

Choice Literature.

SACHET.

'Tis a marvellous one!
This of blue with gold lining;
Sky and sun,
Full of buds, leaves and flowers—
Grasses, green grasses,
And violets in bowers,
Apple-blossoms in showers—
White lilacs and dark,
And more grasses.

And the winds circle by
Diffusing the fragrance
Low and high—
Scented bells in the bower,
Grasses on grasses,
Field-popples in flower,
Blossomed vines in a tower—
Buds amber and blue,
And more grasses.

Oh! the rapture of song
In the throat of the singer
The day long—
Fascination of flowers!
Dry leaves and grasses,
And roses in bowers—
Oh, the drifting in showers
Of rose-petals down
On white grasses!

Helen Merrill, in The Week.
June, 1893.

HOW TATTERS WAS REFORMED.

BY WILLIAM MURRAY GRAYDON.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.

As the shortness of the rope made the nearest trees unavailable for his purpose, Perry selected a narrow seam in the rocks, close to the verge of the cliff. He drove the largest chisel half its length into this, and wedged it tighter with a stone. He tied one end of the rope over it and looped the other end under his shoulders.

"That chisel will surely hold," he muttered. "There's no other way, so I've got to risk it. Here goes."

He lighted the lantern, fastened it to his waist, and cautiously lowered himself into the rift. He treated the rope merely as a safeguard, and did not put any strain upon it. Down he went, clinging with hands and feet to every available knot and crevice. At last he gained the narrow ledge, and was surprised to find it less slippery than it looked from above. His feet took a firm hold of it, and he uttered a sigh of relief to think that the worst was over. The next instant a quick spasm of terror weakened him as he realized his position. Below him yawned the dizzy gulf, and at his feet was the entrance to the dreaded Indian Hole. It came only to his breast, and he could feel the cool air spurting against him.

He clutched the rope, and swayed to and fro for an instant.

Crack! The sound came from up on the cliff, and he suddenly felt himself falling. His feet slipped, and he came to his knees on the ledge. He threw out his arms, caught a knob of rock, and dragged himself forward into the cavern mouth. As he lay there trembling with horror, the rope rustled past him, and dropped with a sudden splash into the creek far below. The strain had either broken the chisel or pulled it from the crevice.

A full minute passed before Perry could get complete control of his nerves. It was his narrow escape that gave him the panicky feeling. He did not trouble himself over the loss of the rope. It would be easier to ascend the rift than it had been to come down. However, there were other things to think of now. The lantern was still burning, and, holding it in front of him he crawled forward on hands and knees until the cavern mouth grew wider and higher. Then he stood erect, and his head just grazed the rocky ceiling. The entrance passage terminated a few yards beyond in what seemed to be a vast chamber. A dozen steps brought him to the threshold, and the lantern rays revealed a moist and slimy floor, sloping downward at a pretty sharp angle.

"It don't look much as though Tatters was in here," he reflected. "What an idiot I am!"

He boldly entered the chamber, and before he could glance to right or left, some

one struck him a violent blow from behind. He lost his footing and came heavily to the floor. The concussion extinguished the lantern and plunged the scene in total darkness.

That instant of horror started the cold perspiration on Perry's forehead. He gave one shrill cry, and, as he struggled to his knees, he was knocked flat again by a collision with some heavy body. His assailant had slipped likewise on the damp floor.

Perry threshed out with hands and feet as a pair of muscular arms clasped themselves around his neck. But it was out of the question to break away from such an iron grip, struggle as he might.

"Let me go—" he cried. "Don't you know me? I didn't come here to harm you."

There was no reply, only a hoarse, snarling sound.

"Don't hurt me, Tatters," he persisted, in a higher key. "I only want to talk to you. I'm Perry—Perry Harding."

The grip slightly relaxed. "Why didn't you sing out before?" cried Tatters—for his voice now proved his identity. I thought it was"—a yell of fright finished the sentence. "Cracky! we're slipping," he added, taking a tighter hold on his companion. "Dig your heels in the ground, quick! There's a big hole below us."

But the warning came too late. Their struggles had carried the lads over the verge of the slope, and now, locked tightly together, they were gliding into the awful blackness of space that yawned before them. The wet, slimy clay seemed smooth as glass, and offered not the slightest resistance. In vain they tried to drive their heels into it. In vain they shrieked and shouted until the cavern rang with echoes. Faster and faster they shot forward, now in one position, now in another. The dim ray of light that had been visible at the cavern mouth suddenly vanished. Then came a plunge into space, and a dizzy drop that ended with a sudden splash and a dull stunning jar.

