

Friday, - - - - - January 12, 1912.

THE STONE VAULT.

[CONCLUDED.]

One morning I was very busy at my desk in the office, when a gentleman came in and asked for Mr. Morris or Mr. Grinby. Old Mr. Grinby was home with the flu, and the young gentlemen were in. I saw the gentleman was a clergyman, and I called him to the study. He had called to see me about a subscription for a mission to the heathen, or Sunday school, or new church. But his first words made me start. They were these:

"You remember, of course, a burglary committed here a year ago or there. I could not keep my secret, but I went forward, trembling like a leaf. Young Mr. Grinby had turned quite faint, and was leaning against the wall for support."

"You are agitated," said the clergyman; "I fear you will soon be still more affected by what you must hear. A person now in custody, condemned to execution, has a confession to make to you in regard to this affair—a very horrible one, I fear."

He took a card from his pocket and wrote a few lines. Then he said:

"If you will call at the prison any time to-day, you will not be too late. To-morrow is Friday, and he is to suffer execution at dawn. Present this, if you please, and I implore you, ask no questions now."

Before they could say much, he was gone, afraid, I think, to be the first to tell the story. One gentleman called a cab and took me to the prison, at my request. They seemed to expect us at the prison, and we were admitted. But in the narrow corridor Morris stopped us.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you must nerve yourselves. Have you reflected that you may see Benjamin Wade when yonder door is opened?"

Young Grinby put his hand upon his heart and seemed to turn for fear again. It was the first time the thought entered my mind, and it was a blow. It staggered me.

The next minute the turnkey flung the door open and we were the only ones on the floor lay a man—a broad-shouldered fellow in rough garments—who seemed to have cast himself down in grief and terror. It was not Ben Wade. At first I thought I had never seen the face he lifted as he arose. In a moment it came to me. It was the leader of the gang who had been arrested for that old attempt at robbery when we found little Ben in the stone vault.

"You've come, have you?" said he, sitting down on the stone seat; "and I see you know me. They've caught me again, and it's my murder this time, and I've got to swing. If it wasn't for me, no person would have got this out of me. But I've promised, and I always keep my word. I do. You remember a young man called Ben?"

"What of him?" we cried in a breath.

"Not much—he didn't rob your place, that's all. We done it—Dick Burd, Slippery Tom and me. Tell you how it was. You know that boy informed on us, and I was locked up for hard labor for more years than most men live. I didn't stay, though; I cut off and came home. And the first thing I did was to vow vengeance on that boy. Why, there he was, a gray young buck in fine livery, with the handle of money, and thought of and trusted just for having done us. Prond, too—wouldn't speak to us in the street. Threatened to give information. If I ever saw one of upswiping about, I heard it all. I swore I'd fix him; and it seemed to come to me.

"One night I was going to Stapp's to have a drink, and I was with me, and in a quiet sort of street we came up to Ben in a hurry."

"I'd have knocked him on the head, but Burd stopped me."

"What he's up to," says he, and we followed. He went down to our place and went in. He left the door ajar, and we made the best of it. He was coming out with a book or something in his hand, and we met him. He was plucky, I tell you. One of us wouldn't have got off so easy; but we were two to one. We gagged and tied him, and made a clean sweep of that place that night."

"And Ben—my God, did Ben think we would not believe him?" cried Mr. Grinby. "He had but to come to us, to tell the truth. Where is he? Do you know? Speak!"

The robber was turning the hue of ashen. His words came slowly. His eyes glanced over his shoulder, and he backed up against the wall. "We looked him up in the stone vault," he said, "and took the keys with us. If you look, you'll find him there."

And Mr. Grinby fainted outright in my arms.

Well, sir, the robber's words were true. The stone vault was opened that day, and there—no matter. It was easier to know the ring he wore, and the keys, and the purse in his pocket, than poor Ben Wade.

The first thing Mr. Humphries said was, "Thank heaven, Lucy cannot know it." And the next he added, "Oh, but the certainty would have been better for her after all! And then to know his name was clear."

And so that is the story of our stone vault, and strange as it is, it is quite true. You may see the man who was on the side Lucy's any day. And Mrs. Humphries—she's a romantic woman, sir—says she thinks the violet and roses grew there of their own accord under the white monument.

HEAT OF WINTER ROOMS.

The investment of fifty or seventy-five cents in a thermometer will make paying returns in health before Spring. The great tendency in Winter is keeping rooms too warm. The foundation of pneumonia, pleurisy and pulmonary consumption is frequently laid in overheated, ill-ventilated apartments. The inmates become accustomed to breathing hot, close air, the system is toned down and relaxed, and a slight exposure to wet and cold results in serious illness. Some years since we called one Winter evening on a friend whom we found in a cozy sitting-room with a large fire, iron stove, a low ceiling, and the heat ranging about the eighties. She was suffering from a severe cold, but could give no account of how she took it. A month later she was prostrated with pneumonia, and she and her sister died within a week of each other, and were buried in the same grave. The intelligent use of a thermometer would, doubtless, have saved both of these valuable lives. The mercury in the tube should never be permitted to stand above seventy. If that temperature is not sufficient to give warmth it is an indication that the person does not take sufficient exercise, and the cure for it is more miles and more fannel. In the coldest weather, when the ground is like stone under the feet and there is no drip from the eaves, when snow covers the roof, rooms should be ventilated. Pure air should be admitted through open doors and windows, so that the oxygen consumed by flame and by respiration may be replaced, and the effects and poisonous matters driven off by the body thoroughly driven off. As one of our best writers on household science remarks, ventilation is a question of dollars and cents. But, but much wiser he is who chooses to pay a large coal bill and enjoy fresh air in his Winter sitting-room than he who keeps everything shut up that heat may not be lost, and has a long doctor's bill to settle in the Spring, and maybe a grave to cut through the frozen turf.

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