

With despairing feelings, Aunt Patty and Bessie followed him, while Uncle Dick, scarce able to suppress his merriment, trotted behind them. The rain was pouring in torrents, and the faint light of the lantern hardly marked the rough path. On they went, now climbing over rocks, now dipping into hollows, till Aunt Patty's patience was thoroughly exhausted.

"How much farther have we to go? it is a perfect imposition upon your boarders," she said impatiently.

"Don't be vexed, marm; its close at hand, and a nice place it is," said the servant.

He held the lantern up, and its faint rays fell upon a rough, unpainted house, from one window of which gleamed a dim light.

"I guess you can find it now," and, turning abruptly away, the man left them to make good as best they could, their entrance into the house. They stumbled up the high and uneven steps, and entered a dark entry, across which gleamed one ray of light from a crack in a side door. Uncle Dick tapped lightly upon it, and it was opened by a person, who, in the *clair obscure*, looked like a being from the other world; her long black hair fell round a face of ghostly whiteness; she was wrapped in a loose robe, her dressing comb was in one hand, and a small taper in the other.

"Oh! you are come, are you?" she said. "I knew you was expected; I am right glad to have some companions at last."

All the tales she had ever heard of haunted houses and robber inns, flashed upon Aunt Patty's mind.

"As we were expected, perhaps you will be kind enough to show us the rooms we are to occupy," said Uncle Dick.

"Ah! yes, certainly." And crossing the small hall she opened a door and ushered them into an apartment more desolate than any they had yet seen,—uncarpeted, curtainless, two wooden chairs, a washstand with a broken bowl, and a ewer that would hold scarcely a pint of water, a small bed covered with what was once a white Marseilles quilt, but whose colour or pattern it would have been now impossible to prove. The trunks and valises were in the room, indicating that it was indeed intended for them.

"A nice roomy place this, ma'am," said the lady, who seemed inclined to be quite communicative.

"Not a very comfortable one," said Aunt Patty, dryly. A small taper stood on the mantelpiece, and Uncle Dick lighted it by the lamp held by their conductor, at the same time bidding her good night. She took the hint and departed.

Aunt Patty and Bessie commenced a closer examination of their apartments; a door opened into an inner room, which was evidently intended for Bessie; but this was also without curtains, and though the windows were so low as almost to reach the ground, there were no fastenings upon them. A bed in the damp heather would have been more attractive than the black heap which was crowded into one corner. Poor Bessie peered into its torn and yellow coverings, and threw herself upon the floor, declaring she would sleep there, with her bag for a pillow, and her shawl for a covering.

Poor unfortunates! how fervently they wished they had never left home; oh for its comforts! and even Aunt Patty resolved within herself that she never would go to the sea-shore again; she would be contented and quiet at home. Uncle Dick saw the spell working upon her and he carolled out gleefully snatches from all the applicable songs he could think of—"Saw ye ever the like of this?"—"Be it ever so humble there's no place like home"—"Away with melancholy." Closing most emphatically with the "Three wise men of Gotham;" leaving Aunt Patty to draw the parallel.

It was long before any arrangements could be made for comparative comfort; the trunks and valises were ransacked for clean linen, pocket-handkerchiefs, &c., to take the place of the untidy sheets, and finally they retired to rest, but not to sleep,—this was impossible. The wind rattled the loose windows, the roar of the surge beating upon the rocks, the occasional entry into the house of some of its various inmates, the deep bass of one of the seven sleepers, in the room adjoining Bessie Lee's, and a creeping sensation of fear, which the timid nerves of Bessie and Aunt Patty, could not help feeling, fairly routed away the gentle spirit of repose.

The hours passed heavily till break of day, when Aunt Patty begged Uncle Dick to rise and make arrangements for their immediately leaving the house. Uncle Dick declared that was quite impossible; lodgings had been engaged for a month, and stay they must; but as he was very weary of his sleepless night, and thought the fresh air might revive him, he rose, and went out to reconnoitre. The clouds still hung in heavy masses over the whole scene, the rain fell gently, and all without was dark, dank, and miserable. Aunt Patty was soon up, and any one who had looked at her could have seen the expression of the strong will and determination around her compressed lips; she dressed herself, rearranged the trunks and valises, and was soon entirely ready for departure.