THE WOOD DEMON.
A TALE OF THE SUSQUEHANNA.

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THE

WOOD-DEMON:

A TALE OF THE SUSQUEHANNA IN OLDEN DAYS.

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THE WOOD-DEMON.

CHAPTER I.

The Wood-Demon

"Jolly blastnation hebbens! Why don't de fish bite? Here I've sat and sat on dis yer old rock 'till I's mos' growed fast, and de only fish I've cotched war' dat dirty ole tappin snurkle w'at bit de end ob dis nigger's big toe off w'en he haul'd him up, den chawed up dat ar' bes' line, and went k'reching back ag'in afore I could catch him by de tail!"

Such was the discontented soliloquy of Zerubbabel Whanger, a great, lubbery, overgrown nigger, who, on a hot summer day, sat on a broad rock overhanging the Susquehanna. His attire consisted of a pair of pantaloons rolled up to the knees, a checked shirt open at the front, and two suspenders, one of which was a rope, and the other a broad strap, secured dextrously in front and behind by a peg of wood. It was near noon, and Zerubbabel, or "Zeb," as he was invariably termed, had sat there ever since early dawn, with no luck other than that referred to by himself. This was rather curious, as this particular portion of the river had never before failed to yield him a bountiful harvest. His impatience and vexation, perhaps, may then be understood, and partly excused at least.

"If I warn't a philos'pher, I'd jis' git mad and swear, but den I axes myself, 'Whar' am de use?' and den answers, dar' ain' any use at all, Zeb. — no more'n 'cussin' at a wood-chuck in his hole."

So, perforce, he maintained silence for some time longer, although his stock of patience was momentarily becoming less. The rock upon which he sat rose some twenty feet perpendicularly from the water, and he sat upon the very edge, his monstrous feet hanging over, his position being such that a slight push would have sent him sprawling into the current below.

"Dat nigger Pete, mus' have lied axeful," he continued; "tole me yesterday he had to lie his elbow j'ints to keep 'em from taking fire, dey got so hot pullin' up de fish. Just like him; neber can break him ob tellin' his whoppers. Hello! dar's a bite!"

There was every evidence of a "bite," as his line received several strong pulls. Zeb's motto was to wait until the fish attempted to run away with the bait, and then to haul him in. He now reached his arm out, and held the line delicately poised, so as to draw it in at an instant's warning. He was anxiously waiting the critical "jerk," and in fact was on the very point of hooking his prize, when something clasped him from behind, and a most terrific scream nearly split his ears. With a howl of terror, he sprung to his feet, and whirled around—only to encounter the grinning visage of Pete—a sable companion of his.

"Golly blastnation hebbens! what for did yer do dat, Pete?" he angrily demanded,
as he pulled in his line minus its bait and fish.

"Yaw! yaw! yaw! warn’t you scare’t though! Yer hain’t got over it yet."

"Scare? I’d like to see me scare. I jes’ had a bite den, and sprung up to haul him in, when you druv’ de fish away. Yer oughter to been kicked, Pete, for doing dat. Tain’t philos’phical; it’s mean."

"Didn’t know you was fishing; sorry," said Pete, with a repentant expression of his countenance. "Be more careful nex’ time."

Zeb. occupied himself with re-arranging his bait, and commencing whirling the sinker around his head, preparatory to throwing it out in the stream. Not letting go of it, at the proper moment, the sinker struck Pete in the eye, and the hook pierced his cheek. It was his turn to howl, and he danced about as if mortally wounded.

"Sorry," said Zeb., very gravely, "but yer oughter stand out de way. But dat lead hitting you in de eye am de best t’ing for yer. Yer knows yer eyes allus bulge out too much, and it’s jis’ shoved dat one in so it looks spectable. Ef yer’s philos’phical, yer’d let me punch de oder one, den you might be near as good-looking as odder niggers. So stop yer howling."

The injured member of Pete’s was exceedingly watery, and he was no ways disposed to take the matter in the philosophical manner recommended by his companion.

"Blasted shame!" he muttered. "Gib me a black eye, dat’s what it will do. Pooty fix I’m in to see de gals!"

"Yaw! yaw! and what am de color ob yer orbs jus’ now. Pshaw, Pete, what’s de use; only make yer eye look better as I tol’ yer, so stop yer noise."

When Zeb., renewed his preparations to cast his line in the water, it scarcely need be said that Pete stepped far enough out of his way to avoid all danger of being caught in the same difficulty. With a whiz the line shot out in the air, and settled down like the coil of the lasso upon the stream. Then, the two sable friends seated themselves upon the edge of the rock, and, with their feet hanging over, commenced a conversation.

It may be well to state here, that Zeb. and Pete were the two servants of Colonel Bonfield, who owned a fine estate a mile distant. Colonel Bonfield had been an officer in the war of the Revolution, and at its close had purchased a fine property upon the banks of the Susquehanna, whither he had retired with his only daughter and invalid wife, to spend the remainder of his days. He was a reserved man, much given to reading—days frequently passing without his being seen outside of his house. At other times, he would spend hours in wandering through the woods, or over his fields, with his gun and dog. He was a skillful marksman, and scarcely returned without an abundance of game.

His daughter Jennie was a refined girl of some twenty years, who, having spent the last four years at school in Philadelphia, had returned to the society of her parents, both of whom almost idolized her. The father, especially, seemed to live for no other object than the promotion of his child’s interest. They were often seen together; and, had it not been that the affectionate daughter felt she must divide her time with her patient, Christian-like mother—it may be doubted whether Colonel Bonfield would have ever been seen alone, great as was his passion for hunting and fishing.

Zeb. and Pete were two lazy rascals, of scarcely any earthly use to the colonel. Their chief occupation was in driving and bringing the cows from pasture, milking them, and fishing. He had taken Zeb. on a hunting excursion with him, but, as the fellow in shooting at a squirrel blown the top of the hat from the colonel’s head, the latter concluded it advisable to leave him home after that. The farm was well attended to by other laborers, Pete and Zeb.
Always managing to turn up missing if there was any occasion for their services.

"I tell yer w'at," said Pete, shaking his head, "I'm exhausted completely."

"Exhausted! what done it?"

"T's been hard at work all de morning, while you've been fishing."

"Working at w'at?"

"Dar' was nearly a bushel ob taters I had to carry down cellar, while dem lazy folks was out playing wid de plows and horses."

"War' dat all?"

"Dat all? Should t'ink it was 'nough, and 'bout a bushel of taters too much. I tol de colonel I had de plumbager in de liber, but it warn't no use."

"W'at did he say?"

"He said he'd give me de plumbager in de head, if I didn't go to work; so I had to work."

"Sarved you right. He put me tr'ough yester'day."

"Did he?" asked Pete in amazement.

"What did he make you do?"

"He made me fotch him a pail ob water from de spring, while dat big Irish gal war' looking on. Golly! warn't I mad. Jis' as I's going to hand it to him, I stubbed my toe on purpis', and spilled half ob it."

"W'at did he do?"

"He jus' picked up de pail, and frowed de rest ober me, and made me go fotch free pails full. Golly blastnation hebben! warn't I mad when dey all laughed at me, as if dey war' goin' to bust dar sides."

"W'at did you do?"

"Didn't do nuffin'. Yer know if de colonel gits mad, he's awful. I see'd he had his eye on me, so I jus' kep still, till he warn't looking, and den I slipped off, and come down to de ribber to fish."

"Did you catch any?"

"Golly, no! didn't catch any yesterday nor to-day. Was dat true you cotched so many yesterday?"

"True! ob course it was! I fisher' in de mornin', and you in de afternoon."

"W'at did you do wid all your fish?"

"Let 'em be in de water."

"W'at's dat?"

"Didn't haul 'em out. Dat many bit you know, but I took pity on 'em, and let 'em be."

"Know'd you was lyn' all de time. But why don't dey bite my hook? I put a good bait on it."

"Mabbe de Wood-Demon bewitch 'em."

"Who knows? Like 'nough."

And who may that personage be with the terrible name of the Wood-Demon? asks the reader. For the last six months there had been most singular stories afloat, in the neighborhood of Colonel Bonfield's estate, regarding a wild man who frequent ed a large tract of swampy woods along the Susquehanna. In that newly-settled country, it was not long before every one for miles around learned all there was known regarding him. He had been seen by different hunters, as he sped over the fair river, in his light canoe, and his unearthly scream had awakened the echoes of the woods, and startled many a settler whose nerves were unmoved when he met the panther or wild Indian. He had been seen at nightfall, prowling around the outbuildings of Colonel Bonfield's estate, and all of the servants fled in terror before him. He had been fired at by numerous frightened settlers, who, of course, came wide of the mark. This gave rise to the story that he was something more than mortal, and could not be harmed by man. Colonel Bonfield once had him under his aim, and could have shot him through the heart, but he saw he was a human being, and it looked too much like murder to bring him down.

Many of the stories regarding the Wood-Demon were ludicrous in the extreme. Zeb. and Pete both affirmed they had had personal encounters with him. Zeb. was positive in his declaration, that in a tussle he came the "back-action" over him, and flung him on the ground, and made him beg for
life. Many a young settler, in order to make himself appear valiant in the sight of his fair one, told incredible stories of encountering the dreadful monster, and pursuing him through the woods—and of the remarkably narrow escape he had from capture and death. One young man affirmed that he fired thirteen bullets into one of his eyes, without so much as making him wink.

This being the state of affairs, it will be understood that it was a little venturesome for persons of weak nerves, in the neighborhood of which we are speaking, to go far from home. It was perhaps worthy of mention, that the Wood-Demon had never been known to harm a person. He had chased them with his unearthly shrieks; he had prowled among their camp-fires, and beyond all question had been given abundant opportunities to do great harm, and yet the blood of no creature could be laid at his door. How long this disposition would last it would be impossible to tell.

The Wood-Demon was generally supposed to be an Indian, although there were not wanting those who affirmed that he was of white blood. Huge eagle-feathers adorned his head; his face was painted and bedaubed in the most fantastic manner; he always carried a rifle and tomahawk, and wore the hunting-shirt, moccasins and leggings that characterize the dress of the border man, whether he be of the American or Caucasian race.

He possessed extraordinary fleetness of foot, and skill in the use of both tomahawk and rifle, so that, in a personal encounter, he could not be otherwise than a most dangerous foe.

"I should like to see dat Wood-Demon," remarked Zeb, after a moment's silence. "I allus wanted to see him, and neber was afread ob him."

