

imminent John Fairmeadow was never permitted to be aware), when, all at once, and clamouring above the old wind's howling, there was a tremendous knocking at the door—a knocking so loud, and commanding, and prolonged, that Pattie Batch jumped like a fawn in alarm, and stood for a moment with palpitating heart and a mighty inclination to fly to the bedroom and lock herself in. Presently, however, she mustered courage to call "Come in!" in a sufficient tone: whereupon, the door was immediately flung wide, and big John Fairmeadow, with a wild, dusty blast of the gale, strode in with a gigantic basket, and slammed the door behind him, leaving the shivering, tenacious Shadow, which had secretly followed from Swamp's End, to keep cold vigil outside.

"Hello, there, Pattie Batch!" John Fairmeadow roared. "Merry Christmas!"

Pattie Batch stared.

"Hello, I say!" John Fairmeadow cried, again. "Merry Christmas, ye rascal!"

Pattie Batch, gulping her delight, and quite incapable of uttering a word, because of it, flew to the kitchen, instead of to the bedroom, and returned with a broom, with which, while the Shadow peeked in at the window, she brushed, and scraped, and slapped John Fairmeadow so vigorously that John Fairmeadow scampered into a corner and stood at bay.