

fear of meeting the Austrians; so old men and delicate women and children must make the fearful journey, or remain to be brutally treated by the pitiless foe.

The troops poured into the valley, and the people (whose plans were already laid with caution and prudence, in case such a necessity should arise) pretended to submit. With the first shades of evening they went as usual to their beds, and soon the whole valley was as silent as death, except as the sounds of brawling or shouting and singing came from the church and schoolhouse, where the officers were quartered.

When the darkness of night, however, had settled over their valley, one by one they stole from their homes and met in a large cavern in the mountain side, which was hidden by a tall snow-covered rock from the sight of those in the village. Here they knelt down, and the old pastor fervently implored the protection of God in their fearful journey.

This done, they set forward, the aged pastor leading the van, some of the strongest men and women walking on each side of the women and little ones, who followed, and the remainder bringing up the rear, that they might be ready, in case they were pursued and overtaken, to meet the foe. Oh! a fearful journey it was indeed!

More than one poor babe, at every stop for rest, was buried in the snow, without even a rough stone to mark its grave; and more than one old or feeble person had to be left behind until he recovered strength to follow on, some stout companion staying with him to assist and defend. When the gray light of morning began to break over the mountain top, the astonished Austrian soldiers saw their escaped prisoners moving in a long black line over the snow upon the summit, where it seemed as if even the chamois-hunter or the wild goat would hardly dare to follow.

Among that little band of fugitives "for the sake of God" was Meta Bannermann, the widow of one of the noblest and bravest sons of the valley. Almost at the beginning of the struggle he had been killed in an attempt to protect from brutal insult the corpse of the old pastor's wife, and left his own wife, with her young babe and a crippled son of six years old, to the grateful love and care of the pastor and his flock.

Carefully, that bitter cold night, she wrapped her sleeping babe and held it tightly to her bosom. For hours they trudged on through the snow, even the stoutest scarce able to bear the intense cold; and when, at every halt for rest, she saw the little stiffened bodies taken from the arms of the weeping mothers and laid in the snow, she held her little one still closer, and prayed in her innermost heart that she might be spared that trial.

But the little bundle in her arms began to grow heavier, and she could scarce refrain from a cry of agony as her heart told her the cause. But still she clasped the little body closely, as if by the warmth of her own bosom to restore life to her child. She spoke no word, though; none knew the babe was dead. She could not leave it there in the cold snow. No, she would not tell her trouble; heavy as was the load, she would bear it, stagger on with it still, and if a merciful God allowed them to reach in safety the shelter they were seeking, she could bury it in God's own acre beside the church, where she could go, day after day, and look at the little grave.

But the watchful eye of her boy saw that there was a change upon her gentle face, and thinking she was weary he asked earnestly: "Mother, can I not carry the little Dora for a while, and let you rest?"

"H-s-s-h!" said the mother hastily, and again she put her ear down to the pale lips, as if she still hoped to hear them breathe.

At last the summit was reached, and the fugitives began the descent on the other side; a journey still more fearful than their climbing. They soon came to a large cave, and here they stopped to rest and pray. A cave it could scarcely be called; it was a space enclosed by some huge blocks of stone resting against each other; but it was a welcome shelter from the bitter, bitter cold, and gratefully they thanked God for the mercy that had led them to it.

But now the poor mother could no longer hide her loss. The pitying old pastor with gentle force took the cold burden from her weary arms, and laid it to its rest with other little beings like itself who had gone to a world of peace and joy.