

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse
Poe Aristotle James Hastings Voltaire Cooke
Hale Shakespeare Bunner Chambers Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shaw Benedict Alcott
Doré Dante Swift Pushkin Newton
Wodehouse



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, tredition offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. tredition is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

TREDITION CLASSICS

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series. The creators of this series are united by passion for literature and driven by the intention of making all public domain books available in printed format again - worldwide. Most TREDITION CLASSICS titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades. At tredition we believe that a great book never goes out of style and that its value is eternal. Several mostly non-profit literature projects provide content to tredition. To support their good work, tredition donates a portion of the proceeds from each sold copy. As a reader of a TREDITION CLASSICS book, you support our mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion. See all available books at www.tredition.com.



The content for this book has been graciously provided by Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg is a non-profit organization founded by Michael Hart in 1971 at the University of Illinois. The mission of Project Gutenberg is simple: To encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks. Project Gutenberg is the first and largest collection of public domain eBooks.

Hidden Hand

Emma Dorothy Eliza Nevitte Southworth

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Emma Dorothy Eliza Nevitte Southworth

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8472-2297-2

www.tredition.com

www.tredition.de

Copyright:

The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations, such as Project Gutenberg, worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

HIDDEN HAND

By MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of THE CURSE OF CLIFTON

NEW YORK
HURST & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

CONTENTS.

- CHAPTER I. The Nocturnal Visit
- CHAPTER II. The Masks
- CHAPTER III. The Quest
- CHAPTER IV. Capitola
- CHAPTER V. The Discovery
- CHAPTER VI. A Short, Sad Story
- CHAPTER VII. Metamorphosis of the Newsboy
- CHAPTER VIII. Herbert Greyson
- CHAPTER IX. Marah Rocke
- CHAPTER X. The Room of the Trap-Door
- CHAPTER XI. A Mystery and a Storm at Hurricane Hall
- CHAPTER XII. Marah's Dream
- CHAPTER XIII. Marah's Memories
- CHAPTER XIV. The Wasting Heart
- CHAPTER XV. Cap's Country Capers
- CHAPTER XVI. Cap's Fearful Adventure
- CHAPTER XVII. Another Storm at Hurricane Hall
- CHAPTER XVIII. The Doctor's Daughter
- CHAPTER XIX. The Resigned Soul
- CHAPTER XX. The Outlaw's Rendezvous
- CHAPTER XXI. Gabriel LeNoir
- CHAPTER XXII. Gabriel LeNoir
- CHAPTER XXIII. The Smuggler and Capitola
- CHAPTER XXIV. Capitola's Mother
- CHAPTER XXV. Cap's Tricks and Perils
- CHAPTER XXVI. The Peril and the Pluck of Cap
- CHAPTER XXVII. Seeking his Fortune
- CHAPTER XXVIII. A Panic in the Outlaw's Den
- CHAPTER XXIX. The Victory Over Death
- CHAPTER XXX. The Orphan

THE HIDDEN HAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE NOCTURNAL VISIT.

*** Whence is that knocking?
How is't with me when every sound appals me?
*** I hear a knocking
In the south entry! Hark! — More knocking!
—Shakespeare.

Hurricane Hall is a large old family mansion, built of dark-red sandstone, in one of the loneliest and wildest of the mountain regions of Virginia.

The estate is surrounded on three sides by a range of steep, gray rocks, spiked with clumps of dark evergreens, and called, from its horseshoe form, the Devil's Hoof.

On the fourth side the ground gradually descends in broken, rock and barren soil to the edge of the wild mountain stream known as the Devil's Run.

When storms and floods were high the loud roaring of the wind through the wild mountain gorges and the terrific raging of the torrent over its rocky course gave to this savage locality its ill-omened names of Devil's Hoof, Devil's Run and Hurricane Hall.

Major Ira Warfield, the lonely proprietor of the Hall, was a veteran officer, who, in disgust at what he supposed to be ill-requited services, had retired from public life to spend the evening of his vigorous age on this his patrimonial estate. Here he lived in seclusion, with his old-fashioned housekeeper, Mrs. Condiment, and his old family servants and his favorite dogs and horses. Here his mornings were usually spent in the chase, in which he excelled, and his afternoons and evenings were occupied in small convivial suppers among his few chosen companions of the chase or the bottle.

