

Literature.

IN A TUNNEL.

"Miss Alice! Miss Alice! will ye be af-thur comin' upstairs? An' sure she's dead entirely this time?" cried the frightened servant girl, rushing out on the piazza, where Alice Austin stood looking anxiously down the road.

Alice hurried upstairs and found her sister-in-law lying still and white on the floor.

"Bring me some water and salts from the bureau. Betty; she has only fainted," said Alice, kneeling beside the prostrate form.

In a few minutes Mrs. Austin opened her eyes and said feebly:

"Has Edward come home yet? I feel so strangely sick!"

"We will send for the doctor presently Margaret, when we get you to bed. Ned will be home soon I hope," and with Betty's assistance Alice lifted the slight form on the bed.

Three weeks before Eddie Austin, the two-year-old idol of the household, had disappeared, and all search for him had proved fruitless. As the days passed on hope gave way to despair, and the heart-broken mother, weighed down by anxiety and the cruel torture caused by false reports of the discovery of her boy, sank into a state of apathy bordering on insanity. Daily was the cry heard through the streets of the little village of Fairfield: "Child lost! Child lost! Large rewards offered!" till all hearts sickened at the sound.

Mothers kept their little ones within doors, dreading far less the entrance of the Dark Angel than that fiends in human form should steal their household treasure to gratify a merciless passion of avarice.

"Betty, you will have to take one of the girls and go for the doctor," whispered Alice, in alarm, as she noticed a gray pallor creeping over the wan face on the pillow.

"An' shure, miss, none of 'em be home but meself. And oh, Miss Alice, I niver can walk alone to Fairfield this dark, dark night."

The girl looked so frightened at the bare prospect of going that Alice said, after a pause:

"Well, Betty, then I shall have to go and you must stay with Mrs. Austin. If Mr. Austin returns before I do, tell him I have gone by way of the tunnel," she added, putting on her hat and walking jacket.

"The saints deliver us! For Hivin's sake, don't ye be goin' be the tunnel, Miss Alice!" exclaimed Betty, imploringly.

"Don't be frightened," replied Alice, smiling. "No train will pass for an hour and it shortens my walk nearly a mile. It is just six o'clock now, and I shall be home a little after seven," and giving the girl some parting injunctions about her sister, Alice ran downstairs. Opening her brother's escritoire in the library, she took from a private drawer a small pocket revolver and, opening the front door, stepped out into the darkness.

It was a damp, cold night in November. The wind moaned drearily through the leafless trees and heavy clouds chased each other across the heavens, obscuring the moon. Crossing the road, Alice walked a short distance and, clambering over a stone wall, found herself in a narrow strip of wood which bordered the railroad cut. Following the narrow beaten path through the trees, she soon reached the edge of the ravine, 15 or 20 feet above the track. The path continued its windings down the side of the cut, but the way was stony and in many places dangerous. The darkness, too, prevented anything like rapid progress.

She finally reached the bottom of the ravine and had crossed to the right hand track, when a low sound among the bushes above her caused the cold drops to spring out on her forehead and almost stopped her heart's beating. Quickly crouching under an overhanging rock she listened. Nothing was heard save the sighing of the wind and the fast rattle of a tiny rill running down among the bushes near her. Suddenly the bushes overhead were stirred, and a stone fell directly in front of her. She scarcely dared to breathe, but crouched under the rock, with her hand clasped tightly on her breast. The tunnel was but a few rods beyond her, but she dared not move.

"I'd like to know how much longer yer goin' to keep up this confounded tramp, Pete Johnston. 'It's been nuthin' but marchin' and counter marchin' this whole cursed day," said a low course voice among the bushes.

"Why did yer enter into the bargain if yer goin' ter back out so soon?"

"Well, I'd be satisfied with half the thousand, for I'm nigh done up with these three weeks' work," said the first one.

"An' I tell ye I'll never give him up till I git the whole twenty thousand dollars or the mother will never see her swate darlin' agin'."

A brutal laugh grated upon the girl's ears; then the first speaker whispered:

"I'll reckon she'll niver know her boy in this little bag of bones, though me arms is nigh worn out wid carrying him the last three hours."