"Yer did have a tussle wid him."

"Yas; but he run afore I had a chance to brust him. Hebben save us! Hebben save us!"

A slight chuckle caught their attention, and, looking behind them, the two negroes saw the hideous Wood-Demon standing within a foot of them! With their teeth chattering in terror, they commenced beseeching him, in their most piteous tones, to spare their lives. The monster listened a moment, and then, with a horrid, chuckling laugh, drew back his foot, and kicked first one and then the other off the rock, into the stream below! Watching their frantic struggles a moment, he turned on his heel, and disappeared in the woods.

CHAPTER II.

The Tragedy in the Woods.

In the depths of the Kentucky cane-brakes ascended the smoke of a camp-fire, one spring day, over sixty years ago. The fire was built under the protecting dome of the massy shrubbery, and almost impervious undergrowth, and the two men who were seated before it seemed to rest in conscious security. Both were quite young, and each had claims to good looks, although the one known as Courtlandt Jackson was decidedly more prepossessing in his appearance than he who answered to the name of Edward Hillingham. A close observer would have pronounced them both "civilized" men, although they were embrowned by exposure and suffering. A fine dog, of the hound species, was stretched beside Jackson, apparently asleep, but with his wonderfully keen ears on the alert for the first evidence of danger.

In truth, the two men were from Pennsylvania, whither they were making their way at the time we introduce them to our readers. They had graduated from the medical college, some six months before, with their health somewhat impaired by application. In hopes of regaining their natural vigor, fully equipped as hunters, they had set out for the "Dark and Bloody Ground."
Their remedy, as they facetiously expressed it, was "kill or cure," with every probability of the former result. Even at that remote day, there were wild Indians in abundance—men who would very willingly relieve any venturesome pale-face of his scalp and life, without asking any questions.

The two young men were fully aware of this, and went prepared for the worst result that could happen. Going for no other purpose than that of gaining health and strength, they did not seek to avoid any of the exposures and hardships of their expedition. From Pittsburg they footed it, until, reaching the central part of Ohio, they struck southward, and reached the river of the same name.

By this time they fully comprehended the perils that encompassed them, and which were daily becoming more numerous and imminent. Before the Ohio was reached, they were pursued by a party of a dozen Delawares, and would have been assuredly captured had not darkness settled down upon them at the most critical juncture. Even then, the case would have been dubious had they not built a raft and taken to the river, thus completely obliterating their "trail."

Reaching the Ohio river, the young men agreed there was no necessity of going further for adventures; but, inasmuch as they had started for the Dark and Bloody Ground, they could not persuade themselves to return without paying it a visit. The day was occupied in constructing a raft, as it seemed impossible to come upon an Indian canoe. Just at nightfall, they commenced ferrying themselves over. Half-way across the river, they descried a flat-boat descending. Instantly they attempted to reach it, with the full intention of spending a day or two in the society of white folks. The latter, suspecting them to be decoys, peremptorily ordered them to keep off, and, with about as much amusement as chagrin, they allowed them to pass in silence. Just as darkness closed in, the adventurers landed upon the Kentucky shore.

Their arrival was characteristic of the region. The sharp crack of a rifle broke the solemn stillness, and the whiz of the bullet revealed the fact that it had passed between the bodies of the two men. A rapid retreat to cover was made, and the first night was anxiously passed. No further alarm occurred, and on the morrow they penetrated still further into Daniel Boone's Hunting-Ground.

It is not our purpose to follow, step by step, the fortunes of Jackson and Hillingham. The only wonder is that they survived a single day in the wild solitude which they had chosen as their theater of action. A kind providence watched over them, and thus we find them, after months of varied adventure, seated around their camp-fire, in the Kentucky cane-brake.

"Homeward bound, at last!" exclaimed Jackson, joyously. "Our last night in Kentucky. Glad or sorry, Ed.?"

"Glad, indeed. Have we not obtained what we sought, and why need we wish to linger?"

"True; and yet, there is something fascinating in these grim solitudes that makes me rather regret to bid them good-by."

"We have spent many pleasant hours here, but I can not see any attraction remaining in them."

"Of course not; for the great attraction to you lies on the banks of the Susquehanna."

A light laugh and blush showed that the pleasantry was truth.

"I haven't got that kind of magnet to draw me away, so I can't exactly sympathize with you; maybe I'll be in your fix some day, and then I can understand the meaning of the 'divine passion.'"

"I hope you will, Ed.; you're well-off, well-educated, good-looking, and——"

"There, don't enumerate any more good qualities, or I shall have a mighty small opinion of the female sex, that they have
not all fallen in love with me at first sight."

"How do you know but what a great many have?"

"Just so; how do I know? I don't know, as I never asked them, and it isn't likely they would tell me unasked."

"I promise you that you will not be long in Philadelphia without some fair one to lead you about by the nose."

"But, jesting aside, Jackson, you are really engaged to Jennie Bonfield, are you not?"

"Yes; we have been engaged for over a year."

"Does the colonel, her father, know it?"

"He has known it for six months—maybe longer, for aught I can tell."

"Well, I must say, you are going to obtain a prize. Miss Bonfield was universally admitted, by all who knew her, to be, par excellence, above all women."

"All who knew her evidenced their own discernment and common sense, for no one can deny that she is such when her acquaintance is once made. Yes, Ed., she is a splendid woman."

"You kept company with her all the time you were in college, didn't you?"

"Can't exactly say that I did, or I should have learned mighty little of the mysteries of Esculapius."

"Pshaw! you understand me, don't you?"

"Yes," laughed Jackson. "I made her acquaintance during the very first week of the first course of lectures."

"I thought they kept such a watch at Madame Choteau's, over their precious charges, that there was no chance of getting sight of them."

"'Love laughs at locks,' you know."

"And gets laughed at in turn. I made a desperate effort to penetrate those walls, one time, and came near breaking my neck, and set the whole school laughing at me, to see me scramble off, with a big dog biting me at every jump."

"You weren't in love," laughed Jackson.

"If you had been, you would have experienced no trouble."

"I don't know about that. 'The course of true love never did run smooth,' doesn't Sir Walter Scott say?"

"Shakespeare says something to that effect. It didn't run smooth with us at the beginning; but we made it do so before long. Ed., you can never be happy until you are in love."

"Nor miserable, either, for that matter. If I must do one-half of the sighing and groaning that you have done for the last six months, I pray that I may never be in love. Heigho!"

The hound, at this juncture, raised his head, pricked his ears, and looked around in the darkness.

"Did you hear anything?" asked Jackson, in a whisper.

"Nothing at all. It may be some wild animal prowling around," returned Hillingham, in the same cautious tone.

"I hope so; but—I—don't—know," added Jackson, still listening with anxiety.

"You seem frightened."

"You remember that rifle-shot we heard this morning. I believe the red-skin that fired that isn't far off."

The hound now arose on his feet, and made a whining noise, keeping his keen black eyes fixed upon a point in the woods directly in front of Hillingham.

"I don't like his actions," whispered the latter. "There's some animal or red-skin close by."

"The fire is nearly out; let it smolder, and we will withdraw into the darkness. If there be red-skins about, we offer them too good targets."

"'Sh! Watch, Danger."

The hound had ceased his peculiar whining, and now stretched himself upon the ground again. This action seemed to quiet the fears of the two young men, who had learned to trust a great deal to the sagacity of the intelligent brute.
"That looks favorable," remarked Jackson, who was the owner of the dog. "That makes it seem as though it were an animal, that has gone on by. If it were an Indian, he would not be quieted so easily."

The two were beginning to breathe more comfortably, when Danger rose to his feet a second time, and gave evidence of greater excitement than ever. He trembled and whined, and seemed stricken with terror.

"Further back," admonished Hillingham, sliding backward into the sheltering darkness. "There are red-skins about."

"I am afraid you are right—Oh, God! I'm killed!"

The pistol-like crack of several rifles broke the stillness, and Courtlandt Jackson rolled over on his back, claspimg one hand to his forehead.

"Are you killed?" gasped Hillingham, who refused to flee, despite imminent danger hanging over himself.

"Yes—yes; dying—dying—poor Jennie—God receive my spirit!"

Hillingham saw his comrade was shot in the head, and there was no use in delaying his own flight. Upon the discharge of the deadly rifles, a crackling of the bushes was heard, but, from some unexplained cause, no savages appeared. The approach of the Indians was now heard, and the agonized man had barely time to plunge into the woods, when the spot, whereon lay his comrade's lifeless body, was swarming with savage foes. Their exultant shouts could be heard, as he dashed away, and he knew, too, that the frenzied red-skins were searching for him.

In the dense darkness, it was a matter of little difficulty to effect his escape. After running a few hundred rods, he found that all danger, so far as regarded himself, was past.

Sad, beyond description, were the feelings of Edward Hillingham, as he stood on that solemn night, in the cane-brakes of Kentucky, and realized that Courtlandt Jackson, his bosom friend, was no more.

Ten minutes ago, in all the life and joyousness of youth—now lying cold and dead—an object of horrid outrage and barbarity. Young, healthful and hopeful; on the eve of returning home; after having safely passed so many dangers; to be stricken thus—it was terrible.

And Jenni Bonfield! How quickly the thoughts of Hillingham reverted to her. He pictured her, in her beautiful home on the Susquehanna, hopefully awaiting the return of her betrothed husband. At that moment, perhaps, she was counting the hours when she might expect him; or was kneeling by her bedside, and offering up her prayers for his protection. It was for her, rather than for him, that the tear coursed down the cheek of the young adventurer.

Hillingham could not persuade himself to leave the spot until he had taken a last look at his beloved companion, and brought away the hound, Danger, if perchance he should be living. He waited for an hour or more, and then, hearing no unwonted sound, began stealing his way back to the camp-fire. This was a delicate attempt, for there was no telling but what his enemies had set this trap to catch him, and were expecting his return every moment.

Such did not prove to be the case. He reached the camp-fire, and, to his surprise, found the body of his friend undisturbed. He had not been scalped, nor had his clothes been stripped from his person. Hillingham was a physician, and carefully examined the body of his friend. He found he had been shot in the head, and he had no doubt but that he had been dead ere the Indians reached him.

Danger, the faithful little hound, had refused to leave his master, and had been slaughtered by his body, and now lay across him, cold and stiff in death.

"Poor Jennie! how shall I tell you this?" sighed Hillingham, as he sadly turned his face away, and left the spot.
CHAPTER III.

The Messenger.