In person Major Warfield was tall and strongly built, reminding one of some old iron-limbed Douglas of the olden time. His features were large and harsh; his complexion dark red, as that of one bronzed by long exposure and flushed with strong drink. His fierce, dark gray eyes were surmounted by thick, heavy black brows that, when gathered into a frown, reminded one of a thunder cloud, as the flashing orbs beneath them did of lightning. His hard, harsh face was surrounded by a thick growth of iron-gray hair and beard that met beneath his chin. His usual habit was a black cloth coat, crimson vest, black leather breeches, long, black yarn stockings, fastened at the knees, and morocco slippers with silver buttons.

In character Major Warfield was arrogant, domineering and violent—equally loved and feared by his faithful old family servants at home—disliked and dreaded by his neighbors and acquaintances abroad, who, partly from his house and partly from his character, fixed upon him the appropriate nickname of Old Hurricane.

There was, however, other ground of dislike besides that of his arrogant mind, violent temper and domineering habits. Old Hurricane was said to be an old bachelor, yet rumor whispered that there was in some obscure part of the world, hidden away from human sight, a deserted wife and child, poor, forlorn and heart-broken. It was further whispered that the elder brother of Ira Warfield had mysteriously disappeared, and not without some suspicion of foul play on the part of the only person in the world who had a strong interest in his "taking off." However these things might be, it was known for a certainty that Old Hurricane had an only sister, widowed, sick and poor, who, with her son, dragged on a wretched life of ill-requited toil, severe privation and painful infirmity in a distant city, unaided, unsought and uncared for by her cruel brother.

It was the night of the last day of October, eighteen hundred and forty-five. The evening had closed in very dark and gloomy. About dusk the wind arose in the northwest, driving up masses of leaden-hued clouds, and in a few minutes the ground was covered deep with snow and the air was filled with driving sleet.

As this was All Hallow Eve, the dreadful inclemency of the weather did not prevent the negroes of Hurricane Hall from availing themselves of their capricious old master's permission and go-

ing off in a body to a banjo breakdown held in the negro quarters of their next neighbor.

Upon this evening, then, there was left at Hurricane Hall only Major Warfield, Mrs. Condiment, his little housekeeper, and Wool, his body servant.

Early in the evening the old hall was shut up closely to keep out as much as possible the sound of the storm that roared through the mountain chasms and cannonaded the walls of the house as if determined to force an entrance. As soon as she had seen that all was safe, Mrs. Condiment went to bed and went to sleep.

It was about ten o'clock that night that Old Hurricane, well wrapped up in his quilted flannel dressing-gown, sat in his well-padded easy-chair before a warm and bright fire, taking his comfort in his own most comfortable bedroom. This was the hour of the coziest enjoyment to the self-indulgent old Sybarite, who dearly loved his own ease. And, indeed, every means and appliance of bodily comfort was at hand. Strong oaken shutters and thick, heavy curtains at the windows kept out every draft of air, and so deadened the sound of the wind that its subdued moaning was just sufficient to remind one of the stormy weather without in contrast to the bright warmth within. Old Hurricane, as I said, sat well wrapped up in his wadded dressing-gown, and reclining in his padded easy-chair, with his head thrown back and his feet upon the fire irons, toasting his shins and sipping his punch. On his right stood a little table with a lighted candle, a stack of clay pipes, a jug of punch, lemons, sugar, Holland gin, etc., while on the hearth sat a kettle of boiling water to help replenish the jug, if needful.

On his left hand stood his cozy bedstead, with its warm crimson curtains festooned back, revealing the luxurious swell of the full feather bed and pillows, with their snow-white linen and lamb's-wool blankets, inviting repose. Between this bedstead and the corner of the fireplace stood Old Hurricane's ancient body servant Wool, engaged in warming a crimson cloth nightcap.

"Fools!" muttered Old Hurricane, over his punch—"jacks! they'll all get the pleurisy except those that get drunk! Did they all go, Wool?"

"Ebery man, 'oman and chile, sar!—'cept 'tis me and coachman, sar!"

"More fools they! And I shouldn't wonder if you, you old scarecrow, didn't want to go too!"

"No, Marse— —"

"I know better, sir! Don't contradict me! Well, as soon as I'm in bed, and that won't be long now, you may go—so that you get back in time to wait on me to-morrow morning."

