In a few moments Mr. Hartley, much agitated, and still half stupefied by the effects of the narcotic, returned with the driver to the cow-house, where the brave, but trembling governess anxiously awaited them.

It was then decided that the coachman and Mr. Hartley should return to the kitchen, under pretence that they had not enough rugs and plaids to keep themselves sufficiently warm. They would thus be enabled to see what the plotters were doing. They accordingly proceeded at once to carry out the plan, Miss Farquhar following them at a distance.

To their extreme surprise, they found the landlady and the pseudo-grazier sound asleep, and breathing heavily.

A light burst upon Catherine's brain.

"We are saved!" she exclaimed joyously. "Heaven be praised! we are saved! They have fallen into their own trap."

Yes! As old Elsie and her companion had grown more and more affected by the spirits which they had taken, they became unable to discriminate between their own glasses and the two which had been intended for two of their visitors.

They had drunk the drugged brandy, which they had prepared for Miss Farquhar and the coachman.

Mr. Hartley and John Dodson bound the two insensible wretches securely to their chairs, although aware that many hours would elapse before their return to consciousness.

Fortunately, with the morning light came a thaw, and Mr. Hartley dispatched the coachman on one of the horses to York for assistance, whilst he remained to protect Miss Farquhar.

There was, of course, no evidence to convict the old woman and her accomplice. No robbery and murder had been committed, and there was but a solitary witness—Miss Farquhar—to speak as to their intention. Old Elsie, therefore escaped punishment, and, indeed she had never connived at murder.

The man 'Joe,' however, who proved to be the old woman's stepson, was 'wanted' for a previous robbery on the highway, and, as that crime was then punishable by the gallows, he suffered accordingly.

In after years—we have it on good authority—when Miss Farquhar became Mrs. Hartley, and the wife of a rector of a large and populous parish, she was often wont, as an illustration of the manner in which Providence brings about important results by the aid of apparent trifles, to relate the incident of the rat waking her from her sleep during the night that she passed at Red Moor House.

Due Notice.

An individual in Massachusetts, who like Rip Van Winkle, found considerable difficulty in "swearing off," has published the following "Notice to Liquor Sellers," in the papers: I hereby forbid all liquor or beer-sellers giving or selling me any liquor, beer, or other spirituous liquors, if they do they may consider themselves responsible, because at another time I shall take legal proceedings against them."

SUNDAY READING.

The Poisoned Robe.

AMONG the stories which have come down to us from the old Greeks is one which tells us that Dejanira, the wife of Hercules, once sent her husband a close-fitting robe dipped in poison, on pretense of preserving him from evil. Hercules, knowing nothing of the power of the poison, put it on, and for awhile felt no ill effects. But soon the poison began to work, and sharp pains ran through his whole body. And now he strove to pull off the robe, but in vain; it clung fast to him; or, if by means of his great strength he tore away a piece of it, the skin and flesh came with it, and at last the poison ate into his very vitals, so that he died. He had been strong enough for almost any thing else, but he was not strong enough to tear off that garment.

Now this is not a true story, of course; it is a fable; but as many of the old fables had a meaning in them, it has seemed as if this poisoned garment might have been intended to show the power of bad habits. They are easily begun, and the boy or girl does not at first feel the evil of them, but after they have practiced them awhile, and begin to feel the sting, then they faintly and vainly try to get rid of them, but they cling to fast to be got rid of.

Swearing, and lying are such poison-garments. Either is easily and thoughtlessly taken up; it grows upon the boy or young man until, from the single oath or falsehood, his whole conversation becomes one stream of evil. But let him even become a changed man, and then see how this garment sticks to him, how hard it is to overcome.

Intemperance is such a garment. For awhile it does not seem to injure those who indulge in it; but before long it begins to pierce them with a thousand stings. Then if any one try to tear away the habit, with what fatal force it clings! And if, by the grace of God, and the power of a strong will, he rends it away, how it is like the dividing asunder of soul and body. How terrible the pangs of the drunkard who strives to overcome his evil ways! Take care, boys, that you do not put on a garment like this.

While there are some who, by the grace of God, do overcome, and save themselves from the destroying venom of evil habit, the greater number either sink under it without an effort, or, after some vain attempt to tear themselves away from it, give up a strife for which they are not strong enough, and in which they are constantly overcome, and sink and die, destroyed by the fatal poison. Oh, never, never take up a habit, any habit which either must destroy you, or which if you finally wrench yourself away from it, will leave its deadly marks and scars upon you all your remaining days on earth.

Business Religion.

The Bible allows no slovenliness.—Christianity encourages invention, promotes refinement, suggests method, insists upon order, promptness, regularity, good humor, good manners, and good living. The resources of the earth are abundant for all. If manual labor were made a part of education, an essential in every school and college curriculum, the world would be brighter and cheerier for the change. It is because labor has been dunned out as toil for a livelihood—underpaid, overtaxed, unfashioned, and unchurched—that so many toilers are worn and weary, and forced to ignorance and melancholy; whereas if their work and position were properly rewarded they would be strong and vigorous, intellectual, religious, and happy.

One Drop at a Time.

Have you ever watched an icicle as it formed? You noticed how it froze one drop at a time, until it was a foot long or more. If the water was clear, the icicle remained clear, and sparkled brightly in the sun; but if the water was but slightly muddy the icicle looked foul, and its beauty spoiled. Just so our characters are forming; one little thought or feeling at a time adds its influence. If each thought be pure and right, the soul will be lovely and sparkle with happiness; but if impure and wrong, there will be final deformity and wretchedness.

VANITY.—Of all passions vanity is the greatest corrupter of good dispositions.—Others subside occasionally. Avarice sometimes sleeps. But vanity is a perpetual trade-wind, always moved by a single cause, and always setting one way."