"Golly blastnation hebben!" vociferated Zeb, as he came to the surface and struck out hastily for shore. "Ef my foot hadn't slipped, I'd 've drowned de Demon dat time, sure."

"Hold on, Zeb, what is the use ob runnin' away from a feller," called out Pete, who was paddling with all his might, several yards in the rear of his sable companion.

"Can't yer let a feller alone? I want to catch dat ole cuss and make him pay for dis."

Notwithstanding this boasting declaration, Zeb looked very cautiously around him, when he reached shore, and had he caught sight of the terrible being that had shoved him into the river, he would not have dared to stir from the spot. But the Demon had disappeared.

"How come you to fall in, Pete?" asked Zeb, as his comrade joined him.

"He took me at surprising disadvantage; didn't give me the least chance, or I'd 've kerflumixed him."

"Jes' dat way wid me; I'd jis' braced my nerves for de final end ob all t'ings, w'en my toes slipped and I went ober. Wonder where he be?"

"Can't see nottin' of him," said Pete, looking all around. "He's had a taste ob our mettle and won't be likely to show himself again. I allers t'ought de Wood-Demon was a coward and now I knows it, suah!"

"Henceforth and forever we declare eternal war ag'in', him! Oh! if he'd only show himself—Hebben! dar' he am!"

The rattling of leaves and crackling of shrubbery betrayed the approach of something, and the two negroes clasped each other and sunk down in helpless terror.

"Hebben sabe us! Oh, good Mr. Demon, we didn't mean it! We lubs you most to deff! please don't hurt us—"

"What's the matter, you confounded fools! Nobody wants to hurt you. Keep still a minute till I ask you a question."

A young man in the garb of a hunter stood before them—half-amused and half-provoked at the excessive terror of the two servants.

"I hope you didn't tink we's afraid?" asked Zeb, as he realized that no danger threatened them.

"I should like to know what was the matter with you then."

"Noffin' at all—only we's trying to sing a little and you kind ob startled us like, you know. We t'ought you was de Wood-Demon, and we was gettin' ready for to smash you, when we found it warn't you but somebody else."

"What do you mean by the Wood-Demon? I have heard that name before."

"Golly blastnation hebben! don't you know who am de Wood-Demon?" asked Pete, both negroes staring in absolute amazement.

"If I had known, it isn't likely I should have asked you. Who may he be now?"

"He am de deebel!" answered Zeb, earnestly.

"No he ain't; for if he was de debbel, how could he hurt good folks like us?"

"Who's hurt us?" demanded Zeb, furiously. "He ain't hurt me, 'though I s'pose he has hurt you."

"He am a wild man," said Pete, answering the man's question, "He libs in de woods 'round yer."

"Where did he come from?"

"Nobody can't tell."

"How long has he been in this neighborhood?"

"Free, four hundred years—mebbe a little longer, mebbe a little less."

"I will talk with you some other time. Can you tell me where Colonel Bonfield lives?"

"Reckon p'raps we can," said Zeb, significantly.

"I wish you would do so then; I am anxious to reach the place."
"We libs dar!," said Pete, triumphantly. "Dat is where we hangs out."
"I am glad to hear it, for then you can take me right to the place."
"Reckons we kin; be you ready?"

The hunter signified that he was, and the trio started for the house of Colonel Bonfield.

This hunter, as mayhap, the reader has suspected, was Edward Hillingham on his delicate errand. After the death of his companion Jackson, he had set out on his return to the east, with the full intention of breaking the distressful tidings to Jennie Bonfield at once. At Pittsburgh, he permitted himself to be delayed for full a month, and when he resumed his journey, he found the repugnance toward performing his duty increase as he neared his destination. He actually passed Colonel Bonfield’s estate, going a number of miles to the north of it. The excuse he made to his conscience was, that it was his duty first to visit his own friends, and assure them of his safe return.

In Philadelphia, Hillingham remained several months, until his conscience would no longer allow him rest. He felt that he was not only acting the part of poltroon, but was serving the fair Jennie Bonfield unfairly. During all these months she was longingly expecting the return of her be- trothed husband. Had Hillingham done his duty at once, the truth would have been known long ago; and, by this time, she would have recovered, so far as was possible, from the terrible shock. The young man became desperate at last, and vowed that he would delay the painful task no longer.

We will precede his arrival at the house of Colonel Bonfield.

On that mild afternoon, Colonel Bonfield and his daughter were seated beneath one of the elms that ornamented the grounds of the estate. The mother of the latter had been with them for an hour or two, but the air was becoming too sharp for her enervated frame, and she had withdrawn within the house, while father and daughter lingered behind.

The engagement of Jennie Bonfield and Courtlandt Jackson, as we have already hinted, was no secret from her father. The latter entertained a favorable opinion of the young man, having known him when a boy. When solicited for her hand, he only asked that the young physician should wait until he had a practice sufficient to support both.

Father and daughter sat a few moments in silence, when the former spoke.
"Let me see, Jennie, you expected Jack-
son, did you not, this summer?"
"I expected him six months ago."
"You did! Why isn’t he here?"

The distressed girl put her handkerchief to her face.
"Tut, tut, what does that mean?" asked Bonfield, in astonishment. "A lover’s quarrel I suppose."

She sobbed bitterly, but made no reply.
"Never mind, daughter, never mind. Has he jilted you?"
"Oh, no, not that, not that."
"Have you jilted him, then?"
"Oh, no; do not talk so cruelly, father; I can not bear to hear it."

He drew the head of his daughter upon his bosom, and fondly caressed it.
"Tell me what is the meaning of this. I have noticed that you have not been yourself for two or three months. Can you not trust your father?"
"I am afraid he is dead."
"Phaw! he is too young and healthy to die. What makes you think so?"
"You know where he went?"
"Let me see; he and another fellow—Hillingham I believe—went out to Kentucky on a hunt. I remember you told me of it. Well, what of it?"
"He has been gone nearly a year."
"So he has—so he has—strange time to go hunting out there in the autumn—best time for game though. Well, daughter, perhaps he has found so much game that he
couldn't make up his mind to leave as soon as he intended.”

“Oh no! He would not stay away,” she returned, impetuously. “I know he would not; something has happened—something has happened.”

“Well, cheer up, my little one. Don’t meet trouble half-way. There are a hundred causes that might operate to keep him away—”

“But I have heard nothing from him.”

“There may be reasons why he should remain at home, and then—”

“But it can not be that—I know it can not. It is something worse.”

Had Colonel Bonfield spoken his mind, it would have been somewhat similar to that of his child, although perhaps expressed with much less feeling and impetuosity. He was a hunter, and knew well enough the perils that environed an amateur in the Dark and Bloody Ground. While the chances were much against the two young men spending a week in those labyrinthine solitude, the fact of their remaining away a whole year was absolute proof to his mind that they had long since fallen victims to their own temerity.

True, Daniel Boone had lived for months alone in that wild region; but then, Boone was born to be a hunter and pioneer—while Hillingham and Jackson were born to be—nothing but physicians.

“Never mind, Jennie,” he added, after a moment’s pause. “Maybe it were better that you should never call him husband. There is no telling what was in store for you—”

“Don’t, father, don’t talk that way. You will break my heart. You know what a good man he was; how kind, how noble—Oh, how can you?”

And again she buried her head on his shoulder, and sobbed as if indeed her heart was breaking.

Colonel Bonfield was greatly distressed. The happiness of his wife and child were synonymous with his own. He scarcely knew what to do or say.

“Does your mother know of this?”

“No; how could I pain her? She suffers enough already.”

“Noble girl,” exclaimed the father, as he drew his daughter closer around him. “You are worthy of any man—”

“Golly blastnation hebben!” shouted Zeb, as he came tumbling into the gate.

“Who put dat stone dar’, fur me to stub my toe ag’innin’? Some ob dat Irish gal’s work. She wants bu’tin’, dat’s what she wants.”

Father and daughter looked up, and saw with amazement, Edward Hillingham approaching. The recognition was mutual. The latter endeavored to look pleased, but it was a futile effort. Jennie scanned his countenance and read the fearful truth—no hope—no hope.

“Oh, tell me! tell me!” she said, rising to her feet, meeting him and taking both of his hands in her own. “Tell me,” she repeated, as she turned her streaming eyes upward. “Where is he? Do not keep me waiting.”

“But be composed, Miss Bonfield; be seated,” he answered, as with great embarrassment he led her to the seat by her father, who took her and absolutely forced her to sit beside him.

“I read the bad tidings in your face,” she continued, with the same excited impetuosity. “Is he dead?”

Hillingham looked at the father in perplexity.

“Tell her,” said the latter. “It can not be worse.”

“I am, unfortunately, the bearer of evil tidings—”

“Is he dead?”

“I have to say—”

“Is he dead?”

“Poor Jackson was a noble fellow—”

“Is he dead? Why torture me to death?”

“Yes; he has been dead several months.”

With a wailing shriek, the girl fell senseless in her father’s arms. He raised her
and carried her in the house, when, calling the servants to attend her, when he saw no real danger threatened, he turned to Hillingham. The latter gave a succinct account of what has been narrated in the previous chapter, and then turned to leave. Colonel Bonfield pressed him to stay, but he had no wish to see that pale, agonized face of Jennie Bonfield again, and he took his departure within an hour of his arrival.

CHAPTER IV.

Danger for the Wood-Demon.

"And de golly blastnation hebbens! but it was orful! You see, I'd been watchin' for de Wood-Demon for seberal months, and at last I got him on de rock, down whar' I sometimes fishes. T'inks I, I got you now, Mr. Feller, and we'll see who's boss, you or Zeb. Whanger. So I split on my hands, cracked my heels togedder, and went to work.

"De fast round was highly orful! We bit and gouged, and gouged and bit, and tore hair, and kicked up de grabbel—"

"How could you kick up gravel, Zeb, when you were fighting on the rock?"

"See yer, I reckons ef it's you tellin' dis story, you can go on; ef it's me, you'll keep your mouf shut. Wal, we fit and gouged, and gouged and fit, tell de solid rock was tored up in grabbel—you understand? But we's about equally matched. I tried to kerflummix him, and my foot slipped, and I come down kerwollup on my back. My head cracked a big stone in pieces, but you see dat didn't hurt me. Finally I kerflumixed him, and we come down so hard dat I felt de whole rock shake.

"Wal, sir, I found de Wood-Demon was greased, and I couldn't any more hold him dan I could hold de slipperiest eel you eber cotched. He squirmed right out of my grasp, and come on his feet ag'in, and we pitched in harder dan eber.