"Thanky, marse."

"Hold your tongue! You're as big a fool as the rest."

"I take this," said Old Hurricane, as he sipped his punch and smacked his lips—"I take this to be the very quintessence of human enjoyment—sitting here in my soft, warm chair before the fire, toasting my legs, sipping my punch, listening on the one hand to the storm without and glancing on the other hand at my comfortable bed waiting there to receive my sleepy head. If there is anything better than this in this world I wish somebody would let me know it."

"It's all werry comfortable indeed, marse," said the obsequious Wool.

"I wonder, now, if there is anything on the face of the earth that would tempt me to leave my cozy fireside and go abroad to-night? I wonder how large a promise of pleasure or profit or glory it would take now?"

"Much as ebber Congress itse'f could give, if it give you a penance for all your sarvins," suggested Wool.

"Yes, and more; for I wouldn't leave my home comforts to-night to insure not only the pension but the thanks of Congress!" said the old man, replenishing his glass with steaming punch and drinking it off leisurely.

The clock struck eleven. The old man again replenished his glass, and, while sipping its contents, said:

"You may fill the warming-pan and warm my bed, Wool. The fumes of this fragrant punch are beginning to rise to my head and make me sleepy."

The servant filled the warming-pan with glowing embers, shut down the lid and thrust it between the sheets to warm the couch of this luxurious Old Hurricane. The old man continued to toast his feet, sip his punch and smack his lips. He finished his glass, set it down, and was just in the act of drawing on his woolen nightcap, preparatory to stepping into his well-warmed bed when he was suddenly startled by a loud ringing of the hall-door bell.

"What the foul fiend can that mean at this time of night?" exclaimed Old Hurricane, dropping his nightcap and turning sharply around toward Wool, who, warming-pan in hand, stood staring with astonishment. "What does that mean, I ask you?"

"Deed, I dunno, sar, less it's some benighted traveler in search o' shelter outen de storm!"

"Humph! and in search of supper, too, of course, and everybody gone away or gone to bed but you and me!"

At this moment the ringing was followed by a loud knocking.

"Marse, don't less you and me listen to it, and then we ain't 'bliged to 'sturb ourselves with answering of it!" suggested Wool.

"Sdeath, sir! Do you think that I am going to turn a deaf ear to a stranger that comes to my house for shelter on such a night as this? Go and answer the bell directly."

"Yes, sar."

"But stop—look here, sirrah—mind I am not to be disturbed. If it is a traveler, ask him in, set refreshments before him and show him to bed. I'm not going to leave my warm room to welcome anybody to-night, please the Lord. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sar," said the darkey, retreating.

As Wool took a shaded taper and opened the door leading from his master's chamber, the wind was heard howling through the long passages, ready to burst into the cozy bedroom.

"Shut that door, you scoundrel!" roared the old man, folding the skirt of his warm dressing-gown across his knees, and hovering closer to the fire.

Wool quickly obeyed, and was heard retreating down the steps.

"Whew!" said the old man, spreading his hands over the blaze with a look of comfortable appreciation. "What would induce me to go abroad on such a night as this? Wind blowing great guns from the northwest—snow falling fast from the heavens and rising just as fast before the wind from the ground—cold as Lapland, dark as Erebus! No telling the earth from the sky. Whew!" and to comfort the cold thought, Old Hurricane poured out another glass of smoking punch and began to sip it.

"How I thank the Lord that I am not a doctor! If I were a doctor, now, the sound of that bell at this hour of night would frighten me; I should think some old woman had been taken with the pleurisy, and wanted me to get up and go out in the storm; to turn out of my warm bed to ride ten miles through the snow to prescribe for her. A doctor never can feel sure, even in the worst of weathers, of a good night's rest. But, thank Heaven, I am free from all such annoyances, and if I am sure of anything in this world it is of my comfortable night's sleep," said Old Hurricane, as he sipped his punch, smacked his lips and toasted his feet.

At this moment Wool reappeared.

"Shut the door, you villain! Do you intend to stand there holding it open on me all night?" vociferated the old man.

Wool hastily closed the offending portals and hurried to his master's side.

"Well, sir, who was it rung the bell?"

"Please, marster, sir, it wer' de Reverend Mr. Parson Goodwin."