Alice could scarcely believe what her ears had heard. Her brain reeled, and

she nearly fell from the rocky ledge on which she sat, as the truth dawned upon her. Her brother's child, her golden-haired little pet, was just within her grasp, but two brutal men kept watch over him. As she began to realize the danger of her position, her mind became clearer, and she resolved, at all hazards to rescue him. She heard the men step back some distance from the bushes and then all was still. She waited a few minutes, and then with the pistol grasped tightly in her hand, she crept stealthily out of her hiding place and struck a narrow path which led to the top of the bluff. She knew the way and the darkness favored her ascent. Reaching the summit she looked cautiously around. The clouds had parted, and the faint shimmer of moonlight through the trees enabled her to observe her surroundings distinctly. A few feet beyond were the two men stretched on the ground, their figures partially concealed by the trunks of two large trees and a clump of bushes. Between them Alice saw a little baby form with its golden head pillowed on the coal, damp grass.

Creeping along behind the bushes she reached one of the trees, and standing behind it, she waited for some minutes, hesitating what to do. The stentorous breathing of the men convinced her that fatigue had steeped their senses and that they would not readily awaken. If she should be successful in seizing the child, she could not return by the way she came. With Eddie in her arms she could never scale the precipitous side of the cut, followed, as she probably would be, by two relentless pursuers.

Again, if she should seek the shelter of the tunnel, the down express train would soon pass through, and an up train would follow but 10 or 15 minutes later. She resolved, nevertheless, to take the latter course, and, with this decision made she prepared to carry out her plans. Passing swiftly round the bushes she stood before the sleeping group. The moon at that instant shone out brightly and fell upon the white pinched face of the child. Not a moment to be lost. Grasping the pistol more firmly, she glided between the men and seizing Eddie, she sprang past them, but in so doing struck the foot of one of the ruffians. Darting up, he saw the slight figure running swiftly down the path. He sprang forward, awakening his companion, and, with muttered curses they followed in hot pursuit. With the child clasped closely to her heart, Alice sped down the rocky pathway. She heard the men close behind her; stones were hurled at her and one struck her shoulder. Terror lent wings to her feet, and she soon reached the track, along which she flew and entered the tunnel.

On—on she sped, but her breath came quick and short, for her strength was failing. She heard the heavy pantings of one close behind her. She almost felt his warm breath. Hugging the little form more closely to her breast and with a despairing cry for help, she ran on. A rude hand clutched her shoulder, and, with a shriek that ran through the tunnel she turned and faced her pursuer like a wounded animal at bay, raised her pistol and fired. With a yell of rage and pain, the man leaped into the air, and then fell with a heavy thud on the track beside her. Alice breathed more freely and ran on, though with feeble steps, through the darkness. Suddenly a low, rumbling sound smote upon her ear, and toward the opening of the tunnel she saw a faint light glimmer in the distance. Nearer and nearer it came, and then the horrible truth flashed upon her. It was the head-light of a locomotive, and she knew that the seven o'clock express train was thundering down the track.

Faint and bewildered the horror-stricken girl had lost her reckoning. She knew not on which track she was and stood staring with terror strained eyes as the thundering mass came tearing down the rail. Its great red light lit up the black walls of the tunnel with a fearful glare. Still the girl moved not; fright had chained her to the spot. The monster was close upon her; she heard its horrible breathings. Was she on the right track? The roar of a Niagara deafened her and, with a shriek of despair, she fell senseless to the ground.

Mrs. Austin fell asleep soon after Alice's departure. Seven o'clock came and Betty began to be alarmed. At that instant the bell rang. Rushing down stairs she opened the door and Mr. Austin stepped into the hall accompanied by a stranger.

"How is Mrs. Austin?" asked the former, anxiously.

"An' sure, she's asleep, sir. But, oh, Miss Alice—hiv ye seen Miss Alice?"

"No; where is she?"

"An' oh! she wint afthur the docthur, sir, an' she wint be the tunnel; an' I'm sure she's kilt, for the train's just afthur goin' by!" cried Betty, excitedly.

"Good heavens! the tunnel!" exclaimed Austin, turning white.

"Yes, sir; she said it was shorter that way," sobbed the girl.

"Hush! Get my lantern, Betty, while I run upstairs. I'll be down directly, Dana," turning to the fine looking young man he had brought with him.