"T'inks I, Zeb. Whanger, you neber can do nuffin' dis way. Why don't you bring yer skience into revolution; fetch him one ob yer back-handed, double complex kerflummixers under de ear. Wal, I made up my mind I would, and so I drew back and let drive.

"Wal, de imp dodged it, and de force ob my blow war' so orful, it whirled me off de rock into de ribber, and when I got ashore ag'in he war' gone."

Such was the story of Zebulon Whanger's encounter with the Wood-Demon, as narrated by himself. He and Pete were standing among a company of villagers, who, with open mouths and staring eyes, were drinking in every word that he uttered.

The *locus quo* of the gathering was the village, whither the two had been sent on an errand some hours before. The village was something less than two miles from the estate of Colonel Bonfield, and, as may be supposed, was greatly agitated about the Wood-Demon that had appeared in the vicinity quite often of late. We ought to state, perhaps, that all of Zeb's acquaintances were aware of his great habit of exaggeration; and that, as a natural consequence, his narration was accepted with several large grains of allowance.

"Where was Pete all that time?" inquired one of the bystanders.

"He's looking on, too darn mean to help; I b'lieve he tried to trip me up, when I slung de animal around—"

"No such t'ing. When Zeb, seen de t'ing comin', he just yelled and jumped into de ribber. I tried to fro de t'ing in arter him, but he frowed me instead, and we both liked to get drowned afore we got out."

"Blasted lie!" interrupted Zeb, angrily.

"You don't know nuffin' about it. You's too scar't to see t'ings."

"He's a terrible critter," said a large, well-to-do farmer, Hunt by name, who stood, whip in hand, listening to the conversation.

"Have you ever seen him?" asked several, turning toward him.
"Yes; very lately."
"When?"
"Last night."
"You did! Where?"
"Right up the road, yonder; not a mile from here."

All eyes were turned upon the farmer, and he found himself obliged to narrate his own experience; an obligation with which he was not at all backward in complying.

"You see, I left here last night rather late. It must have been between ten and eleven o'clock, as I remember the moon was just rising when I drove out of the village. I had taken a dram or two, but only just enough to clear my eyesight, and make everything appear clear and right to me.

"Wal, my mare was trotting along quite briskly, when, just as we got to the bottom of the hill, she began to shy, as though she was scar'rt at something. Thinks I, what in the deuce is the matter, and I hit her a right smart lick, to make her hurry up.

"She rattled over the bridge, loud enough to be heard clear here. Just then I thought about the Wood-Demon, and looked around, but didn't see any thing of him. I thought, maybe, there was some man under the bridge that wanted to rob me; but, if there was, he didn't show himself.

"I hadn't gone fur afore the critter shied ag'in. I begun to git mad by this time, and riz up in my wagon and hit her a smart lick once more, when I heard a scream, as if a panther was being squeezed to death. Looking around, what should I see but the Wood-Demon hopping over the fence and coming right toward me.

"I put my mare on a full run, but there! I might as well have tried to run away from the wind. He was up in the wagon in a twinkling, and, standing beside me, laid his hand on my shoulder—"

"Gosh! warn't you scar'rt?"
"Didn't you holler?"
"It would have killed me."
"What did you do?"
"I trembled considerably," smiled the farmer, amused at the emotions of his hearers, "but I thought it wasn't best to make any fuss, as he had a gun and a tomahawk, which makes me certain he is an Injin. I jest set still, and druv' the mare along on a pretty good jog, while he stood there with his hand on my shoulder.

"I was purty scar'rt, but, somehow or other, I didn't think he'd hurt me. He looked awful, but he didn't look wicked enough to hurt such a harmless man as myself—"

"Josh. Perkins tells a different story from that," interrupted one of the listeners.

"Yas, sir-ee," added the individual referred to, "he lambasted me like blazes—"

"But, go on with your story."

"Wal, as I just said," resumed the farmer, "I didn't think he looked very wicked. I kinder twisted one eye up over my shoulder, for I didn't dare turn my head, and purty soon I got a glimpse of his face. He warn't a-lookin' at me, but was lookin' right ahead over the mare's ears, just as though he war' expecting to see something he didn't see.

"It was kinder queer, I own," continued the farmer, with a smile, "but, what I tell you is the real truth. I'm a deacon in the church, and you know I never was given to lyin', and ain't agoin' to stretch the truth the least bit. I told yer, yer know, that he had his hand on my shoulder, and bimeby, I begun to feel the warmth of it, and when I felt his hand gittin' warm on my shoulder, it made him seem kind of human, and about half my scare went away.

"Wal, for the next half-mile I didn't think of any thing except his hand being on my shoulder, and getting warmer and warmer, till it got raul warm. Then it begun to seem so very funny to me to have the Wood-Demon standing alongside the wagon with me, that I couldn't help laughing—"

"Guess it was old Pete's whisky that made you laugh."

"No, it wasn't. Bimeby, I didn't feel afeared at all, and I shoves off on one side
A SPARKING ADVENTURE.

of the seat, and looks around at him. 'My friend,' says I, 'excuse me for being so mean, but there's plenty room; take a seat.' You oughter seen him look; but I knowed he wouldn't hurt me for saying that. Well, he looked, and looked, and then stepped right over the seat, and I thought he was going to sit down; but, instead of that, he just give a yell, jumped out of the wagon, over the fence, and made for the river."

"What did you do?"

"I went home, of course, and told Betsey, and we laughed over it, and prayed the Lord to take care of the poor being. But how was it with Josh Perkins?"

"Very different, indeed," replied several of the bystanders.

"Yas, sir," added that individual, with a meaning shake of his head. "He weren't so mighty kind to me. You see, I'd been down to 'Squire Hutton's one night last week, and stayed purty late—purty late, considerably on toward midnight—couldn't get away sooner—hang it."

"What you stayin' there so late fur?" inquired one of the bystanders, in a quizzical manner.

"Never you mind, now."

"I know; sparking the 'squire's darter, Sally."

At this, all laughed. It was the very question Josh Perkins had been fishing for when he began his narrative. He was excessively vain of the fact, that he occasionally called upon the lady in question; and, in truth, was more anxious that this should be known than that he should tell the story.

"Wal, boys, I s'pose I may as well own up," he said, pretending to laugh with the others. "I was down there, sparking the gal—derned fine gal—any one thinks different, he's got to walk over my dead body."

"I was down there, and had stayed rather late that night, when, just as I was passing the corner of the woods, by the creek, I heerd an orful screech, and the Wood-Demon dropped out of a tree right onto me. Yer see, a feller hadn't a chance, and he ham-

mered me heavy, I can tell you. I tried to shake him off, but he stuck like a wildcat. He scratched my face, blacked my eyes, and pounded me so that I wasn't able to go out of the house for several days. You can see my eyes haven't got over it yet."

"Was that all he did?"

"Yes; when he got through, he jumped up, and run away afore I had a chance to touch him."

All paused for a moment, after hearing this startling narration, when the farmer, the preceding narrator, who seemed to be endeavoring to repress a smile, said:

"Is that the story you told your folks, Josh?"

"Of course it is—sart'linly—why not?"

"Josh, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. That's wicked. You're the greatest liar I ever heard."

The bystanders now looked inquiringly at the farmer, while the young man turned very red in the face.

"Just listen, friends, while I tell the truth," pursued the farmer. "That night Josh called on 'squire's Sally, and got sent out the house, and was told not to come ag'in, 'cause, you know, the gal thinks a great deal more of young Jerry Smith. Wal, Josh, he knowed that was the reason, so he laid along the road that night, waiting till Jerry should go up to his mother's, when he intended to lick him. You see, Jerry comes home only once in two weeks, and so he hasn't had a chance to tell this.

"Wal, Josh, he waited there till Jerry come, and then slips out and told Jerry he was going to pound him to death, that he had been telling Sally Hutton lies, just to cut him out, and now he was going to pay him for it. I don't know how much more he was going to tell him, for Jerry didn't give him time to finish, but just knocked him down, and Josh, Perkins got the worst licking that night that he ever had in his life. If I hadn't come up, I don't know but what Jerry might have hurt him beyond recovery."
"Was you that man?" asked Perkins, unwittingly betraying himself by the question.

"Yes; I was that man, and gained the other particulars from Jerry himself."

The bystanders now laughed so heartily that the young fellow walked away to get rid of the annoyance.

"I tell you, friends," pursued the farmer, after the uproar had subsided, "we must capture the Wood-Demon."

"Capture him! Let's kill him!"

"No; that would be murder; for he has harmed no one; these stories about his hammering people are all nonsense. We must capture him, and shut him up in an asylum, if we can't do any better."

"But how?" inquired several.

"I've a plan. I know a path in the woods that he frequently passes over. We'll set a snare for him."

"Can't catch him that way; he's too smart."

"We'll go into the woods just at night-fall to-night, three or four of us, and bend down a powerful big sapling that will sling up a moose when it's sprung. The moose will catch him by the leg, and hold him fast."

"He'll be too cunning to walk into such a snare."

"We'll only set it at night, and spring it during the day."

The plan seemed to suit all, and it was agreed to put it into execution that very night.

The farmer bore his keen-bladed ax upon his shoulder, while the long, gawky Josh. Perkins straddled behind him with both hands driven down to the uttermost depths of his pockets, and short, stubby Tom Shanter, trotted along like a little fat dog. Zeb. and Pete took long steps as if traveling according to orders.

Through this particular portion of the wood ran a path, which, from peculiar marks, easily understood by borderers and settlers, was known to be frequently haunted by the hero of these pages—the Wood-Demon. As he had been very rarely seen in this vicinity during the daytime, it was concluded, with a great deal of reason, that he must walk here at night. In fact, he had been encountered by Colonel Bonfield himself, on returning at dusk from one of his hunting excursions.

The plan of our friends was to set a huge snare—such as boys now frequently set for rabbits, on a smaller scale—which, upon being sprung, would instantly catch the man or animal springing it by the leg, and hold him securely. It was not pretended that the Wood-Demon could be held in this manner even for ten minutes, for a man of his strength and cunning could not be expected to be capable of being held in durance for any length of time by man's invention. But our friends intended to lie in wait close by, and the moment the monster was caught rush upon and overpower him instantly. A very fine scheme on paper, beyond question, but, no doubt, the keen-sighted reader, in common with our sagacious selves, inclines to the belief that we may well shake our heads. Still, let us see.