"Goodwin? Been to make a sick-call, I suppose, and got caught in the snow-storm. I declare it is as bad to be a parson as it is to be a doctor. Thank the Lord I am not a parson, either; if I were, now, I might be called away from my cozy armchair and fireside to ride twelve miles to comfort some old man dying of quinsy. Well, here—help me into bed, pile on more comforters, tuck me up warm, put a

bottle of hot water at my feet, and then go and attend to the parson," said the old man, getting up and moving toward his inviting couch.

"Sar! sar! stop, sar, if you please!" cried Wool, going after him.

"Why, what does the old fool mean?" exclaimed Old Hurricane, angrily.

"Sar, de Reverend Mr. Parson Goodwin say how he must see you yourself, personable, alone!"

"See me, you villain! Didn't you tell him that I had retired?"

"Yes, marse; I tell him how you wer' gone to bed and asleep more'n an hour ago, and he ordered me to come wake you up, and say how it were a matter o' life and death!"

"Life and death? What have I to do with life and death? I won't stir! If the parson wants to see me he will have to come up here and see me in bed," exclaimed Old Hurricane, suiting the action to the word by jumping into bed and drawing all the comforters and blankets up around his head and shoulders.

"Mus' I fetch him reverence up, sar?"

"Yes; I wouldn't get up and go down to see—Washington. Shut the door, you rascal, or I'll throw the bootjack at your wooden head."

Wool obeyed with alacrity and in time to escape the threatened missile.

After an absence of a few minutes he was heard returning, attending upon the footsteps of another. And the next minute he entered, ushering in the Rev. Mr. Goodwin, the parish minister of Bethlehem, St. Mary's.

"How do you do? How do you do? Glad to see you, sir; glad to see you, though obliged to receive you in bed. Fact is, I caught a cold with this severe change of weather, and took a warm negus and went to bed to sweat it off. You'll excuse me. Wool, draw that easy-chair up to my bedside for worthy Mr. Goodwin, and bring him a glass of warm negus. It will do him good after his cold ride."

"I thank you, Major Warfield. I will take the seat but not the negus, if you please, to-night."

"Not the negus? Oh, come now, you are joking. Why, it will keep you from catching cold and be a most comfortable nightcap, disposing you to sleep and sweat like a baby. Of course, you spend the night with us?"

"I thank you, no. I must take the road again in a few minutes."

"Take the road again to-night! Why, man alive! it is midnight, and the snow driving like all Lapland!"

"Sir, I am sorry to refuse your proffered hospitality and leave your comfortable roof to-night, and sorrier still to have to take you with me," said the pastor, gravely.

"Take me with you! No, no, my good sir!—no, no, that is too good a joke—ha! ha!"

"Sir, I fear that you will find it a very serious one. Your servant told you that my errand was one of imminent urgency?"

"Yes; something like life and death— —"

"Exactly; down in the cabin near the Punch Bowl there is an old woman dying— —"

"There! I knew it! I was just saying there might be an old woman dying! But, my dear sir, what's that to me? What can I do?"

"Humanity, sir, would prompt you."

"But, my dear sir, how can I help her? I am not a physician to prescribe— —"

"She is far past a physician's help."

"Nor am I a priest to hear her confession— —"

"Her confession God has already received."

"Well, and I'm not a lawyer to draw up her will."

"No, sir; but you are recently appointed one of the justices of the peace for Alleghany."

"Yes. Well, what of that? That does not comprise the duty of getting up out of my warm bed and going through a snow-storm to see an old woman expire."

"I regret to inconvenience you, sir; but in this instance your duty demands your attendance at the bedside of this dying woman— —"

"I tell you I can't go, and I won't! Anything in reason I'll do. Anything I can send she shall have. Here, Wool, look in my breeches pocket and take out my purse and hand it. And then go and wake up Mrs. Condiment, and ask her to fill a large basket full of everything a poor old dying woman might want, and you shall carry it."

"Spare your pains, sir. The poor woman is already past all earthly, selfish wants. She only asks your presence at her dying bed."

"But I can't go! I! The idea of turning out of my warm bed and exposing myself to a snow-storm this time of night!"

"Excuse me for insisting, sir; but this is an official duty," said the parson mildly but firmly.

"I'll—I'll throw up my commission to-morrow," growled the old man.

"To-morrow you may do that; but meanwhile, to-night, being still in the commission of the peace, you are bound to get up and go with me to this woman's bedside."

