

A Winter Night Tale.

(Rockland Courier-Gazette.) "Wal, if this ere ain't agoin' to be a master to-night, then I'll give in!" Farmer Prescott precipitated this sentence simultaneously with a huge armful of well-seasoned hickory; the one in the direction of the little woman in the chimney corner, the other into the capacious wood-box, expectorating, as he finished both feats, into the sober looking ash-pan by the side of the wood-box, by way of punctuation. He might have been communicating his climatic prognostics to the wood box mentioned, for all the sign the quiet figure sitting in the old rocker made of having supposed it addressed to herself. She sat silent and motionless, save when the old rocker, from force of habit, now and then joggling thoughtfully back and forth. Her knitting-work lay idly in her lap, under her folded hands, and her dim gray eyes gazed absently into the ruddy blaze of the kitchen fire.

less and amazed spectator of the scene. "Father!" said the little woman, bending above the prostrate form, "father, it's Jack—don't you know? Bun and bring the hartshorn—he's fainted." Thus adjured, the old man hurried to bring restoratives; and soon Jack opened his eyes. "Mother—father—where am I? Where is Mary?" "Don't you know, Jack? She's under the old elm, waitin' for you?" "Oh, yes, I remember," Jack said; "where is his voice had sunk to a whisper, and he went on slowly: "the doctor said 'd never live to come home, but I wanted to see you and to sleep alongside Mary." "Oh, Jack, Jack! can you ever forgive us—me'n father?" "Yes, mother, I'm too near bein' with Mary now to have any hard feelin's against you for separatin, us." The old farmer wiped his eyes with his sleeve and said: "Thankee, my boy Jack, I'm sorry I was so sot."

"What's the matter, mother?" queried Farmer Prescott, drawing his chair opposite to hers, and preparing for his evening smoke. "Sixteen years ago to-night," she began, in evident response to his query, though she did not move her gaze from the fire: "sixteen years ago to-night, Jack—our Jack—shouldered his little bundle and went out into the night, never to come back!" "Something like a precursor of a thunderstorm rose on Farmer Prescott's shaggy brows, as he rose abruptly and went to the window, through whose frosty panes he could see the old elm, in front of the house, now ominously still for a moment, as if gathering all its strength to cope with its natural enemy, the wind, now throwing its long, slender arms wildly about in the fearful wrestle. "Yes," the little woman went on, persistently, "and it's now night on to fourteen years since we laid Mary out under the old elm, to wait for Jack, and in all that time not a word from the boy."

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