A hickory sapling of such rigidity was selected, that Zeb., upon climbing to the top found it impossible to bend it to the ground. It, however, came over far enough for the others to catch him by the feet, and haul him down, thereby nearly pulling off his arms.

"And de golly blastnation hebben, but dat'll jerk him!" exclaimed Zeb. "Dat
cooch him by de leg, won’t he dance de highland fling! Yah! yah! yah!

"S’posen it cooches him by the neck," said Josh, Perkins, who, by the way, had come along to retrieve, so far as possible, the reputation he had lost by being caught in his outlandish yarn.

"Can’t do that," replied farmer Hunt.

"You see, it has got to be stepped on before it will spring. It then flies up and catches whatever happens to be over the loop, and there can’t be any thing but the man’s leg."

No doubt all our readers are familiar with the construction of the common snare. A circular loop of thick twine is laid upon the ground, and in the middle of this is strewn bits of apple to entice the rabbit. Thrusting his nose over the loop, and nibbling at the most tempting piece, he thereby springs the snare, and is seized as quick as lightning with a death grasp around the neck, and instantly choked to death between heaven and earth.

Similarly constructed was the huge snare which it was ardently hoped would be the means of finally disposing of the troublesome Wood-Demon. All depended, of course, upon his stepping exactly in the right spot, and the watching men immediately seizing their prey.

It was nearly dark, as the snare was completed to the satisfaction of all, and the five exultingly withdrew.

"I tell you that is well done," said farmer Hunt, rubbing his hands, as he set his ax down. "Bound to catch him sure without killing you. You see it wouldn’t do to kill the poor thing, and now we’ve got the chance to get rid of him otherways."

"Yas, I think so," added Perkins, who, since the exposure of the farmer, was very anxious to coincide with all he said. "Yas, think so, too."

"Think what?" asked Shanter.

"Why, yes; I think so."

"Think what? I say."

"Why that—that is—yes—that—you know—hang it! we mustn’t talk or maybe the imp ’ll hear us."

"Gorra, he might be 'bout now," whispered Pete, his eyes projecting further than ever from his head.

"Pete, can’t you talk without bulging out your eyes so?" asked Zeb., reproachfully.

"Pears to me you’ll never larn nothing, don’t look well."

"I s’pose it’s best now to get out of sight," remarked farmer Hunt. "The critter may be around any minute."

All assented to this, and the five withdrew into the wood. At the foot of a huge oak they all stretched themselves upon the ground, and prepared for their eventful night of watching. They were about a hundred yards distant from the snare which all believed would place the Wood-Demon in their hands before morning.

It is impossible for an undisciplined body of men to remain hours upon the watch in the dead of night without communicating with each other. All agreed, upon lying down, that not a syllable was to be spoken; but this finally became so irksome all round, that it was decided that they might whisper to each other, but, on no account to utter a syllable above that unless imminent danger to the company should be discovered.

"S’posen he don’t come?" was the natural remark of Zeb., at the end of the first ten minutes.

"Well, s’posen he don’t, what of it," was the somewhat irritable reply of the irritated farmer at the nonsensical question.

"Dat’s jes’ w’at I wants to know," continued Zeb., in all innocence.

"Keep on wanting to know then."

"Dat’s w’at I don’t want to do, else I wouldn’t ax’d ye."

"Don’t ye know nottin’?" admonished Pete. "Keep your clam-shell shut, can’t yer."

The next question addressed to farmer Hunt, by Zeb., was about as sensible as the first.
"Don't s'pose de Wood-Demon watched us while we was setting dat sneer does yer?"

"Oh, confound you! stop asking me your stupid questions."

"Yes; see if you can't keep still a few minutes," added Perkins. "Don't be bothering better men all the time."

"Does you t'ink de critter had his eye on us?"

"What do you ask me for?"

"'Cause I didn't want to ax better men dan myself, dat's de reason."

A suppressed laugh greeted this thrust at Perkins, who threatened to punch Zeb, for his "imperence."

"I's afeard de Wood-Demon won't bite," continued Zeb., in a serious tone.

"Won't bite what? What you talking about?" demanded Shanter, who was the nearest to the negro.

"Why, isn't he 'pected to creep up on his hands and knees like a rabbit, and bite at de bait, like he orter?"

"Heavens! what a fool! Don't you know any thing? The man is to step into it."

"Dat's what I t'ought."

"What did you ask for then?"

"To see whever you know'd how 't was. I knowed all de time."

A suppressed titter passed around at the expense of Shanter, who felt for a stone and flung it at the head of Zeb., who dodged it with a chuckle.

"I was going for to say—"

"Hark!"

"'Sh."

"'Sh—there he comes."

All breaths were suspended in an instant. Farmer Hunt affirmed he heard a footstep, and Josh. Perkins was sure he heard, one also, although precisely where neither could tell. For five minutes, scarcely a muscle moved, so intense was the attention. Then the first disturbance was the natural question of Zeb.:

"S'pose you heard any thing?"

"Of course we did," replied Josh. Perkins.

"T'ink him be de Wood-Demon?"

"Like 'nough; who can tell."

"S'pose dat—"

"'Sh! there he is again."

Footsteps upon the leaves were heard by all. There was something beyond all question close at hand, and more than that, it was approaching. Zeb. and Pete needed no injunction to maintain silence, for the location of the suspicious sound was directly behind them.

"Golly blastnation hebben! he's coming dis way!" whispered Zeb., in the uttermost horror.

"He ain't; he's arter me," whispered Pete, while both made as if to crawl nearer their white companions. Farmer Hunt impatiently motioned them back.

"Don't you stir, or all will be lost!"

"Why don't he go step in de snare? Hang him! what he come around yer for."

"Hush! he's right there in de bushes!"

In the mean time, the stranger could be heard gradually nearing the hiding-place of the watchers. He appeared to approach with deliberation, as though he suspected all was not exactly right. He would take a step, and then pause and listen. It would appear impossible that he should have failed to hear the whispering of the men as they lay upon the ground.

"Tell ye, he's mos' here!" chattered Zeb.

"Like to have stepped on my foot dat time."

"I can see his eyes shinin' like coals of fire."

"Hush! Do keep still one moment!"

Something violently seized the foot of Zeb.

"Oh golly blastnation hebben! Sabe me! sabe me! de Wood-Demon has got me! Quick! he's poundin' me to def! I'm nearly dead! Quick! quick!"

"Shut up, you confounded fool! its nothing but one of Colonel Bonfield's hogs hunting for acorns!"

Such proved to be the case. The porker, as much frightened as Zeb. himself, turned with a terrified snort and dashed off in the
wood, while the frightened party were given
time to recover their courage. The negroes
protested they had not been alarmed, and
Zeb. thought it "mighty queer" because
they couldn't see through his joke.

After a half-hour or so, all had entirely
recovered and settled themselves down to
watch for their "great game." None seemed
to doubt but what he would happen along
that way before morning, and all were
equally sanguine that he would walk directly
into the snare, and permit himself to be
secured without the least difficulty.

As hour after hour wore away, without
the least event occurring to vary the monoton-
y of the watch, all began to experience a
sense of drowsiness. Zeb. was the first to
succumb, then Pete, then Shanter, farmer
Hunt and Josh. Perkins. Just at midnight,
the whole five were sound asleep, and all
snored tremendously until daybreak.

When it was fully light, the farmer awoke,
and after looking around him for a moment,
aroused the others. The snare was exam-
nined, and found undisturbed. It was sprung,
so as not to attract attention, and all traces
of the work carefully obliterated.

"Never mind, we'll catch him sure to-
night!" said the farmer. "All be ready,
and we'll come again."

CHAPTER VI.

The Springing of the Snares.

When a man who is not used to it, un-
dertakes to sleep out of doors, on a cold
night in autumn, he is pretty apt to incur
certain consequences. On arising next
morning, Farmer Hunt found himself the
possessor of a tremendous cold. In fact, he
could scarcely articulate, and his victuals
had no taste, nor would he have been able
to distinguish hawthorn had it been placed
at his nose. Upon announcing his intention
of going forth again to capture the Wood-
Demon, his wife plumply told him he
shouldn't do any such thing. He had already
made an old fool of himself, and, as soon as
night came, he should swallow some red
pepper-tea, and go to bed. He did not dare
to murmur; and, accordingly, when the hour
for meeting arrived, he was swathed in
bedclothes and put away.

Zeb. and Pete did not catch any cold at
all. Perkins had quite a severe one, and
Shanter was moderately affected. The four
all met somewhat sooner than the hour ap-
pointed.

"Wonder whar' Hunt am," remarked Pete.
"He don't seem to be here," was the lucid
reply of Zeb.

"He'll be along soon," replied Perkins,
stamping his feet on the ground to keep
them warm.

But, as the time wore on without bring-
ing their acknowledged leader, Zeb. was
sent to inquire the reason.

When he appeared at the door, Mrs. Hunt
gave him a whack on the head with a broom-
stick, and told him to go off and mind his
business. Zeb. left.

A council of war being held, the four re-
solved to go into the stupendous undertak-
ing conjointly. Accordingly, the three made
their way to the woods as before. It was
already growing dark, and they found it a
work of extreme difficulty to set the snare.
But, finally, they succeeded, and retreated to
their hiding-place as before.

Perkins and Shanter were both provided
with guns, which they had determined to use
if worst came to worst. They were weary
of the reign of terror caused by the wild
man, and they had agreed that if it was in
their power, it should cease with the present
night. The idea of a crazy Indian scaring
a whole neighborhood, and keeping them
scared for months, was a little too much to
be borne.

"Golly blastation hebbens! Won't it be fun if
we catch him dis yer night!" exclaimed Zeb.,
throwing his heels in the air.

"Won't it be fun if he catch us," said
Pete, warningly.
"Cotch us! Yer oughter be 'shamed yerself. Don't 'pear to know nuffin' dese times."

"I feel as though he was going to come to-night," whispered Josh. Perkins to Shanter.

"Somehow or other, I feel all-overish, too."

"Comes from layin' out last night!" exclaimed Zeb. "I feels dat de ole imp am almost yer now. Dat's why I'm so happy."

"We mustn't make so much noise this time," cautioned Perkins, who seemed to be the leader in the absence of Hunt.

"No, sah; I goes in fur not making no noise, noways, nohow; dat's what I does."

"See then that you don't make it; you're the one to be feared, as you was last night."

"Tain't me; it's Pete; he's allus doin' ob what he hadn't orter. I offen get obgusted wid him."

