

"Not to-night," said the guide, "I have business elsewhere that demands my immediate attention."

"Well, then," said Mr. Lane, "promise me that some day, not far distant, you will return and make yourself known to me, and I will for the present be content to let you go." So saying, he extended his hand toward his friend, and their hands met—all in the darkness, as it was—and the strong grip of brotherly love and affection was given and returned, and the next moment Mr. Lane was alone—his friend had gone.

A week passed on and the old stone house and its occupants were undisturbed. The moon was at its full.

Again, at the dark hours of the night, Mr. Lane was aroused from his sleep by some one in his room. This time he was soon enough to prevent their getting the advantage of him by surprise.

He drew from under his pillow his pistol, and raising up in bed, he counted seven masked men in the room stealing toward him. The bed stood in such a shape as to leave Mr. Lane in the dark, while his enemies had the light of the windows behind them, thus rendering fair marks for Mr. Lane's pistol. He lay perfectly still, watching their movements.

One of them came forward with a large knife in his hand. Mr. Lane waited until the assassin stood close by his bed, then fired, and the villain fell, exclaiming, "I am killed, I am killed!"

"Use your knives, boys," said a rough voice. "and cut the damned scoundrel to pieces, and do it quickly!" and a rush was made for Mr. Lane. Another shot from the pistol, and another of the robbers fell dead to the floor. The remainder of the robbers were upon Mr. Lane in a moment, and he gave himself up as lost.

He could see the flash and gleam of the assassins' knives in the moonlight, and his last hope left him.

But just at that critical moment, the whole room was flooded with light from several dark lanterns suddenly unmasked in different parts of the room. At the same instant, a voice, which Mr. Lane at once remembered as the voice of his deliverer from the cave, cried out, "Hold, you are our prisoners."

The robbers turned to find themselves surrounded by a dozen or more men, all armed with rifles, and each rifle covering one of their number.

"Throw down your knives," said the same person who had spoken before, "or we shall fire, and not one of you will be left alive."

The robbers reluctantly obeyed the command, and were soon bound, hand and foot, in such a manner that they could do no further harm.

The leader of the party of arresters now approached the bed, and reaching his hand to Mr. Lane said: "My brother, I came near being too late this time, but let us thank the Grand Master above, that I came in time to save your life."

The brothers grasped hands with hearts too full for utterance. The congratulations ended between the brothers and their friends, and they turned their attention to the would-be assassins.

There were seven of them, altogether, two of whom had been shot by Mr. Lane. One of these two was found to be dead, but the other—the first one shot—was still alive. This latter, upon examination, was found to be Aaron Clark, the sawyer.

Some of the neighbors, who had come with Nash, now left for home, leaving a strong guard, however, to watch the prisoners.

Clark was removed from the floor to a lounge, and his wound examined by Mr. Nash, who found it to be mortal, and would no doubt prove fatal within a few hours, and he so informed the wounded man.

Clark did not appear to be in any manner excited by the knowledge of the fact that death was so near to him.

The news of the attempt to murder Mr. Lane had rapidly spread through the neighborhood, and many of the neighbors, male and female, came to the house, late as it was, to see for themselves. Among the number who came was Mrs. Clark and her daughter Eunice. When they entered the room where Clark was lying, he seemed, for the first time, very excited. He first cursed his wife and daughter for coming, and ordered them to return home immediately, but they refused to go and leave him in that condition.

Finding that he could not drive his wife and child away from him, Clark next called for Mr. Lane to come to him. Mr. Lane came, and asked Clark what he wanted. Clark replied, "I want to tell you how I hate you; to curse you, and then to die. Walter Lane," continued he, "you don't know me, but I know you; I knew you the day you came to Millport to take possession of this house, and I knew you many years ago. I, and the rest of them over there, swore we would kill you when you first came here. They had one reason for hating you, but I had two. They wanted to kill you for coming to live in this house, because we have used it as our headquarters for many a year. In the dark cave where you were left a few nights since, and from which you