

and he would go for a lantern. The two incendiaries, for such they were, in practice, and also in intention, had kept their wicked, malicious design from their father, in this instance, but had in a jesting manner said that they ought to have a bonfire of their own; thus covertly alluding to their intention to burn their neighbor's house and property. About midnight they cautiously approached the dark, quiet, peaceful home of a family resting in the security of unsuspecting honesty, and trusting to the protection of Him, who "neither slumbers nor sleeps." But what recked, or indeed, what did these men understand respecting the fear of God, or duty to their neighbor. Stealthy and vindictive as the Indian approaching his sleeping foe, and exulting in the excitement of gratified revenge as an anticipated pleasure, they crept around the house to see that all was quiet. Well aware of Spot's remarkable character for watchfulness, they fully expected to hear his bark at once, if any of their movements disturbed him. This was their first mistake; for deceived by the silence of all within, they concluded the roar of the wind would drown any sound they might have occasion to make. So perhaps it might have done. But had Spot heard them at their first approach he would not have given the alarm they expected. Spot, however, had a coadjutor of which they had no more idea than the Gauls had of the sacred geese of the Capitol.

Their intention at the first was to enter the premises by a small door in the front of the barn, and so avoid coming into the yard behind. This door, however, was fastened in the inside, and thus they were compelled to try the way by the stable.

Here, again, an unexpected difficulty presented itself in the form of a chain and padlock securing the second mode of proposed entrance.

While standing deliberating as to what they had best do, an owl, which had been a resident of the barn, longer than any one could remember, was curiously watching their movements, as he sat in one of the numerous oopholes of the barn walls. Whether his lengthened experience and observation in nocturnal affairs had

taught him to regard them as suspicious individuals, or his duty, as sentinel, required him, in his own peculiar way, to apprise his superior that such persons were lurking around, or that his own marauding intentions were disturbed, and his temper as well as feathers, ruffled thereby:—this is certain, that he sent forth one of those fearful screeches, which when once heard are not easily forgotten, even when heard *where* and *when* no adventitious circumstances can add to the startling effect. In this case, however, there was the weird hour of midnight and the terrors of conscious turpitude as the unnerving concomitants, and had, at that moment, the ghost of their grandfather, wrapt in a mantle of blue flame, appeared before them, they would not have been much more astonished.

They started on a run, in a simultaneous bound of fright, but as the direction they took was across the yard their progress was soon terminated by the sheds. Here they collected their scattered wits, and recovered from their fright by remembering a sound with which they had been familiar from childhood, identical with the present in all but time, place and mental perturbation.

Near the stable door was a casement and to this casement they now directed their attention. By breaking one of the small panes, they succeeded in opening it, and as it was but a few feet from the ground, they thus found ready entrance.

Their movements, however, had aroused Spot; or it may be more correct to say that the loud outcry of Spot's old acquaintance first attracted his notice, and the accompanying noises put him on the alert; so that before they had got into the stable he had succeeded in wakening his master; and thus, by his wonderful instinct and watchfulness, he prevented the execution of a dastardly nefarious action.

Mr. Purdee left his sons in the barn and, as quickly as he could, lit a dark lantern, from the red peat fire in the kitchen. Closing the slide he returned to the barn, where his sons were momentarily expecting the entrance of the Crooks, who had at length succeeded in striking a light, which was simply a candle in a horn lantern.