"And so does I wid yerself; but you neber didn't know nuffin', and Massa Bonfield says you neber will."

"You both know mighty little, for that matter," said Shanter. "Just lay still, and don't holler; that's all you have to do."

"We can whisper, can't we?"

"Yes; I s'pose so, if you don't whisper too loud."

"All right; yah! yah!"

"Now," said Shanter, turning to Perkins, "it's no child's play we've come on to-night. I almost wish that we had brought some one else with us, as Hunt didn't come. There's Jim Whilkin and Bob Bumpy that wanted to come, but they're such durned brags, I didn't want 'em along. Do you think we can get along alone?"

"Oh, yes; the minute the critter is cotched, we'll just rush up and overpower him. It won't take us but a few minutes afore we'll have him sure."

"How about the darkies?"

"They don't count either way."

"Won't they be a hindrance?"

"Guess not; they'll just yell and make a rumpus; that's all; we needn't mind them."

"I'm afraid they'll upset matters generally."

"Guess not; if they undertake it, just kurch them over. I don't see what Hunt brought them along for, any way."

"I say, Josh, s'pose we do capture the Wood-Demon to-night. What then?"

"What do you mean?"

"What are we going to do with him after we catch him?"

"Take him to the village, and give him up to the 'quire."

"But s'pose — by heavens! there he comes!"

Every voice was hushed in an instant, for all four heard immediately the sounds of footsteps advancing along the path in which the snare was set. They were light and deliberate, but they were going straight toward the snare.

"We're going to catch him!" whispered Shanter, trembling, and wishing to heaven the Wood-Demon would pass by without disturbing the contrivance.

"I think so," replied Josh., endeavoring to appear hopeful, but secretly entertaining the same wish as his companion.

"Golly blastination hebben! I wish I was home!" whispered Zeb. to Pete, who wished the same thing, but he didn't say so.

The sound of footsteps ceased, and the hearts of all throbbed painfully. Moment after moment passed, but nothing more was heard. The Wood-Demon had evidently gone by without disturbance.

With his disappearance, the courage of all began to revive.

"I'm going fur to see whever de snare am sprung," said Zeb., creeping forth on his hands and knees toward the dangerous spot. While he was gone, his three companions drew closer together, and commenced, or rather, continued, the conversation that had been interrupted by the passing of the dreaded Wood-Demon.

They had spoken scarcely a score of words, and Zeb. had certainly been gone less
than five minutes, when an unearthly howl rung out on the night-air, and the blood of the men fairly froze with horror. The sound was as much like a scream as a howl, and came directly from the snare, and fairly split the ears from its intensity.

"The Wood-Demon is caught!"

And thereupon, the three men, pale and trembling, turned and fled for their lives!

CHAPTER VII.

What the Snare Caught—A Startling Occurrence.

"The Wood-Demon is caught! the Wood-Demon is caught!" was the joint exclamation of the three men, as they tore out of the woods, down the road, and encountered a company of villagers that were on their way to play a practical joke upon the watchers, by springing the snare themselves.

"Where? What do you mean?" they demanded.

"In the snare! He's just caught!"

"How do you know?"

"We seen him," they answered, giving reins to their terrified imaginations.

"Yes; cotched him by de big toe, and de end ob his nose," volunteered Pete.

"Ki! yi! how he yelled! Just listen! dat's him singin' out now!"

At intervals, that wild, wailing scream broke upon the air, with a distinctness that fairly curdled the blood.

"Where's Zeb? He came with you."

"Golly! he run toder way. S'pect he's hum by dis time, and snoozin' in bed."

The party were provided with lanterns, and set out for the woods. They knew the Wood-Demon, even crippled and at bay, was a dangerous enemy, and those who possessed guns carefully examined them, to see that they were in proper order. It was evident they did not intend to be taken at disadvantage.

"I only hope we have got him at last."

"I think there is little doubt of it."

"But I should suppose he would be able to free himself."

"Old Hunt took a great deal of pains with the snare, and you know he understands how to make them."

"Yes; but it is a difficult thing to hold a man."

"He has used a chain instead of a rope, so it can not be cut."

The above were but disjointed parts of a conversation, as the company hurried forward, anxious to see and capture the terror of the neighborhood. In a few moments they entered the wood, and, striking the path, poured tumultuously forward. As they drew near the spot, they instinctively slackened their gait, and only those with guns and the lanterns took the advance.

The terrific yells had grown fainter, and were repeated only at intervals; but all knew the precise spot, so that they needed no guidance.

Within twenty yards or so, the party halted.

"Here, Sam, you've got a lantern; go ahead."

"I will, if you'll cover me with your guns."

"All right; go ahead."

Raising the lantern over his head, so as to see the more distinctly, the man commenced moving cautiously forward, while the others, with ready-cocked rifles, followed a few paces in the rear.

"By Heaven! he's there!" gasped the man, turning his white face to those behind him.

"How do you know? Do you see him?"

"Yes; he's fast by the leg."

"Is he hurt?"

"He appears to be. He's trying to get loose; hurry forward, or he'll make his escape."

Closing together, the entire party advanced a few yards further, when they all halted, for this is what each one distinctly saw:
Not the Wood-Demon, but Zeb Whanger—fairly caught and held fast in the snare. In endeavoring to ascertain whether it had been sprung, he had unconsciously "put his foot in it." The loop closed around his left ankle, and was drawn taut as quick as lightning. The elasticity of the sapling drew his left foot up beside his head, but it was not quite sufficient to lift him entirely off his feet. Still, it lifted him, so that he stood on his right toes, and it made his foothold so precarious that he was obliged to keep hopping up and down to prevent himself losing his balance entirely. When first distinguished by the yellow rays of the lantern, he appeared to be dancing some highly original jig.

"And de golly blastnation hebben! Hang ye ole niggers to blazes! T'nder and blazes and lightning, why don't ye come and help ontie a feller's foot, dat's cotched fast in dis darned ole blasted snare?" furiously exclaimed the negro, when he saw that white men stood around him.

"Oh, that's you, Zeb, is it? Hain't you had the Wood-Demon there?"

"Wood t'nder! Almost pulled my leg off," he groaned, as they proceeded to disengage him.

"How came you to get caught?"

"Blastnation! don't ax me questions! I don't know. I was walkin' round, and de fast ting I knewed, I was cotched."

"Hain't the Wood-Demon been around?"

"Dunno; hain't seen him."

Zeb, being freed, the party concluded to give up all attempts to ensnare the creature, and to wait until he was brought fairly within range of their rifles. Accordingly the party separated to their homes.

The next day was one of those mild, hazy days of autumn, when a sort of delicious languor seems to rest on all nature, animate and inanimate. Jennie Bonfield, since the affliction she had suffered, went abroad but little. She sometimes spent days without leaving the side of her mother, and then, when alarmed at her failing health, she only came forth at the express commands of her parents.

Listless and spirit-weary, she emerged from her home, on the afternoon of this charming autumn day, equipped for a walk with her father. The latter had expressly commanded her to accompany him on this occasion, or she would have remained at home. While he sympathized from his heart for her, yet he was becoming somewhat irritated at her persistent grief. Jack son was only a lover, and, while his death had been a sad one, there was no occasion for mourning him forever. It was childish for a woman of her years to give way to sorrow in such a manner.

"Jennie," said Colonel Bonfield, as he drew her arm within his own, "are you going to mourn for this young man forever?"

"Oh, father! do not scold me; I can not help it!"

"I know you can not, if you do not try."

"I have tried," she said, the tears welling up to her eyes. "I can not—I can not."

"He was a fine young man; but do you suppose, if you had died and he lived, that he would have mourned himself to death for you?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"Well, I do. He would have mourned you, of course; but I have seen enough of him to know that he was not such a fool as to go moping around, as if he had lost his wits."

"What would he have done?"

"He would have sorrowed for you for a season, and then hunted up some one else, and married her—"

"Oh, father!"

"You needn't start so, and make believe such a thing impossible. I am a man myself, and they are all the same in such matters."

"Perhaps I am foolish in this matter, but—"

"There's no perhaps or but about it; you
are foolish—more foolish than I could ever
dream a child of mine could be. Had young Hillingham asked me how you
would take this, I should have told him,
'like a sensible woman,' not like (I speak
truly) a half-witted one."

Jennie glanced up in her father's face, as
if she did not understand this severity. The
latter did not return her look, for he had
resolved that he must be firm with her, and
he was determined that she should know
how much he despised her weakness in
sinking under the blow.

"It is good for us to be chastised in this
manner; the Lord intends it to be so, and
he gives us strength to bear it. Before you
were born, your mother and I placed a lit-
tle curly-headed boy—our only son—in the
grave. Don't you think we suffered as
much as any young lady could in losing
her lover?"

Presented in this light, the daughter could
but look upon her own affliction in a truer
light than she had yet done.

"We mourned him, as if our hearts
would break, and we can never forget him;
but we did not mourn him forever. I trust
we called into exercise a little bit of com-
môn sense."

"You mean to say, father, then, that I
do not?"

"That is precisely what I mean to say.
I have not seen the smallest grain of it as
yet."

"You are cruel with me."

"I am truthful, if that can be cruel. I
suppose I may as well make up my mind
either to put you in the asylum, or in the
grave. I should prefer the latter, if I had
the choice."

It cost the father a great deal to be thus
severe with his child; but he had schooled
his heart to it. He concluded to press the
subject a little further, and then change it.

"I may as well be frank with you, Jen-
nie. While I can feel and sympathize with
your affliction, I can not see the necessity
of this prolonged suffering. Since I have
seen your weakness, I can not respect you
as much as I have heretofore—"

"Oh, father, don't!" cried the distressed
girl. "Do not speak to me in that manner.
I have not thought how foolish I have
been."

"I must speak the truth. If you con-
tinue to show such childish weakness, I shall
give you up as unworthy of me. Has not
your mother spoken to you?"

"Yes, oh, yes."

"You cause her as much suffering—yes,
more than you feel yourself. I had hoped
that she might be spared the necessity of
discovering that she had not a woman for a
daughter."

"Oh, father! I will be a woman—"

"Golly blastnation hebben!" shouted
Zeb., who was frantically endeavoring to
climb a zig-zag fence, a few rods ahead.
"Dat yer Wood-Demon 'pears to have a
spite ag'in' me. I never harmed de blasted
critter."

