

now completely surrounded the house. So they had to return sorrowfully to their father, but when they reached his bed they found that he had breathed his last. This shock quite overpowered them, and they sat down beside the corpse and cried as if their heart would break; and in truth theirs was no enviable position. Two lonely, dependent women—alone in the house with their dead father and idiot brother—night coming on, and their darling sister, their dying mother's charge, out alone, and they with no way of helping her. And now another trouble presented itself. The water commenced to flow in at the door, and they feared that the whole house would be swept away. And in the chamber of that miserable house did Betsy and Nancy, with poor Davie, pass the long, long night, the water rising all the time.

We will now go back to Jennie, standing in the water in the cave a mile up the river. Just as she lost all hope she felt the ice on which she stood rock under her, and then she felt herself gradually raised out of the water almost to the roof of the cave. The water had got under the ice and forced it up in a large cake, which formed a raft for Jennie. It turned round and round the cave several times, and then gradually swung out into the river and floated slowly down, bearing Jennie safe from her prison. Night had come on in the meanwhile, but still it was light enough for her to distinguish objects at a little distance from her, and she anxiously looked out for the house—hoping to be observed.

"Betsy," said Nancy, "come to the window and see what that is on that large piece of ice."

Betsy came to the window, and after she had gazed for a few moments at the object, said,

"It looks like a woman. Perhaps it's Jennie."

"Let us go down and open the door. It will drift near," said Nancy.

Down then they both went, and wading

through the water that covered the lower floor, they reached the door, and after some difficulty opened it, and gazed out on the river, now swollen to more than thrice its usual breadth. About fifty yards from the door they saw the cake of ice, and thought they recognized Jennie on it. They tried to call to her, but their voices were drowned by the noise of the water. They could do nothing but wait and pray. A tree stands a few yards above the door, a little to one side. The ice is coming straight for it. If it turns to the right side of the tree, Jennie will be sent into the middle of the river and lost before their eyes; if it turns to the left it will jam against the house, and Jennie will be safe. Scarcely have they time to take in all the danger when the mass of ice strikes the tree with a crash that almost brakes it to pieces. They catch their breath as it balances for a few moments, uncertain which way to turn, and then slowly and unwillingly swings round to the left, and strikes against the house, where it remains fast; and Jennie,—foolish, frightened Jennie,—is back again to her sisters.

The next morning the jam had given way and the water had subsided; but the effects of that terrible night were ever after felt by the two elder sisters. They both had a severe attack of rheumatic fever, and though they recovered after a long and weary illness, yet they were both cripples for the remainder of their lives.

Amplly, then, did Jennie repay them for their love and kindness to her. She took the care of them and Davie for her life-work, and nobly did she fulfil it. She was often entreated to change her name, but always refused, saying,

"I have my sisters to take care of, and that takes all my time."

Years after that, they one by one were laid beside their mother and father—first Nancy, then Davie, and last of all Betsy; and Jennie lived alone, loved by all who knew her, till at last she, too, died, and her story has been forgotten.