He hurried to his wife's room, pressed a kiss upon her white brow, and returning to the hall took the lantern from Betty, saying:

"Don't leave Mrs. Austin an instant. We may be absent some time, but you need not be alarmed."

The two gentlemen did not utter a word as they left the house, but following the path through the woods, clambered down the cut and entered the tunnel, swinging the lantern right and left as they walked along. Suddenly Dana stopped. Directly in his path lay a dark heap. Throwing the light of the lantern upon it, the gentlemen stooped and then started back with an exclamation of horror, for before them lay a bleeding, mangled mass of human flesh and bones.

"Some poor fellow has gone to his doom," muttered Dana, striding away from the sickening spectacle.

They had walked some distance further when a deep groan broke the ghastly stillness of the tunnel. Flashing the lantern on the other side of the track, Dana discerned another man's form close to the dripping wall. As he was about to raise him, Austin uttered a hoarse cry, and, springing forward, the two men stood over the prostrate form of a woman between the tracks. A pistol lay on the ground beside her, which Austin instantly recognized as his own. He trembled so violently that Dana pushed him aside and raised the slight form. As he did so his companion bounded past him, and in a voice in which joy, pain and incredulity were blended, cried out:

"Oh, my boy!—my precious boy! She has found my Eddie!" and he caught the little form to his heart and fairly sobbed aloud.

"Oh, heaven, he is dead! Gerald, look at him!" and the father's eyes burned with anguish as he looked at the white, baby face pillowed upon his broad breast.

Dana laid Alice on the ground and looked earnestly at the child.

"Cheer up, Ned, the little fellow has been drugged. Listen! His heart beats!" and putting his ear down he heard the faint flutterings which told of the spark of life still remaining in the wasted little form.

"And Alice, is she—"

"She is in a swoon, and the sooner we get her to the doctor's the better. It is quite evident that she was pursued by those scoundrels while rescuing your child, and that fellow yonder has somewhere in his body a ball from this pistol," picking it up as he spoke.

Lifting the insensible girl in his strong arms, Dana strode down the track, followed closely by Austin, who held his boy wrapped warmly under his coat. After some minutes walk they were out of the tunnel and reached the depot, where they drove directly to a doctor's.

For an hour Alice lay insensible in the doctor's office, and when she opened her eyes Austin whispered in alarm:

"Why does she talk so strangely, doctor?"

There has been such a terrible strain on her nervous system that I fear she may have an attack of brain fever unless a reaction takes place," he replied with some anxiety. "A good hearty cry would do her more good than any of my remedies."

"Let her see the child. That baby's face ought to be enough to melt a heart of adamant," said Dana, compassionately.

Austin laid Eddie beside her. She looked at the little white emaciated face with a troubled, sorrowful expression for an instant, and then, clasping her arms tightly around the child, burst into a passionate, uncontrollable flood of tears.

By this time the news of the child's rescue had spread like wildfire through the town.

Bells were rung, bonfires lighted, and men, women and children rushed to the doctor's house, crowding the street and sidewalks. The entire village had turned out, and yards doorways and stoops were alive with an excited populace.

The crowd was clamoring to see the hero of the hour, and cries of "Eddie Austin!" filled the air.

"Ned, you will have to take him on the stoop to satisfy them," said Dana, as the shouts and cries were redoubled.

Austin took the child out on the steps, and as the bright light of the torches fell upon them, cheer after cheer rent the air.

When the father raised the little inanimate form so that all could see it, the excitement and enthusiasm knew no bounds. Women cried aloud for joy, boys shrieked and hurraed, and many a tear coursed down the hard, weather beaten cheeks of stalwart men in the crowd. Alice stood beside her brother, leaning on Dana's arm, but overcome with agitation, was led back fainting to the sofa.

Roused to indignation by the sight, someone shouted out: "Death to the childstealer!"

In an instant the cry was caught up by the excited crowd, who rushed in frantic haste toward the railroad. Dragging the wounded man from the tunnel, they would have lynched him on the spot had not Dana, with the sheriff and one or two others, arrived to prevent them.

The wretch was grovelling on the ground in an agony of pain and terror. With haggard face and bloodshot eyes he looked up and cried aloud for mercy; but he saw no pity in the white, inexorable faces around him.

A rope was placed around his neck, he was dragged to a tree, when Dana hurried to the spot.