Crash! he came headlong over the fence,
with a shock that would have dislocated
the neck of an ordinary individual. But
he scrambled to his feet, as lively as ever.

"What's the matter, Zeb?" demanded
Colonel Bonfeld, who was not sorry at this
fortunate excuse for a turn in the conversa-
tion. The negro looked up, and was
considerably surprised at discovering his master
so close by.

"Why, blast it! Seems to me dat Wood-
Demon is bound to pick at me all de time."

"What has happened?"

"I was fishing down by de rock, when
somebody frowed a big chunk, and scare't
away all de fish. Dat ar' made me mad."

"Well, I have no doubt of it."

"I tought maybe it was dat negger Pete,
trying to bodder me, 'cause he's up to sich
tricks, so I sung out for him to stop, or I'd
smash him!"

"And he stopped, of course?"

"No, sah! w-h-a-s-h! come another big
stone right onto my line. Dat yer made
me madder, and I sung out for him to come
They are fine, indeed; let me procure you some."

The father was in the tree in an instant. He was reclining forward to pluck the luscious fruit, when a scream from his daughter arrested his attention, and glancing downward, he saw her seized by the Wood-Demon. He dropped to the ground, but the strange being had turned, and was fleeing with the speed of the wind. The agonized father sprung after him, but in five minutes the two had disappeared, her screams momentarily growing fainter and fainter in the distance.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Rescue.

Colonel Bonfield had seen moments of imminent peril before—moments when every faculty of his mind was called into play; and now, when he found to pursue the Wood-Demon was a hopeless task, he paused, and endeavored deliberately to think.

Night was close at hand, and there was no chance in the world of rescuing Jennie before the next day. It was a terrible thing to leave her with that hideous creature during the coming dark hours; but somehow or other, he felt certain she would receive no harm at his hands. His first impulse was to rouse the neighborhood, and make a general search for his lost darling; but second thought decided this unwise, and he concluded to wait until the morning, and then start upon the search alone. He would take nothing but his trusty rifle with him, and then woe betide the Wood-Demon, the moment he came under his aim.

Colonel Bonfield walked quietly home, entered the house, and went to the room of his wife. The first question she asked was, to inquire regarding Jennie. Her husband replied, that she would spend the night "out." She looked up in his face greatly surprised to hear this, but asked no further
questions. It may safely be said that she would have been considerably more surprised had she understood his real meaning.

Colonel Bonfield talked pleasantly with his wife for an hour or so, and then, when he observed her become drowsy, he pleasantly bade her good-night—first telling her that he should start early the next morning upon a hunt.

What agony was there beneath an unrumpled surface! While he maintained a listless, pointless conversation with his wife, it seemed at times that he would cry out with pain. His daughter alone in the power of the dreadful Wood-Demon! Heavens! was it not enough to drive him mad?

Out of his wife's room, he went straight to the large dining-hall, where hung his trusty rifle. This was taken down, and carefully examined. It was always placed away loaded; but, on this occasion, he carefully drew out the charge, and reloaded it. It was a piece that never missed fire, but he wished to make assurance doubly sure.

All night long, the tortured man paced backward and forward across the hall—now looking at the ormolu time-piece, and then glancing out the window to see whether there were no signs of coming day. Again and again, he went up to the clock and listened, really believing it had stopped; but the slow, measured ticking, that neither faltered nor hastened, showed him his mistake, and he resumed his walking.

"How long the night is!" he muttered.

"Here, it seems to me that it ought to be morning, and the hand is just pointing to twelve. Midnight!—the night only half gone!"

"Poor Jennie!" he exclaimed, after a few moments' silent walk. "How cruelly I talked to her yesterday, and yet I did it for her good. There never was a more dutiful or affectionate child, but that love affair has nearly turned her. If she comes out of this safe, it will be a good thing to divert her thoughts.

At such a time, the mind of Colonel Bonfield was unusually active. He naturally thought of nothing but the abduction of his daughter, the circumstances accompanying it, and his project of rescue.

"How strange that he should run away with Jennie! There have been all kinds of stories about this wonderful wild man, but it has never been proved that he ever injured a person, or that he attempted to run away with any one. Some sudden freak, I suppose, entered his head."

He walked a few minutes in silence, and then resumed:

"I have spared the creature more than once when he was under my aim, because he is a human being, and I never like to injure any one of them unless I am compelled to; but he has forfeited all claim to my mercy. This reign of terror must be ended; it has already gone too far; it is time that it was over. There is but one certain way to stop it, and that means will assuredly be taken on the morrow. Only two o'clock!" he added, looking up to the time-piece again.

Thus muttering, soliloquizing, and looking at the clock, and out the window, the hours gradually dragged away, until Colonel Bonfield glanced out, and finally saw, beyond all question, that it was growing light in the east. With a compressed lip, and a beating heart, he grasped his rifle.

"Now, I shall never return till Jennie returns with me!"

As he passed out the door, he saw to his surprise that Zeb was already up.

"Why, Zeb, how comes this? You're up rather early."

"I 'ought I'd milk de cows 'ary, and den go a-fishin' 'fore de sun got up."

"All right; you must be active."

"I say, massa," called out Zeb, as the colonel started to move away. "Going hunting?"

"Yes."

"Would you mind if I goes along?"
"How will the cows get milked?"
"Let Pete 'tend to dat. It's his turn, any way. He kin do it."

Colonel Bonfield hesitated a moment. He was not certain regarding the propriety of taking his blundering servant along; but at length, he concluded it could do no harm, and he might need some entertaining society before the hunt was ended.

"Come along then; I'm in a hurry."

The joyous negro instantly dropped his tin-pail.

"Wait till I fetch my ole gun."
"No you don't; I have had a taste of that already. Come along with me."

Zeb. was somewhat crestfallen at this refusal; but, nevertheless, was glad to accompany his master. The latter admonished him of the necessity of prudence and caution, and the negro, as a matter of course, was profuse in his promises to obey. When they were a considerable distance from the house, Colonel Bonfield spoke:

"Zeb., how would you like to hunt the Wood-Demon?"
"Fus' rate; like to kill him."
"Think you wouldn't run now?"
"Not if I had a gun."
"Would you stand by me, if I should get into trouble with him?"
"Jus' got in, and see if I won't."
"Well, Zeb., I expect before I return, that I shall either kill the Wood-Demon, or he will kill me."

"Wuah!" was the wondering ejaculation of the amazed negro.
"He ran away with Jennie last night?"
"And de golly blastnation hebben!" was all the dumb-founded Zeb. could say.

"Yes; he almost took her from my arms, and I am now hunting for him."
"Is dat so now?" asked Zeb., hardly daring to believe the astounding intelligence.

"I am not joking, Zeb.; I never spoke truer words in my life. Shortly after we met you, he caught her and made off like a wild animal."

The servant was too full for coherent utterance. He walked beside his master muttering all sorts of ejaculations, and invoking dreadful anathemas upon the creature that durst lay profane hands upon the sacred person of Jennie Bonfield.

In the mean time, the sun had risen, and the day bid fair to be as pleasant as the preceding one. The air was cold and crisp, and Colonel Bonfield experienced a thrill of anguish more than once, as he reflected upon the unavoidable suffering that his beloved daughter must have endured during the preceding night.

"This creature must have some place to which he retreats," he remarked. "Have you any idea where it is, Zeb.?"

"I tink it must be off in dat part ob de woods," replied the negro, pointing in a direction at right-angles to that which they were pursuing.

"What makes you think so?"
"'Cause I neber yet see him in de forenoon, but dat de 'peared to be coming from dat way."

This was certainly good reason, and Colonel Bonfield determined to act upon it at once.

"I'll give you ten dollars and a new suit of clothes if you see the Wood-Demon before I do."

The negro rolled his eyes around him and exclaimed all at once:

"Dar' he am now!"
"Where?" demanded Colonel Bonfield, bringing his rifle from his shoulder in considerable excitement.

"Dar'—right dar'—looking straight at us."

"Oh, pshaw! that's a stump; if you can't see better than that you had better go home."

"I'll be more keerful," replied the negro, considerably chagrined at the mistake he had made.

"You must observe, too, to make no
more noise than you can help. I want to come on the creature unawares, so that I may shoot him before he can do any harm to Jennie."

"Yas; if I come on 'im unawares I'll kerflummix him. I could do't now."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, frow him down and smush him. Nebber could do it afore—'cause I hadn't de—de—de—"

"Motive."

"Dat's it; de motor, but I tell yees it'd be awful to tetch me. I'm dangerous! I could kerflummix him as easy as I could pull a fish out ob de water."

On pressed the father—holding down his surging emotions with an iron will—cool, calm, and unruffled without—within a seething volcano. His eyes and ears were on the alert, ready for any sight and sound. He even held his rifle at half-cock, so fearful was he that the crisis might come and go in an instant.

When the sun was about a half-hour above the horizon, they reached the edge of the woods, on the right of which stretched far away fields of meadows. Above these the ground rose into a long hill, of gentle declivity, so that a long, unobstructed view was afforded them.

The two were standing together, somewhat exhausted by their long tramp, and Colonel Bonfield was gazing listlessly about him, when he was startled by the gasping exclamation of Zeb:

"Look! dere he am, suah, dis time."

Following the direction of his finger, Colonel Bonfield saw the Wood-Demon walking leisurely along the edge of the wood. He was alone—and there was no sign of Jennie in the vicinity! The creature was too far away to make the rifle available, and the colonel pushed Zeb back into the cover of the wood.

"Look out! don't let him see you! Hurry! we must overtake him."

Bonfield commenced tearing through the wood, the negro close at his heels. At intervals, the former dashed to the edge of the forest to make sure of not losing sight of his victim.

Finally he was within range, and he came fearlessly into the opening. The Wood-Demon was still walking away, and Colonel Bonfield now noticed, for the first time, that he was making his way toward a gigantic chestnut, that he had noticed several years before was hollow. He divined at once that here was his retreat.

Bonfield had paused in astonishment, and he now observed Jennie seated with bared head, upon a large stone, near the entrance to the tree-trunk. "Jennie! Jennie! come to your father!" he called, in the yearning agony of his heart.

The daughter raised her head, and, recognizing her parent instantly, rushed toward him. "Save me! save me! Quick, he is crazy!"

The Wood-Demon had turned upon hearing the voice, and the moment Jennie started to her father, he gave a sort of half-howl, and sprang toward her. Colonel Bonfield instantly raised his rifle, and taking a quick aim at the head of the man, pulled the trigger. With a shuddering shriek the Wood-Demon threw up his arms and fell flat on his face.