"And what the demon is wanted of me there?"

"To receive her dying deposition."

"To receive a dying deposition! Good Heaven! was she murdered, then?" exclaimed the old man in alarm, as he started out of bed and began to draw on his nether garments.

"Be composed; she was not murdered," said the pastor.

"Well, then, what is it? Dying deposition! It must concern a crime," exclaimed the old man, hastily drawing on his coat.

"It does concern a crime."

"What crime, for the love of Heaven?"

"I am not at liberty to tell you. She will do that."

"Wool, go down and rouse up Jehu, and tell him to put Parson Goodwin's mule in the stable for the night. And tell him to put the black draught horses to the close carriage, and light both of the front lanterns—for we shall have a dark, stormy road— —Shut the door,

you infernal— —I beg your pardon, parson, but that villain always leaves the door ajar after him."

The good pastor bowed gravely, and the major completed his toilet by the time the servant returned and reported the carriage ready.

It was dark as pitch when they emerged from the hall door out into the front portico, before which nothing could be seen but two red bull's-eyes of the carriage lanterns, and nothing heard but the dissatisfied whinnying and pawing of the horses.

CHAPTER II.

THE MASKS.

"What are these,
So withered and so wild in their attire
That look not like th' inhabitants of earth
And yet are on't?"

—Macbeth.

"To the Devil's Punch Bowl," was the order given by Old Hurricane as he followed the minister into the carriage. "And now, sir," he continued, addressing his companion, "I think you had better repeat that part of the church litany that prays to be delivered from 'battle, murder and sudden death,' for if we should be so lucky as to escape Black Donald and his gang, we shall have at least an equal chance of being upset in the darkness of these dreadful mountains."

"A pair of saddle mules would have been a safer conveyance, certainly," said the minister.

Old Hurricane knew that, but, though a great sensualist, he was a brave man, and so he had rather risk his life in a close carriage than suffer cold upon a sure-footed mule's back.

Only by previous knowledge of the route could any one have told the way the carriage went. Old Hurricane and the minister both knew that they drove, lumbering, over the rough road leading by

serpentine windings down that rugged fall of ground to the river's bank, and that then, turning to the left by a short bend, they passed in behind that range of horseshoe rocks that sheltered Hurricane Hall—thus, as it were doubling their own road. Beneath that range of rocks, and between it and another range, there was an awful abyss or chasm of cleft, torn and jagged rocks opening, as it were, from the bowels of the earth, in the shape of a mammoth bowl, in the bottom of which, almost invisible from its great depth, seethed and boiled a mass of dark water of what seemed to be a lost river or a subterranean spring. This terrific phenomenon was called the Devil's Punch Bowl.

Not far from the brink of this awful abyss, and close behind the horseshoe range of rocks, stood a humble log-cabin, occupied by an old free negress, who picked up a scanty living by telling fortunes and showing the way to the Punch Bowl. Her cabin went by the name of the Witch's Hut, or Old Hat's Cabin. A short distance from Hat's cabin the road became impassable, and the travelers got out, and, preceded by the coachman bearing the lantern, struggled along on foot through the drifted snow and against the buffeting wind and sleet to where a faint light guided them to the house.

The pastor knocked. The door was immediately opened by a negro, whose sex from the strange anomalous costume it was difficult to guess. The tall form was rigged out first in a long, red, cloth petticoat, above which was buttoned a blue cloth surtout. A man's old black beaver hat sat upon the strange head and completed this odd attire.

"Well, Hat, how is your patient?" inquired the pastor, as he entered preceding the magistrate.

"You will see, sir," replied the old woman.

The two visitors looked around the dimly-lighted, miserable room, in one corner of which stood a low bed, upon which lay extended the form of an old, feeble and gray-haired woman.

"How are you, my poor soul, and what can I do for you now I am here?" inquired Old Hurricane, who in the actual presence of suffering was not utterly without pity.

"You are a magistrate?" inquired the dying woman.

"Yes, my poor soul."

"And qualified to administer an oath and take your deposition," said the minister.

"Will it be legal—will it be evidence in a court of law?" asked the woman, lifting her dim eyes to the major.

"Certainly, my poor soul—certainly," said the latter, who, by the way, would have said anything to soothe her.

"Send every one but yourself from the room."

