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## NELLY.

concluded.

But it looked more and more as if Seth was going to "lose his guess." A neighboring village was only too glad to hear Nelly would come, and Nelly was only in too much haste to get away.

The jaunty dresses were folded and sent over to Miss Pettikin for safe keeping, on a Saturday, and on Monday the old green stage was to stop at the Harcourt house and carry Nelly away. Everybody grieved except Seth, and he whistled away as if the world had never been gay.

"Let's drop in and say good-bye to her this evening, a few of us, anyhow," suggested little Miss Pettikin. "I hate the sight of that hypocrite there, with his smooth ways and his 'Sorry Nelly will leave us;' but no matter, let's go."

What a bright idea! They came by twos and threes, till the old "keeping room" could hardly have held another.

"How very kind of you all!" said Nelly, with a smile that went to everybody's heart; but with a round red spot burning in each cheek, and the white little hands trembling again.

"Very kind, very neighborly," said the smooth tones of Mr. John. "I hope you will come in again after this wilful child has had her way and left us."

Hark! Who was that? Where? A hollow, muffled voice seemed to come up through the very boards of the floor they stood upon.

"John! John! Come nearer! I have something I want to say!"

Every eye turned to John. He stood transfixed, and his face grew deadly pale.

"John! John!" said the voice again. Mr. John's lips moved, but in vain. He could not utter a sound.

"Let me try it," said Seth; and stepping forward he asked, in a loud voice, "Who's there, and what do you want?"

"I want to speak to you. John. Deal justly, John, whatever you do."

John Harcourt's knees seemed to fail him, and he dropped into a chair.

"Who are you, anyhow, and why don't you come up?" asked Seth again,

But without answering him, the voice seemed to move directly under Mr. John's chair and began again, in the same ghostly tones.

"Call Nelly, John! I want her to hear what we say."

"What foolery is this?" cried Mr. John, starting with a violent effort from his chair, and taking refuge on the other side of the room.

"Come along, some of you, and we'll see!" said Seth, taking a light and leading the stoutest-hearted of the party to the cellar. They searched it in every corner; but no sign of the dead or the living could they find. Back to the keeping room they went, and the moment they reached it the voice began again, directly under the spot where John Harcourt stood.

"Go down again, half of you, while the rest of us stay here," said Seth. They went, and while they searched in vain as before, the muffled voice came up steadily through the floor with the same startling cry,—

"Draw the curtains back, John; I want to see you. I have something I want to say."

John Harcourt sprang from his seat, as the voice was directly under him, and fled towards the door.

"Bless my soul!" he cried in a tremulous voice, "I had nearly forgotten it! I must go to the city; I must run for the train!"

Nelly's visitors gazed at each other in silence, but the silence was unbroken by another sound from the ghostly voice.

"Now, Nelly," said little Miss Pettikin, when the guests had departed, "you just come home with me, and we'll see if we can't keep Sunday together."

The old green stage called for Nelly at Miss Pettikin's instead of the Harcourt house, and amid mingled tears and smiles she was hurried away to her new life among the strangers that seemed only less dreadful than Mr. John Harcourt to her brave little heart.

The village was half-beside itself over all that had happened; but instead of nine-days wonders, there seemed a new wonder every nine days; for scarcely a week had passed before there was a fresh excitement.

Mr. John Harcourt had written Nel-

ly from the city that his wife had decided she should not like to spend summers on the farm, and as he could not be reconciled to see Nelly go away from home, he had made her a present of the old place, and begged her to occupy it, and said the papers were all made out. The news came in a letter from Nelly to Miss Pettikin, asking her to look after the place till she could rent it.

"Of course I can't live in it, you know," she wrote, "for I haven't the means."

Seth chuckled to himself a whole day over his work, and the village people crowded around him in the evening to know if the wonderful news was true.

"Didn't I tell you so?" he said. "I told you he'd do the handsome thing at last, if you only gave him time, and he'll come down with a few thousand of bank-stock before he's done, just to keep up the old place. Now, mark my words! If he don't, I lose my guess, that's all."

Seth was a saving man, and he had a little money invested in the city with the same bankers whom the squire had trusted, and dividends becoming payable on a certain day, he put on his black coat again, and went to the city to collect his share.

He did not seem in any hurry, but sauntered near the bank till he saw John Harcourt coming.

"Glad to see you," said Seth; "I wanted to speak to you about the horses."

"John started, frowned, and then, in the old smooth tones, said he should be "most happy."

But hark! Once more! What was that? Through the stone pavement under John Harcourt's feet came up the muffled ghostly voice again, in disturbed and pitiful tones,—

"John! John! Come nearer! I have something I want to say!"

He leaped backward and his face seemed turned to stone.

"What's that?" said some passers-by, "somebody caught in the coal-hole?"

But there was no coal-hole, the pavement was solid and firm, and the voice was beginning again under John Harcourt's feet,

"Lift me up a little, John! lift me up! I want to have everything right before it's too late. I want Nelly to have it all, John, all!"

Half-a-dozen people had gathered now, and were beginning to get excited.

"Call the police!" said one. "Somebody's smothering down there!"

"I tell you there isn't!" said another. "I saw that flagging, and it's solid as a rock underneath."

Whether it was or not, up came the voice still, with the same ghostly entreaties over and over—"John! John! Anybody here who answers to that name?" asked one of the crowd at last. But no one answered. Mr. John Harcourt had fled away, the voice suddenly ceased, and the wondering crowd gradually dispersed.

Very soon the little school-mistress had another letter.

"Dear Miss Pettikin," it said, "how could I ever think my uncle selfish and hard? Only see, what he has done! He has made over the bank-stock to me. He says he has enough without it, but how generous he is! and I am coming home to live once more. Won't you come and live with me, you dear Pettikin? You're not afraid of ghosts, I am sure!"

So there was another party at the Harcourt house, not to say good-bye this time, but to welcome Nelly home again, and a merry set they were.

Just then Miss Pettikin drew Seth into a corner and whispered to him, shading her funny little mouth with her hand,—

"What do you think I've heard about you?" she said. "A man from where you used to live told me to-day you were a ventriloquist. Now I do want to know."

"Well, ma'am," said Seth, the "sunshine" on his face coming out with an extra gleam, "I play at it a little now and then."

"Seth Danbury, you come here!" said the little school-mistress pulling him into the corner again, "confidential now, between you and me—I never'll tell—can you make your voice sound as if it came up through the floor?"

"Well, marm," said Seth, "between you and me, and strictly confidential, I have done such a thing, and even through a stone flagging too."—*Youth's Companion.*