"Untie that rope!" he demanded sternly.

"We'll string him up to high heaven first!" answered an angry voice near him.

"However deserving the fellow may be of death, it is not for you to take the law into your own hands," replied Dana, sternly.

"The deuce take the law and you, too! What right have you to interfere between that man and justice?" said the fellow, clinching his fist threateningly. The excitement had now reached a fever heat. The crowd had quickly gathered around Dana, who stood beside the wounded man; threats and curses were freely hurled against both, and the state of affairs began to look alarming.

"If the man is guilty he has a right to be tried, and I'll shoot the first one of you who dares to touch him!" said Dana, coolly.

His quiet, commanding tone—and, still more, the menacing gleam of the pistol he made no effort to conceal, quelled the tumult, and the miserable man was carried to the village jail, followed by an angry, hooting crowd, clamorous for his death.

An hour later Eddie Austin was in his mother's arms. For days death hovered over the darkened home, threatening to carry off first one and then another. Put when over the little village of Fairfield the sun shone brightly, it smiled, too, upon the happiest home in all the land. For a golden-haired boy, with rosy cheeks, was playing near his mother's chair, and Margaret looked up with a proud, happy smile to her husband's face as the little fellow played in baby gear and rolled and tumbled over the good-natured hound who lay stretched on the rug before the blazing wood fire.

The Old Soldier Muses.

"I heard only the other day," said the old soldier, "that at every mealtime all the time I was away in the army in the civil war a plate and a knife and fork were set for me at the table at home. Many a time if I had only known it, while I was falling into line at the cook's fire at the end of the company street, with my tin plate and tin cup in my hand to get the pork and hard bread and coffee or whatever we might have to eat, better or worse, they were setting a plate for me on the table at home. They entertained me there in spirit if they could not in flesh, and how glad they would have been to see me sit down at the table!"

"Where we were, in camp or on the march, and whether we had much or little my plate was always laid for me at home just the same. I wonder if it would have helped me if I had known it, if I could have eaten in spirit, as they entertained me? And I can hear them now after all these years, when they had something that I particularly liked, saying:

"How David would like this if he was here."

"Dear, dear! How glad I am I got back!"—New York Sun.

Why the Train Slows in Leaving.

He was an observing man and was not in the habit of allowing the slightest details of anything or any event to escape his eye. He stood on the depot platform and watched the heavy overland trains pulling out for the west. Each one of them seemed to come nearly to a stop just after pulling out of the depot.

"Stopping to let some one off?" he asked of a railroad man standing near him.

"No. Looks as if they were doin't it?" Well, that fools lots of people," said the railroad man. "Some people think they stop to let off some one who stayed on too long, and some think they stop to put off a tramp. Neither of these reasons is right. All engines bring their trains to a stop or nearly so after pulling out of a terminal station in order to test the airbrakes and see that they are in working order. Most engineers try the air just after pulling out of a station, but on most roads the rule is that they try the brakes within two miles of the station."—Topeka State Journal.

Making Music Primatively.

I once read in an account of the early history of New Zealand the story of Bishop Selwyn's first pastoral visit to Otago, then peopled mainly by whalers and sealers.

The grateful sailors made unusual efforts to receive their august visitor as he deserved. A room was hung with flags, a chair disguised as a pulpit, and the bishop was told that music had been provided. He was requested to give out "Old Hundred" as the only hymn they knew.

This he did with much misgiving, and the next moment a musical box which had been concealed near his elbow struck up a lively waltz, followed by "Nix, My Dolly." Though electrified, the bishop was sustained and reassured by the perfect gravity of his audience, who waited until the solemn "Old Hundred" came round when they joined in full chorus.

A Nice Question.

Colonel Butler, session judge at Bassein, has puzzled the jail authorities. In a recent case in which a woman was stabbed in an abduction affair the sessions judge sentenced the criminal to undergo four years' rigorous imprisonment for abduction and to be hanged on the capital charge. The criminal has appealed, and among the grounds of appeal raised it is seriously pointed out that the learned sessions judge omitted to specify which punishment should be carried out first—the hanging or the imprisonment.

THE QUEENS COUNTY GAZETTE,

The Queens County Gazette will be issued from the office of Jas. A. Stewart,

Main Street, Gagetown, N. B.

EVERY

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