"What, my good soul, send the parson out in the storm? That will never do! Won't it be just as well to let him go up in the corner yonder?"

"No! You will repent it unless this communication is strictly private."

"But, my good soul, if it is to be used in a court of law?"

"That will be according to your own discretion!"

"My dear parson," said Old Hurricane, going to the minister, "would you be so good as to retire?"

"There is a fire in the woodshed, master," said Hat, leading the way.

"Now, my good soul, now! You want first to be put upon your oath?"

"Yes, sir."

The old man drew from his great-coat pocket a miniature copy of the Scriptures, and with the usual formalities administered the oath.

"Now, then, my good soul, begin—'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' you know. But first, your name?"

"Is it possible you don't know me, master?"

"Not I, in faith."

"For the love of heaven, look at me, and try to recollect me, sir! It is necessary some one in authority should be able to know me," said the woman, raising her haggard eyes to the face of her visitor.

The old man adjusted his spectacles and gave her a scrutinizing look, exclaiming at intervals:

"Lord bless my soul, it is! it ain't! it must! it can't be! Granny Grewell, the—the—the—midwife that disappeared from here some twelve or thirteen years ago!"

"Yes, master, I am Nancy Grewell, the ladies' nurse, who vanished from sight so mysteriously some thirteen years ago," replied the woman.

"Heaven help our hearts! And for what crime was it you ran away? Come—make a clean breast of it, woman! You have nothing to fear in doing so, for you are past the arm of earthly law now!"

"I know it, master."

"And the best way to prepare to meet the Divine Judge is to make all the reparation that you can by a full confession!"

"I know it, sir—if I had committed a crime; but I have committed no crime; neither did I run away."

"What? what? what? What was it, then? Remember, witness, you are on your oath."

"I know that, sir, and I will tell the truth; but it must be in my own way."

At this moment a violent blast of wind and hail roared down the mountain side and rattled against the walls, shaking the witch's hut, as if it would have shaken it about their ears.

It was a proper overture to the tale that was about to be told. Conversation was impossible until the storm raved past and was heard dying in deep, reverberating echoes from the depths of the Devil's Punch Bowl.

"It is some thirteen years ago," began Granny Grewell, "upon just such a night of storm as this, that I was mounted on my old mule Molly, with my saddlebags full of dried yarbs and 'stilled waters and sich, as I allus carried when I was out 'tendin' on the sick. I was on my way a-going to see a lady as I was sent for to 'tend."

"Well, master, I'm not 'shamed to say, as I never was afraid of man, beast, nor sperrit, and never stopped at going out all hours of

the night, through the most lonesome roads, if so be I was called upon to do so. Still I must say that jest as me and Molly, my mule, got into that deep, thick, lonesome woods as stands round the old Hidden House in the hollow I did feel queerish; 'case it was the dead hour of the night, and it was said how strange things were seen and hearn, yes, and done, too, in that dark, deep, lonesome place! I seen how even my mule Molly felt queer, too, by the way she stuck up her ears, stiff as quills. So, partly to keep up my own spirits, and partly to 'courage her, says I, 'Molly,' says I, 'what are ye afeared on? Be a man, Molly!' But Molly stepped out cautious and pricked up her long ears all the same.

"Well, master, it was so dark I couldn't see a yard past Molly's ears, and the path was so narrow and the bushes so thick we could hardly get along; and just as we came to the little creek, as they calls the Spout, 'cause the water jumps and jets along it till it empties into the Punch Bowl, and just as Molly was cautiously putting her fore foot into the water, out starts two men from the bushes and seized poor Molly's bridle!"

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Major Warfield.

"Well, master, before I could cry out, one of them willains seized me by the scruff of my neck, and, with his other hand upon my mouth, he says:

"Be silent, you old fool, or I'll blow your brains out!"

"And then, master, I saw for the first time that their faces were covered over with black crape. I couldn't a-screamed if they'd let me! for my breath was gone and my senses were going along with it from the fear that was on me.

"Don't struggle; come along quietly, and you shall not be hurt,' says the man as had spoke before.

"Struggle! I couldn't a-struggled to a-saved my soul! I couldn't speak! I couldn't breathe! I liked to have a-dropped right offen Molly's back. One on 'em says, says he:

"Give her some brandy!" And t'other takes out a flask and puts it to my lips and says, says he:

"Here, drink this."