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THE PROFESSOR'S STORY.

THERE were six of us seated around the fire, each trying to do his share to make the evening pass pleasantly. It was now the professor's turn to tell us a story and after much pressing he began:

"Gentleman," said he, gravely, "no man cares to gain for himself the reputation of a liar or a maniac. Yet this is exactly what you are pressing both of us to do. I have no doubt that the experience which I am about to relate, and in which my friend the doctor bore no unimportant part, will appear absolutely incredible to persons of your advanced views.

There was a touch of sarcasm in the worthy professor's tone, but in our eagerness to hear his story we found it convenient to disregard this.

"However," he continued, "I shall risk it. If you choose to disbelieve it, why I shall endeavor to have charity for your ignorance and conceit. Now, doctor, if you will hand me the tobacco and one of the pipes—the ranker and blacker the better—I will proceed."

Having filled his pipe and settled himself comfortably in his chair, he began thus:

"It must be fully ten years ago that the doctor and myself were engaged upon a geological survey of the northern part of this State. We had labored diligently during the summer and fall, when toward the close of a cold November day we shouldered our knapsacks and turned our faces homeward.

"Our way led through a chain of black and rugged hills towards a frontier town, twenty miles distant, where we intended to take the railroad. A more forbidding region it has never been my misfortune to see. It was a perfect chaos, blackened and warped by primeval fires, and destitute of the smallest trace of vegetation. Tall cliffs towered a thousand feet above our heads, shutting out the light of the dull November sky. Sluggish streams filtered between the crevices of the rocks, and poured noiselessly into deep and motionless pits. It seemed that the blight of death had fallen upon the whole country.

"Well knowing the peril of attempting to proceed through such a region after nightfall, we halted at sunset, and building a fire at the foot of a crag, disposed ourselves to rest as well we might. Exhausted with the toils of the day, the doctor was soon asleep, and I was not long in following his example.

"How long I had slumbered I knew not, when I found myself sitting upright, peering nervously in the darkness around me. It seemed to me that some one had uttered a wild appealing cry in the very portals of my ears. For some moments I sat so, wondering and anxious. Then I reflected that as there could be no human being in the neighborhood except ourselves, the sound which had alarmed me must have been the shriek of some bird or animal. Explaining the matter thus, I was on the point of lying down again, when I was arrested by a repetition of the cry. This time there could be no mistake. Wild, long, and, it appeared to me, full of intolerable anguish, it re-echoed among the crags with fearful shrillness. With an uncontrollable start, I turned and shook the doctor to awake him.

"Be quiet," he muttered, "I am awake and heard it all."

"What can it be?" I asked anxiously. "Surely, nothing human; no one lives in this region for miles around. Perhaps it is a wild-cat."

"No," he said, between his teeth

'such a sound never came from the throat of a wild-cat. There it is again. Listen!'

"The cry was repeated. It was a woman's voice, but it expressed such supreme misery as I believe woman never felt before. It came ringing up the gorge with a weird and mournful intonation that chilled the blood in my heart. By the doctor's quick breathing, I could tell that he was as much affected as myself. Neither of us spoke or moved; both waited for a renewal of the cry, in the hope of arriving at some rational explanation of it.

"Again it came; but now like a low, tremulous sob. I am not a superstitious man, gentlemen, but I confess that I sat there shivering with a species of horror that was utterly new to me. What could it be? Not a living woman, surely; alone and suffering in an inaccessible fastness where we were mortally certain nothing human dwelt. And then what misery was it that gave itself such uncanny expression? Not fear, nor bodily pain, but something terrible, something nameless to us. While we were debating these questions in smothered tones, the cry came once again. This time in words we understood:

"Help! Oh, God! help!"