Perry landed on top of his companion, and, except for a severe shaking up, he was uninjured. He rose painfully to his feet, and felt that he was standing ankle-deep in icy water. He fumbled for his tin box of matches, and hastily flashed a light on the scene. Tatters was sitting erect in the water, groaning as though in pain. "I guess I'm done for," he cried. "Don't let that match go out. It's awful to be in the dark."

"Wait a moment," answered Perry. He had just caught sight of the lantern imbedded right end up in a strip of sandy beach close by. He eagerly grasped it, and the readiness with which the wick took fire showed that there was plenty of oil.

"We won't be in the dark now," he exclaimed, cheerily. "The light will burn long enough to show us a way out of this place. I hope you ain't hurt bad, Tatters. It wasn't my fault that you landed underneath."

Tatters laughed grimly. "I'm sore all over," he replied; "but the worst is my ankle. It feels as if it was broke." He foolishly tried to bend it, and howled with pain.

Perry made an examination, and concluded that his companion's left leg was really broken. "I'm sorry for you," he said, "but you must try to get along somehow."

"What's the use?" groaned Tatters. "We can't get out of this hole. We're as good as dead and buried."

"Can't get out!" gasped Perry; "why not?" He held the lantern overhead, and turned it in all directions. A brief survey caused his heart to sink, and his face to turn pale. The cavity into which the boys had fallen, was about twenty feet square. On three sides were smooth, perpendicular walls of rock, rising fifteen feet to the treacherous clay that sloped upward to the cavern mouth. The fourth side towered sheer into the darkness, as far as the gleam of the lantern reached. At its base was a triangular crevice which seemed to penetrate the rock but a short distance. The floor of the cavity was of sand, partly covered with water.

"You kin see for yourself," muttered Tatters. "There ain't any hope."

"Don't give up yet," answered Perry. He stepped to the crevice, and thrust the lantern in. "Hullo!" he cried. "There is a space at the back end just large enough to crawl through. I'll bet anything it connects with that cavern out at the base of the cliff. We must try to get through right away, while the oil lasts. I'll go ahead, and you must crawl behind me. It's our only chance; for we can't climb these walls, and no one would ever find us here. It's no use to shout for help, either."

Tatters's face brightened. Then he looked at his companion with a puzzled, shamed expression. "Do you mean that you're goin' to help me out of here?" he said, slowly. "I guess there ain't many like you. I'm sorry I took your money. I can't give it back, because it fell out of my pocket into the creek. And it was me took all them things out of the desks, an' robbed the farm-houses. You must have heard all about it. Most of the stuff is hid up there in the cavern. You see, I got tired livin' among folks what always hated me, and treated me bad. I didn't know it was you what come in the cave, though, or I wouldn't have knocked you down. I thought it was some one to arrest me, an' that made me mad. You kin leave me here if you want to. I don't deserve no better, after the way I've treated you. I'm better dead, anyway."

Perry was silent for an instant, as he waged a brief struggle with self. He wavered between resentment and sympathy. The money was gone beyond recovery, and with it went his hopes of a shot-gun. But his better nature gained the victory. "I won't leave you, here, Tatters," he said, softly. "We will fight our way back to freedom together. As for the money—why, we won't talk about it any more. If you ever get the chance, you can pay me back. But I want to ask you one thing. If we get out of this place all right, and I save you from being arrested and punished, will you try to lead a different sort of life? I'll help you all I can, and I'll persuade other people to treat you better, and give you a show."

"Yes, I will," promised Tatters, "and I mean what I say. I'm not bad clean through, Perry, but—but I was driven to it. You know—" He ended abruptly, and brushed a tear from his eye.

"Yes, I know what you had to fight against," said Perry. "I'll stick by you after this, and help you to keep your promise. There! we'll drop the matter now. It's time we made a move toward the outer air."

He helped Tatters to limp over to the crevice, and crawled in ahead of him. "I'm afraid your leg will hurt a good deal," he said, "but it can't be helped. Lie down on your stomach, and crawl behind me."

"All right," Tatters assented, hoarsely. He gritted his teeth to keep from moaning with pain.