"Golly blastation heben! I'll pay you!" exclaimed Zeb, rushing toward him.

"Stop!" commanded his master. "He's killed—let him alone."

The next moment Jennie was in his arms.

"Has he injured you? Has he harmed you in the least? Has he insulted you? Has he offered you—"

"No, no, no! Oh, father! is this a dream? You have not killed him. Oh, father! I have seen—I have seen—" Her strength failed her and she fainted. Lifting her tenderly in his arms, the strong man carried her to a small brook—there bathed her temples until she revived—then strictly forbidding her to speak, led her home.
CHAPTER IX.

All's Well that Ends Well.

At the close of that eventful autumn day, farmer Hunt was jogging merrily along toward home from the grist-mill. The farmer had heard of the mishap, by which the negro Zeb. had been caught in the snare instead of the Wood-Demon, and he was laughing to himself about it. He had not heard of the abduction and rescue of Jennie Bonfield (for the father had studiously concealed it), or he might have been more serious and thoughtful.

"That was rather funny!" he repeated, alluding to the former incident. I believe a man can't do better than mind his wife at all times. It did kinder go hard to have Betsey put me to bed and keep me home, when I wanted to go so bad. But then, s'posin' I had gone—maybe I'd got caught in the snare, and then wouldn't there have been a purty laugh ag'in me? Any way, I'd got cold—Lord save me! what was that?

He reined up his mare, and listened.

"I heard a groan then, if I ain't mightily mistaken—just as if some human was suffering. Hello! there it goes ag'in! There's something wrong, that's certain. Whoa! Dolly!"

Springing out of his wagon, he scrambled over the fence. A short distance away, he saw a dark object lying upon the ground. Hurrying up to it, he found, what he feared, a man in dire extremity.

"May the good Lord save me!" he ejaculated, "if it ain't the Wood-Demon, come to grief!"

That strange creature lay upon the ground, moaning as if in his death-agony. Lifting him up in his strong arms, farmer Hunt carried him to his wagon, and, jumping in, made all haste for home. "No matter whether he is white or red," he muttered, "he's got his last spell of sickness, and it's a Christian duty to tend to him."

A brisk drive brought him to the door of his own house. Betsey stood waiting to chide him for being so tardy.

"This is a purty time o' night for you, Deacon Smith, to be coming home. I should think—"

"'Sh! dear Betsey. I've a dying man with me."

"What!"

"Do you hear that groan? It is the Wood-Demon, and I am afraid he is dying."

The wife, woman-like, changed to ploy on the instant. She ran into the house, and fixed the "spare bed," so that by the time the deacon brought him in, a comfortable resting-place was ready for him.

"Now, we must have Dr. Scudder right away. You won't like to be left here alone, so I'll send Jim for him. Where is he?"

"Out at the door."

The farmer dashed out.

"Jim, jump into the wagon, and go for the doctor at once. Bring him right away."

"Who's sick?"

"There's a man here that's been badly hurt."

"Who is he?"

"Heavens and earth! he'll die before you start! Be off, and don't spare the whip!"

"All right."

"And, Jim, don't say any thing to anybody else about it," called out the deacon, as his son sprung into the wagon.

"Why not?"

"Heavens! what a boy!"

"All right."

The next moment, Jim was thundering down the road, and the deacon and his spouse were busy attending to their charge. Their first proceeding was to wash the blood from his face, neck and hands. This done, they were somewhat taken aback to find that, instead of his being an Indian, he was a white man. They were still wondering, when the doctor appeared at the door.

Dr. Scudder was an excellent physician, and proceeded at once to the task before him. He examined the wound, dressed it,
after which the patient subsided into a gentle sleep. As yet he had failed to recognize the patient.

"Who is he?" he asked, in a subdued voice.

"The Wood-Demon."

"I suspected as much. How did it happen?"

In a few words, the farmer related all that had occurred.

"He turns out, then, to be a white man, as you recollect I contended him to be all along."

"How did he get shot? Who done it?"

"I know the whole particulars, but can not tell you at present. Let it suffice to say, that it was necessary to shoot him to save another person's life."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed husband and wife in concert.

"Yes; the Wood-Demon is a white man, who has been crazy."

"What made him so?"

"I observe that there is an old wound in the corner of the forehead. This wound has injured the brain and put him out of his mind. The same hurt has been opened to-day, and when it heals up, the probabilities are that he will be in his right mind."

"You don't say, now?"

"Yes; don't forget my orders; I will call around in the morning."

All night long the suffering man could be heard muttering and talking with himself. The farmer and his wife listened several times, but could detect nothing of any import.

The next morning Dr. Scudder pronounced his patient much better. Through the day he remained quiet, but when the physician called again in the evening, the man rose on his elbow, and said:

"Who are you?"

"Dr. Scudder," replied the farmer, who saw at once that reason had resumed its throne. The physician, be it stated, was fully acquainted with the love affliction of Jeremie Bonfield, and knew all the particulars of her abduction and rescue.

"What are you doing here?" pursued the patient, fixing his dark eyes earnestly upon the doctor.

"Attending you."

"What is the matter with me? Ah! I see my head is bandaged."

"Yes; you have been badly hurt."

"I recollect—the Indians came upon us; they shot me—where's Hillingham?" he suddenly demanded.

"In Philadelphia, I suppose. What is your name?" asked Dr. Scudder, a sudden suspicion almost overpowering him.

"Courtlandt Jackson, of course. How came I here? Were we so close to a settlement when the Indians attacked us?"

"Wait a moment," said the physician, leaning upon his hand. In a few moments it was all clear to him.

"Courtlandt Jackson," said he, "look me straight in the face. Do you think I would tell you a falsehood?"

"I would not take you to be such a man."

"Listen, then, to what I say, for I am going to tell you a strange and true story. Last spring you and Hillingham were hunting in Kentucky—"

"Last spring?"

"Yes; you were set upon by the Indians, and so badly wounded that your companion believed you to be dead. He left you for dead, came home and told Jeremie Bonfield, who has nearly pined to death. Restrain yourself, or I shall have to stop."

"Go on! go on!"

"It proved that you were not dead, but you were wounded in such a manner that when you recovered you were crazy. Some vague impulse led you to make your way out of the wilds of Kentucky into Pennsylvania. You wandered hither; took up your residence in an old chestnut tree. From that you issued forth, frightening the people until you became the terror of the neighborhood. All sorts of attempts were made
to capture you without success. This good-hearted man, in whose house you are staying, headed a company that tried to take you. You have been fired at again and again, but Providence has watched over you. Do you recollect nothing at all of this eventful period?

"Nothing—all is dark—dark—hold—let me think!" he suddenly exclaimed, pressing his hand to his forehead. "I seem to have been asleep and dreamed—yes, dreamed of darling Jennie. I had her—some one tried to take her—I caught her—I was shot—it's gone!"

Jackson dropped his head back on the pillow, pale and perplexed. Turning his inquiring eyes upon his physician, he said: "Go on! go on! or my head will burst."

"Not another word. I have said too much already."

The physician saw that he had taxed his patient's mind to the utmost, and further revelation might be fatal. He had enjoined farmer Hunt and his wife to hold no conversation with him, as it was his wish that he should know nothing of the abduction and shooting of himself, until he was so recovered that it could not possibly injure him.

"Jackson," said he, noticing the perplexed look upon his face, "whatever you may have been in the past few months, you are now a man of sense. You have studied medicine, I believe, but you are my patient, and I shall only be responsible for your health under condition that you obey me implicitly. Will you agree to do so?" Jackson nodded, with a faint smile.

"Then let your mind rest. Let it suffice that you are in the best of hands, and in a fair way to recover. I will see you again this evening."

"But, doctor," pleaded the patient.

"Well, what is it?" laughed the latter.

"Can't—can't—she come?"

"No; it might be fatal to both. Not another word," he added, raising his hand in a warning manner, and passing out of the room.

From farmer Hunt's, Dr. Scudder made his way straight to the residence of Colonel Bonfield. Taking the latter aside, he narrated the wonderful fact of the Wood-Demon and Courtland Jackson being one and the same person. The first inquiry of the colonel was to ask whether the young man was fatally wounded. When assured in the negative, his joy was naturally great. For a moment, he was scarcely able to restrain his emotions, and then he said:

"How wonderful! how marvelous! That explains something that, up to this moment, has been incomprehensible to me. Jennie, you know, has hardly recovered from the shock she received. She has said something about the Wood-Demon and Courtland Jackson—mixing their names up in a manner that made me fear she had lost her mind. He treated her with chivalrous politeness during her captivity, remaining outside all night while she was within the tree."

"There has been something in his manner that reminded her of her lover; but she can not suspect the truth."

"Are you certain of that?"

"I am; disguised and besmeared, as he was, with paint, his most intimate friend could not have recognized him. I think it would be a good plan to send to Philadelphia for Hillingham, that young friend of his."

"I will do so at once."

"I will leave it to you to break the tidings to Jennie. Do it gently, or you may overcome her."

"I can not express my gratitude to you, doctor, for the interest and kindness you have shown," said Colonel Bonfield, taking the physician's hand. "Let me request that the matter remain a secret for the present."

A person rarely dies with joy, but Jennie Bonfield came very nigh doing so. Her father became so alarmed that he summoned
Dr. Scudder, who assured him that it was
the best thing in the world for her.

A week later, Courtlandt Jackson, and
his betrothed, Jennie Bonfield, met. The
interview was too sacred to be touched up-
on by us, and we therefore draw the cur-
tain.

In good time, Courtlandt Jackson entirely
recovered, and, as a matter of course, he
and Jennie were speedily united in marriage.
Edward Hfillingham was groomsman, and
his amazement, and, in fact, the amazement
of all of Jackson's friends and acquaint-
ances, can be better imagined than described,
when they learned that he and the Wood-
Demon were one and the same person.

The neighborhood was always distasteful
to Doctor Jackson, on account of its having
been the scene of the most remarkable, and,
in some respects, the most ludicrous phase
of his life. Shortly after he was married,
therefore, he, and his newly-made wife, re-
moved to Philadelphia, where he settled as
a city physician, and lived out a goodly
number of days.

Zeb. Whanger would never believe that
the husband of Jennie Bonfield had once
been the Wood-Demon. When told so, he
got furiously mad, and said: "Golly blast-
nation hebben! t'ink I's a fool? Dat ar'
Wood-Demon went down! I see'd him!"
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