

The Purdees were intently watching their movements through the latch hole and the rough joinings of the batten door, for fear they might attempt any mischief in the stable.

Firmly grasped in his hand, Samuel Purdee, the elder brother, held a heavy cart whip, which he had secured in the barn; and from the determined expression of his face, seemed resolved to use.

When Dan Crooks had lit the candle, he deliberately took a survey of the stable at the same time speaking to his brother.

"Now we'll give these informers as good a warming as we gave old 'Mose'," alluding to the Squire.

"Well, if we are to do anything," said Ben, "we'd better be quick about it, for if that dog hears us, he'll waken up the whole house."

"I'm sorry," said Dan, "I did not settle his business for him better, when I was about it."

"What way had we better go out?" enquired Ben.

"Why not the same way we came in?"

"I think, though, we'd better unfasten the little door in the barn and go out that way."

"Very well," said Ben, "let's be moving. I don't like to be stopping here."

"What's that?"

While Ben was speaking he accidentally cast his eyes in the direction of the small window by which they had entered and thought he saw it move.

"What's what," said Dan.

"I thought I saw something pushing at that window."

"Nonsense!" said Dan but he put down his lantern and went back to the window, pulled it open, and very cautiously looked out and listened.

Not more than four feet from him, standing erect in the deep recess of the doorway was a man, but Dan could neither see nor hear him.

He closed the window, turned the catch, and observed to his brother that,—"it was just the wind blowing." He took up the lantern from the cornbin, and went up to the inner door leading to the barn. As the Crooks moved up to the door the Purdees crept behind a

pile of hay, the remains of a mow, close to the door of the stable.

The door cautiously opened, and Dan peered into the barn.

"All quiet here," he said, advancing.

The light from the lantern was very dim, but sufficient to shew them the general outline of things.

"Why," said Ben, "here's another new lock as I live."

"The Purdees must have been scared," said Dan, "but we'll scare 'em worse.—Cant we open that door any way?"

"I don't know," said Ben, "hold up the light, while I look at the fastenings of the big doors, if we could push back this bolt, we could manage well enough."

Dan raised the lantern to examine the lock and the other fastenings, while his brother was vainly endeavouring to push back the bolt of the lock with his thumb.

"Never mind that," said Dan, "unfasten the larger doors." "Supposing we do," said Ben, "they'll make noise enough to waken the seven sleepers, if they're like ours. I'm sorry we cannot serve out Wyatt instead of them."

"His turn will come," said Dan, "if we cannot give him a fire scare we can"

The remainder of the sentence was not given, for full upon his head and shoulders descended the heavy cart whip, propelled by the vigorous arm of Samuel Purdee, and down went Dan and the lantern with a crash. Spot, it seemed, was watching his opportunity, for he sprang upon his fallen foe with a savage growl. The light of the horn lantern was extinguished by the fall, but Mr. Purdee advanced with his dark lantern, and drawing the slide, threw the light upon the group at the door. There was a stifed cry of "take off the dog," and then it was noticed that Spot had seized Dan by the throat and was strangling him.

"Spot," said Mr. Purdee, "that'll do; come here."

Among the dog's good qualities was that of prompt obedience, but, for once, he seemed to be unwilling to quit his attack. He loosed his hold, however, and with a parting growl at his prostrate enemy, went to his master.

David had remained near the inner