The space at the end of the crevice was barely large enough to admit Perry's body. He pushed the lantern ahead of him as he advanced, and after crawling a few yards, the passage widened, and permitted him to rise on his hands and knees. Tatters followed as well as he was able, moaning from time to time with pain.

The lads lost all account of time as they made their way slowly and laboriously forward. Already they seemed to have been in the cavern for hours. The passage made frequent turns, and was rarely more than two feet high. Often it contracted to such an extent, that the boys grated against the slimy roof and sides. This was a horrible sensation. It was like being buried alive in a stone coffin. Worst of all, they realized that it was next to impossible to return as they came, for there was not sufficient room to turn around in. Unless the passage they were tracing had an exit, they would be hopelessly entombed.

On and on they went, fighting nobly against the sickening fear and dread that tempted them to despair. The weight

of responsibility fell on Perry, and this critical test showed the sturdy manhood of the lad. He did not murmur or complain. He assumed a cheerfulness that was not heartfelt, and kept his companion's spirits up by words of hope and courage. Not once did Tatters lag behind, though every crawling movement jarred his broken ankle.

The passage was, for the most part, level, though here and there it rose a little. Perry regarded this as encouraging. "It looks as though we would come out in the other cave," he called back to Tatters. "The place we started from was on a level with the creek. The water showed that. It must have oozed in through the rocks and sand."

A short time after Perry made this cheerful prediction, all hope seemed to come to a sudden end. The passage terminated against a mass of clay and stones. The lantern left no room for doubt. The worst had come, and the horror of utter despair stared the unfortunate lads in the face.

Perry uttered a thrilling cry. "It's all up with us," he groaned. "We'll never see the outer world again."

The passage was quite roomy at this point, and Tatters crawled alongside his companion.

"Why, that looks like a cave-in," he muttered. "It's all stones and dirt, instead of solid rock. This ain't the regular end of the cave. If we only had a pick, and room to stand up!"

Perry interrupted him with a gasping cry. He drew a chisel from his pocket, and moving the lantern aside, he attacked the barrier with might and main. It yielded easily to the pointed instrument, and as fast as Perry dislodged the stone, he handed them to Tatters, who in turn, pushed them behind him. The dirt was shoved to one side of the passage.

Perry pried and delved until the perspiration streamed down his face, and at the end of half an hour he broke through the obstruction. The boys shouted for joy to see a gray light shining into the newly made crevice, and when they had enlarged it sufficiently to crawl through, they found themselves on a broad ledge overlooking the creek cavern. The water below them danced in the sunlight that streamed through the mouth. "Thank God!" whispered Perry. "We are safe at last."

Tatters laughed as he sucked in big draughts of the fresh air. "I don't mind my ankle now," he said. "It's good to see the sunlight again, and—and I won't forget that promise."

For a few moments the boys feasted their eyes in silence on the glad sight. It seemed too good to be true. Then Perry stripped off all but his shirt and trousers, and dropped into the water. He swam through the cavern mouth and disappeared.

In half an hour he returned in a boat, and with him was a farmer who lived a short way up the creek. By the aid of ropes, Tatters was got into the boat, and by four o'clock that afternoon the farmer was driving both lads homeward.

They stopped first at John Malden's farm, and when Tatters's uncle cruelly denied his nephew admission, they drove on to Perry's home. Mr. Harding was in some ways a strict and rigid man, but he had a kindly heart. When he had heard the whole story, and listened to Perry's persuasions and pleadings, he consented to give the injured lad temporary shelter. So Tatters was put to bed, and a doctor from Mount Airy attended to the broken ankle.

The whole affair quickly became known throughout the neighbourhood, and Perry used his opportunities to such good advantage, that he aroused a general feeling of sympathy in behalf of the outcast. Tatters's convalescence lasted for six weeks, and when he was able to be about he found a new life open before him. There was no thought of arresting him, since all the stolen articles had been recovered from the Indian Hole. Every one seemed anxious to help him keep his promise, and, best of all, Mr. Harding offered him a home on condition that he would make himself useful about the farm.

Thus Tatters's reformation began, and though he found the path a rugged one, and met with many trials, he stuck faithfully to his promise. By doing work in play-hours, he earned enough money to replace Perry's fifteen dollars. He is known as Joe Malden now; and his hated nickname is as much a thing of the past as his evil reputation. He still lives with Mr. Harding, and he declares that he owes all his good fortune to Perry.