"At this intelligible appeal to our manhood, our superstitious weakness at once disappeared. Seizing a torch from our smouldering fire, we made our way hastily toward a pile of rocks a few hundred yards distant, whence the sound seemed to have proceeded. Scrambling up the height we came suddenly upon a strange and mournful scene. Before us stood a small, wretched-looking hut, evidently constructed by hands unused to such labor, unglazed, and without a chimney. There was a dull light within, and through the open door we saw the body of a man apparently lifeless, lying prone upon the earthen floor. Beside him, with arms flying wildly over her head, knelt the figure of a woman, evidently the one whose cries had alarmed us. It need but a glance to assure us that some strange tragedy had taken place, and without a moment's hesitation we entered the hut.

"The woman raised her eyes as we approached, but gave no further heed to us. Apparently her great sorrow had driven her distracted. She was a young creature, hardly twenty, I should judge, and, despite the signs of hardship and sorrow visible on her features, very beautiful. Her form was slight and even attenuated, but in its shabby dress preserved traces of former refinement.

"Her companion, a young man of about her own age, attired in a coarse woodman's suit, had evidently succumbed to hardship or disease, and was either insensible or dead. His pinched and ghastly countenance must have been once very handsome, but now it looked old and worn as that of a man of sixty. He had apparently fallen in his present position, and the girl had been unable to raise him.

"My friend, the doctor," continued the worthy professor, "surlily, uncouth and cynical as he commonly appears, has as kind a heart as ever beat in a man's breast—no flattery, my dear fellow, for it must be confessed that you have faults that more than counterbalance your one good trait. Well, gentlemen, he bent over the poor creature, and in a voice as gentle as a woman's endeavored to arouse the girl from her lethargy.

"Who are you?" he said, "and what has happened?"

"He is dead—dead!" she muttered, hoarsely.

"Perhaps it is not as bad as that," he rejoined. "Tell us all about it. We are friends, my dear, and medical men, and may be able to assist you."

"He died this morning, before my very eyes," she moaned, "died, oh, my God! of starvation. And I never knew that he was depriving himself for my sake. Oh, my husband; why did you not let me die with you? And she threw herself across the body, sobbing as if her poor heart would break. There were tears in the doctor's eyes as he looked at me," added the professor, with a tremor in his voice, "and the rascal has always sworn that my own were not dry. That, however, is aside from the subject.

"Though we knew nothing of these two poor children—for they were but

little more—we felt that we had chanced upon a strange sad story of love, pride and suffering, such as is rarely told, even in this unhappy world.

"The doctor stooped down and felt at the heart of the prostrate man.

"He is dead," he whispered, motioning me to imitate his example.

"Yes, dead," I replied, after examining the corpse.

"How we made the truth known to the poor wife I do not remember. It would seem that she had preserved some faint remnant of hope until our assurance destroyed it utterly. With a low groan she fell suddenly at our feet, insensible. Although at a loss as to what course to pursue, we felt it more than our duty to remain in the hut for the night; and on the morning to make the best arrangements for the poor girl's comfort that were possible.

"Fortunately the doctor had his medical case in his pocket. Administering a powerful sleeping potion to her, he placed her in happy unconsciousness of the events that were to follow. We then proceeded to a more careful examination of the man.

"Without vanity I can say that both the doctor and myself have received some few testimonials as to our scientific ability from the world. You will probably believe that we are capable of deciding upon a very simple case of death by starvation?" He paused and looked gravely around. "Very good, remember then, that I assert upon my professional reputation that the man was stone dead."

"Yes," added the doctor, who had hitherto remained silent, "the life must have been extinct more than five hours when we found him."

"Well," continued the professor, with increasing gravity, "having satisfied ourselves upon this point, we covered the corpse decently and sat down to wait for morning. Though in no mood for conversation, the startling experience of the evening kept us both awake for several hours. But at length, completely overcome with weariness and excitement, I fell into a light slumber.

"Almost immediately, it seemed, I was awakened with a shock. The doctor was bending over me with an expression of wonder and alarm upon his face.

"Wake up," he said, in a troubled whisper, "something very strange has been going on in this room for many minutes past."

"What is it?" I asked, "I thought I heard some one speaking."

"You did," he replied, "I have distinctly heard a voice close beside us, yet there is no one in the room except ourselves and these two poor people."

