

my face and whined his sympathy, and then with intense agony I managed to tie my handkerchief round his neck and sent him on his errand for help. I heard him splashing through the water, and prostrated by the exertion, I fainted.

When I came to myself I was lying in a large, comfortable chamber, whose walls were lit up by the ruddy glow of cheerful fire, and by my bedside stood an elderly gentleman, anxiously watching me. Near him was a lady, who seeing me try to rise, spoke to me in a gentle tone.

"Do not move, Walter, you are now in your brother's house; I am your new sister; keep up a brave heart, and all will be well yet. Lie still, dear, for we must have no exertion."

The grave gentleman, whom I afterwards learnt to be the kindest doctor I ever knew, gave me a draught, and in a few minutes I was in a sound, refreshing sleep.

My kind nurse told me at last how it was that I was rescued, and I cannot do better than give the narrative of my preservation in her own words:—

"At four o'clock on the afternoon of Christmas Day, we were sitting down to dinner, when the shepherd came to Francis, and said that his dog Ranger had come to him dripping with wet, and with a handkerchief tied round his neck, which, upon examination, was marked 'W. Holbrooke.' The man thought the incident sufficiently important to be mentioned, and I was going to send him away with a laugh at his puzzled air, when I saw your brother turn pale, lay down the carving-knife, and leave the room in evident agitation."

"He returned in a moment. 'Nelly,' he said to me, 'Ranger's feet are covered with mud from the copper stream. He has been into the stalactite cavern, and as true as Heaven, Walter has got in there somehow or other.' He then went in search of you leaving us before an untasted dinner, as miserable a party as ever sat down on a Christmas Day."

"We were not kept long in suspense, for in less than half an hour the waggoner's lad came running back with a message for me to get warm blankets, send for the doctor, and have all ready; 'For,' little Jim added, 'they've found a poor gentleman frozen to death, and master's crying like a school-boy.'"

Thus passed my Christmas Day, but I have spent many a merry one since then at Ashleigh Grange. Through Frank's intervention, the lord of the manor has made such a belt of protection round the treacherous spinney, that I think it will be a long time ere another wanderer spends his Christmas Day in the stalactite cavern."

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"And what became of Ranger?" said Frank Barrington. "By Jove, sir, I would have bought that dog a silver collar and kept him on the farm of the land as long as I had a sixpence to call my own, if I had been you."

"So I did," replied Holbrooke; "I brought him to London, where he came to a melancholy end—whether he was poisoned by an old maid who