

chap, who thought more, and said less than any other of his companions, taken advantage of a lull in the chorus of approval that followed upon Charlie Hall's little speech, to say that he had a plan to propose.

Instantly the others were all attention, for Sydney never spoke without having something to say. His idea in a few words was this: to buy a miniature satchel, and in order to make believe it was full of money, to drop into it a few nice fat mice from the barn.

"Yes," said Tommy Stubbs, "Oh! yes, Mother Grumps hates mice like poison. She'll scream herself into a fit."

A hearty round of applause greeted the unfolding of Sydney's brilliant proposal. The scheme was adopted unanimously, and a committee, on which Charlie Hall was placed in order to console him for the rejection of his plan, was at once struck for the carrying out of the enterprise.

There was no difficulty about this. The material for the satchel was not hard to find, and it was agreed that the mice should be kept upon starvation allowance for a day beforehand. Sydney undertook to catch and starve the mice. The other boys were to get the satchel. Nobody was to breathe a word of the prank. The boys found it hard to keep so grand a secret all to themselves; but somehow or other they managed to do it, and St. Valentine's Day drew near without the slightest hint of what they had in mind getting beyond their own circle.

Up to February it had been quite an ordinary winter in Intervale, but with the first of the month began a series of snowstorms that threatened to make the roads impassible. The 12th was marked by a wild gale that drifted the snow against the houses in huge banks of white, which kept the Intervale folks busy all next day in making paths through them. But St. Valentine's Eve was as fine as heart could wish, a clear bright winter night, just cold enough to be bracing.

Soon after supper the boys gathered at their appointed rendezvous, and having first of all whetted their appetites for mischief by leaving some of the regulation "night-mares" at different doors, finally about nine o'clock proceeded to carry out their design upon poor old Mrs. Scadding. Cautiously they approached the house. Sydney Lewis with careful pride, bearing under his left arm the parcel that contained the curious Valentine that was to be delivered.

"Hello": he exclaimed in a tone of surprise, as they turned off from the sidewalk. "I guess Mother Grumps has not been out to-day, there's no path made to her door."

"The old lady's been too lazy to clear one," suggested Charlie Hall. "We'd better tramp one for her while we're about it."

Through the deep white drifts they made their way only to find the front door buried nearly to the top and not a sign of light or life about the cottage.

This discovery made them hesitate, and hold a whispered consultation, the result of which was that Sydney Lewis volunteered to go around to the back of the cottage and reconnoitre before anything further was done. Charlie Hall accompanied him. The snow lay deep and undisturbed in the yard, but they ploughed through it and on coming into view of the kitchen window were rewarded by seeing a light behind it.

"Ah! ha!" whispered Sydney "Mother Grumps is in her kitchen. Let's try and peep in without getting caught."

As silently as two panthers the boys crept up to the window which happened to have no blind, and holding his breath Sydney gave a quick glance into the room.

He started back at once. Then looked again, crying under his breath; "See, Charlie. What can be the matter with her?"

Charlie put his face to the window. What the boys saw was this. A small lamp burned on the table, and beside it lay an open Bible. An empty rocking chair stood near the table, and on the floor between it and the window was a dark heap that could be nothing else than the body of Mrs. Scadding. Whether she was alive or dead the boys could not tell.

"Let's scoot!" exclaimed Charlie Hall, grasping Sydney's arm nervously. "She may be dead."

But instead of "scooting" Sydney put down the box and made a move towards the door.

"What are you going to do Syd?" asked his companion in a surprised tone.

"I'm going in to see what's the matter with her" answered Sydney quietly.

"Oh! don't come away" urged Charlie, moving off.

"No---I'm going in---Don't be a goose, come along; and the latch of the door clicked as he pressed it open. Very reluctantly Charlie obeyed, and they stood beside the prostrate form. Mrs. Scadding was lying upon her face on the hard floor. Bending down Sydney lifted her head tenderly; "She's not dead" he said "only in a faint. Run and tell my mother to come quick. I'll stay here till you get back."

Off darted Charlie like an arrow from a bow. Dashing past the astonished boys waiting at the front he shouted to them

"Can't stop to tell you. Come along" and rushed on, followed by the whole party. He did not pause until he reached Mrs. Lewis' house, and rapped loudly on the door. Panting out his message to Mrs. Lewis, her kind heart was quick to respond, and in a very few minutes with a basket on her arm and escorted by her husband, she followed Charlie back to the cottage, where Sydney was found still supporting Mrs. Scadding's head in his lap, for he was not strong enough to lift her to the sofa near by. Under Mrs. Lewis' directions the fire, which had gone out, was quickly rekindled, and some water heated. In the basket were restoratives, and wine. The poor little helpless form was gently placed upon the sofa by Mr. Lewis' strong hands, and before long the closed eyes opened, and with a gasp and moan Mrs. Scadding came to herself.

At first too bewildered to speak, she presently found her voice, and then explained that she had been feeling very weak and miserable for several days so that she was unable to venture out of doors to procure the necessaries of life. In fact she had been actually starving, and no one knew of her need. While sitting reading her Bible for comfort, she must have fallen from her chair in a faint, and, as Mr. Lewis said, but for the providential appearance of the boys would undoubtedly have died before morning. Of course the boys had to explain how they came to be on hand, but their intended mischief was readily forgiven, seeing how fortunately matters had turned out.

Under Mrs. Lewis' friendly care, Mrs. Scadding soon regained her strength, and being too sensible a woman not to feel properly grateful to the boys for having been the means of saving her life, so entirely changed in her bearing toward them that the old time enemies and tormentors became friends and benefactors, doing her many a good turn by way of showing their appreciation of her altered demeanor towards them.

No one was better pleased than Sydney Lewis at the unlooked for change in the programme of that St. Valentine's Eve. He meant mischief, but he did good, and he felt profoundly glad that such had been the result, at the same time making a pledge with himself that he would think twice before undertaking anything of the kind again.