"Perhaps the woman has been talking in her sleep," I suggested, "or it may be that the man is not dead after all."

"No, I have looked to both," he returned. "One sleeps soundly, and the other will never speak again in this world. So satisfy yourself."

"I arose, and, trimming the lamp, proceeded first to the couch where the girl lay. She at least could not have spoken, for all her senses were locked in a profound stupor. I then examined the corpse and found it as we had left it, except that the features were more shrunken and sallow than before. No voice could have come from those rigid lips. Concluding that we had both dreamed or had mistaken some nocturnal cry for a human voice, I reoccupied the light, and was about to resume my seat, when my movements were arrested by a very singular voice.

"There it is again!" muttered the doctor, agitatedly.

"A low, confused murmur, resembling nothing that I had ever heard before, arose in the room, and seemed to circulate in the air for an instant and die away. Again it arose, coming from a point over our heads, and gradually descending until it appeared to emanate from some invisible source immediately beside us. I know of nothing with which to compare the intonation, except it may be the articulation of the telephone, or that of a ventriloquist.

"The first words we caught were, 'Oh, my poor wife!'

"It would be impossible to describe the effect that these words produced upon us. It was not so much the tone, weird and uncanny as it was, as the

startling significance of the words that amazed us.

"Who could have spoken them but the husband of the woman lying stupefied upon the couch? Yet he had been dead many hours. Full of the repugnance of the horror of the idea, we started up and again examined not only every nook and cranny of the hut itself, but even the space outside for many yards around. There was no human being besides ourselves in the vicinity.

"We again scrutinized the corpse. It had neither changed its position nor its appearance. The flesh had grown perfectly cold and the muscles rigid; there was not a trace of vitality in it. Now," continued the professor, wiping his forehead nervously. "I have arrived at what I imagine will be the limit of your credulity. I do not expect you to credit what followed; but I swear to you, on the word of an honest man, that I do not deviate from the truth as much as a syllable when I say, that while we bent above the body we again heard the voice proceeding from a distant part of the room, saying audibly:

"In the name of God, assist me back to life!"

"With hearts beating thick and fast, we stood gazing at each other absolutely thunderstruck. An experience so terrifying, so utterly without precedent, completely unnerved us. While we remained stupefied with horror, the voice was again audible.

"Oh, have pity!" it said, "aid me to return to life."

"It was some minutes before either of us could recover from our amazement sufficiently to make any reply.

"Who is it that speaks to us?" asked the doctor, in a low tone.

"The soul of the man who lies dead before you," it replied.

"It is impossible that the dead can speak," answered the doctor.

"No, for the intelligence never dies," replied the voice. "My body is indeed dead, but that with which I lived and thought and loved is still in this room."

"What is that you desire?" asked the doctor, carrying on this strange colloquy with increased wonder.

"To be aided to resume my former existence," was the rejoinder. "I dare not leave my poor wife unprotected in this wilderness. I cannot see her suffer. I love her beyond all my hopes of a future life, and by the power of my love I have remained near her, and have been able to communicate with her. I cannot, I will not, be separated from her. I must return to her in my human shape."

"Whether the doctor's courage deserted him at this point or not I cannot say; but he spoke no more; and as the voice was no longer audible, we remained silent in a state of mind that baffles all description.

"I am morally certain that both of us would have fled instantly from the place had it not been for the poor creature sleeping upon the bed. We would not leave her to face alone a mystery that shook even nerves as toughened as ours. After a hasty consultation as to what course we ought to follow, we resumed our former seats and waited in breathless expectation for what was next to occur.

"Some hours had passed in this way, and the first dim traces of dawn were shining upon the eastern horizon, when with a simultaneous start we sprang to our feet. The voice had again spoken. This time it had proceeded, not from some indefinite point in the atmosphere, but from beneath the sheet enveloping the corpse:

"Help!" it cried, in faint, but distant accents, "for Christ's sake, help!"

