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"Not often," answered Mary, with a rather ghastly smile. "There are two men almost always on the premises, my father and the gardener."

"Have you a man about the place now?"

As she hesitated for the moment what to answer, a way out of her difficulties occurred to her. There was a basement to the vicarage, reached by a flight of stairs, and provided with a strong door at the top. This door could be bolted from the outside, and there was no window to the cellars below large enough for a man to get out by. There were only three small openings, all provided with strong iron bars; so that if once she could persuade her visitor to go down there, he would be safely imprisoned, and she would have time to look about her.

But how was she to get him into the trap?

She knew that both the coachman-gardener and his wife, who lived in a cottage adjoining the stable at the end of the long garden, would on this Saturday evening be out doing their marketing in the village.

"My father is not here," she answered cautiously, after a short pause. "But the coachman lives at the end of the garden."

"I suppose you have some means of communicating between the stables and the house?"

"Oh, yes," said Mary quickly. "If you will open that door, and go to your left a little way, you will come to an-

self. Do—do go, there's a good girl! I don't know how long the door will hold; it seems to creak on its hinges already."

For the visitor was emphasising his displeasure at the treatment meted out to him by blows, which grew ever more vigorous upon the basement door.

This sound redoubled Perrin's nervous fears; and although she pretended to agree, to go to the village for help, Mary heard the key turned in the lock of her door, when the girl got to her room at the top of the house, and felt quite sure she should get no help from that quarter.

In the meantime the knocking had ceased, and the silence which followed alarmed her even more than the noise had done. She thought that the madman might be preparing some more effectual attack upon the door, so she went quickly back into the dining-room and hurried to the window, so that, if he should break out, she might be able to run out of the house and seek protection.

Indeed, she was in a divided mind as to whether she should do this at once; but cowardly as Perrin had shown herself to be, Mary did not like the idea of leaving her alone in the house with the lunatic. It occurred to her as she passed by the sideboard, and noted that the great bread-knife was laying on the platter, to wonder what the madman had done with the long knife he had had in his hands when he came into the house. Had he taken it with him? And was he now using it as a tool with which to



1st Communion, Catholic Church, Long Lake, Holdfast, Sask.

other door on your right, leading to a flight of stairs. Ring the bell in the wall on the left, half way down, and if he is at the stable, the coachman will come."

The visitor rose slowly. He seemed puzzled by these directions, but appeared quite willing to follow them.

"Would you, then, allow me to send him into the village, if he should be here?" he asked.

"Oh, certainly."

"Thank you very much."

He opened the door and went out into the hall, and Mary, running across the room, listened with a fast-beating heart while he pulled open the heavy door at the head of the cellar stairs. She heard him go cautiously down a couple of steps, and then she flew into the hall, ran on tip-toe to the cellar door, which he had left open to enable him to see, and shutting it quickly, pulled the heavy bolt across it, and drew a long, shivering sigh of relief.

If only the old door would hold fast, she was safe.

She did not heed his cries, his knocks on the door as she ran to the kitchen and beckoned to Perrin, who started up from the chair on which she was sitting by the table, at her young mistress with eyes full of alarm.

"Oh, miss, what is it?"

"There's a madman in the basement. Don't scream. He can't get out. Will you run to the village and get help to secure him?"

"Oh, miss, I daresn't!"

"Why, you will be much safer out of the house than in it, don't you see? It is I who will have to look out for my-

force open the door?"

This seemed highly probable, and when the thought occurred to her, Mary slipped out into the front garden, afraid to remain indoors.

As she did so, she at once became aware that another visitor was standing at the door.

The joy she felt was so great that she could not repress an exclamation, and she clasped her hands in such evident pleasure that the visitor, smiling, raised his hat and waited for her to speak.

Then she perceived that her behaviour must appear rather extraordinary to him, as he was a stranger to her.

"You—you wish to see the Vicar?" she asked timidly.

"Yes. I suppose I have the pleasure of speaking to his daughter?"

Mary blushed and smiled.

"Yes, I'm his daughter," she said.

"But papa is away; he's gone to take the Sunday duty for a friend of his, and won't be back till the day after tomorrow. Is there any message I can give him for you?"

She wondered whether she would dare to tell the visitor of the dilemma she was in, and decided that she might make the venture. For he was a sedate and dignified man, with mild, blue eyes and grave, gentle manners, who would certainly not fail to listen to her patiently, and who would, she thought, at least be willing to take a message to the village for her.

In the meantime he answered her questions.

"I have no particular message for him, thank you. I looked in for a chat, that was all."