"For an instant we hesitated—and who would not?—then hastened to the body and removed the covering. There was no alteration in its pallor and rigidity, but we perceived that the lips, from which a faint murmur was issuing, trembled slightly. Here our instincts conquered our weakness. Whatever the mystery involved in the matter, a human being was struggling to regain existence, and our impulse was to aid without question. A powerful restorative was administered, and, before many moments had passed, we saw the color coming back to the wan cheeks and the shrunken muscles re-shaping themselves with the current of warm blood. Then with a faint sigh the eyes opened and

gazed at us inquiringly. In a word, gentlemen, the dead was restored to life.

"It is needless to detail what followed. In the meeting which occurred between these two poor young creatures, we felt ourselves more than repaid for the startling experiences of the previous night. It can do no harm to add that we claimed and exercised the right of securing their future prosperity out of our ample means. We learned no more of their former history than that the persecution of those whose wishes their marriage had opposed, had driven them to hide their poverty and misfortune in the wilderness. We have heard of them since.

"The young man, as we discovered on questioning him, remembered nothing of his sensations while unconscious, except a vague, dreamlike, and yet intense sorrow for his young wife. He had no knowledge whatever of the voice which had addressed us, and appeared to believe that he had labored under temporary suspension of animation arising from starvation. We did not combat his belief, for we believed that he was actually dead, and that he only returned to life through his great love. Who will deny that love is stronger than death, and that it goes with us even beyond the grave?"

Brother Gardner on Dancing.

"What I was gwine to remark," said the old man as the meeting opened, "was to de effect dat a sartin cull'd clergyman, who has charge of a flock in de western part of dis State, has written me a letter axin' dat dis club-sot its face agin' dancin'. It am his opinyun dat a pusion who stands at de head of de line when de Virginny reel am called off am on clus terms wid old Satan. Now, den, I don't say dat I would take de ole woman on my arm an' walk off to a public hall to jine in a dance wid Tom, Dick and Harry, but de odder night when Sir Isaac Walpole kin a little party we war dar, an' we shook de foot in de liveliest sort o' style. What harm kin come from slidin' across a pine floo' to de music of fiddles am past my grip. De music can't be wicked, an' if it am wuss for a man to glide dan walk den I am ready to believe anything. An exmber of dis club sot down by his own fireside one night an' talked 'nuff lies and scandal in one hour to last de cull'd folks of Detroit for six months. Could dancin' do any wuss? People who doan' dance or play or attend games am de werry pussions who have time to gossip an' start scandals, an' we all know it. I want dis clergyman to go on doin' good in buildin' up de church; but when he axes me to help choke down de social feelin' an' de jolly speert which de Lawd gin mos men, I must refuse. Heaven must be a werry gloomy place if it am peopled wid only dese pussions who am 'fraid to open der moufs when day laff fur fear de evil one will jump down der froats. I say to every man in dis hall to go ahead an' enjoy himself as best he kin, an' as much as he kin widout doin' injury to his fellow men. Stop at de limits in all fings an' you'll break no laws nor add to your sins. Let us now purceed wid de purceedings."

His Unknown Friend.

The *Sarina Observer* says: "A good joke is being told just now of an old resident, living not a hundred miles from Sarina. Col. F— came to town and went to one of the leading hotels for dinner. A new feature had been introduced into the hotel since the Colonel's last visit, in the shape of a waiter in full dress, swallow-tail coat, etc. The Colonel came in and seated himself at a table, and the waiter came up and said: 'What will you have, sir?' The Colonel, who is a little deaf, shook him cordially by the hand, and rising, said: 'Really, you have the advantage of me, sir, er-er, where was it I met you before? Toronto?' Then leading him to a window, and turning him so that the light would fall on his face, again remarked that 'the countenance was familiar, but really he could not place him,' etc. The waiter blushed, of course, and repeated the remark, 'What will you have, sir?' The Colonel thanked him, 'Really I never take anything before dinner,' he said and returning to his seat he asked the waiter to be seated. The waiter, of course, excused himself, and sent a pretty dining-room girl to wait on the Colonel.—The Colonel went home and is still wondering who his distinguished friend was."