

'No, I shan't. I'm a sick man—a terrible sick man. I callate it's pneumony or the beginnin' of a gen'ral break-up. I shan't ever be any better. Doc, he's always hopeful, 'cause that's his business, but he can't fool me. He stuck that glass tube of his under my tongue, an' that's just what he did to Rance Moulton when he had the pneumony. I don't know how long I shall be rational, so I want to tell you now that my will's in the cedar chest.

'What are you going to have for supper?' inquired his practical daughter.

'I hain't got any appetite,' he returned gloomily. 'Just some gruel an' tea, guess. But before you get it, I wish you'd go over an' see if Cephas Blake'll come over an' watch with me to-night.'

'Why, if you think you need to have a watcher, I'll sit up with you.'

'No, I ain't goin' to have you broke of your rest,' he objected. 'You'll have enough to do waitin' on me daytimes. You go and get Cephas. I ought to have some one here, for like enough I'll be worse in the night, and besides, I've got to have powders every two hours.'

Mary Catherine rose reluctantly. 'Perhaps you won't need a watcher,' she suggested. 'Perhaps you'll feel sleepy after you've had your supper.'

'I don't callate I shall close my eyes to-night,' he replied. 'You get Cephas. I've heard he was real handy in sickness.'

Thus it came about that two hours later Cephas Blake was ushered into the sick-room, where a dim light showed but faintly the rugged outlines of the face on the pillow. Cephas was nearly as old as the invalid, but, unlike him, he was small and wiry.

'Good evenin', Eben!' he said tiptoeing to the bed. 'Sorry you're under the weather. Never had an idea of such a thing till Mary Catherine ran over a little while ago.'

'Have a chair,' said the sick man. And, as the other drew one forth and sprawled comfortably in it, he continued, 'I'm a sick man, Cephas. I guess my race is most run.'

'Now I shouldn't look at it that way,' Cephas began, but the other cut him short.

'You can't ever tell how you'll look at things till you're brought face to face with 'em. If it's got to come, as of course it has some time, I guess it might just as well come now. The last of my potatoes is dug and in the cellar, and Mary Catherine will marry Sam Hallet soon after I'm gone, so that leaves her well provided for.' He sighed heavily. 'I'm resigned, Cephas. I'm perfectly resigned.'

Cephas squirmed uneasily in his chair. 'I should try to get a little sleep if I were you,' he advised.

'Sleep!' the man on the bed snorted scornfully. 'I guess I shan't get much sleep! My head's nigh bustin'.'

'Try a powder, then. Maybe that'll ease you some.'

He shook the powder from its paper out on the invalid's tongue and held a tumbler of water to his lips; after this he resumed his sprawling attitude in the chair, and sat there in preoccupied silence. There was no sound to break the stillness except the ticking of the clock in the kitchen. After a time Mary Catherine went to bed, and the silence became oppressive. Cephas yawned frequently, and presently began to nod. He was drifting into a comfortable doze when a complaining voice from the bed roused him.

'You ain't asleep, are you, Cephas?' it inquired, with some asperity.

Cephas pulled himself together with an effort and sat up. 'Course not, Eben!' he declared.

'Because I shan't be easy if you get asleep,' Eben explained. 'I'm likely to be worse at any minute.'

'You needn't worry. I ain't goin' to sleep,' the watcher said doggedly. But nevertheless almost immediately he was nodding again. His under jaw dropped; there came from his throat an unmistakable gurgle. Eben sniffed disgustedly.

'Hey!' he called. 'Hey! what you doin' now?'

Cephas started up guiltily, blinking his sleepy eyes. He stared about him for a moment, as if trying to collect his napping wits. 'What is it? What's wrong?' he asked. 'Time for one of them powders?'

'No!' Eben snapped. 'You were asleep!'

'I wasn't, either,' contradicted Cephas, vigorously.

'Yes, you were. You were a-snorin'.'

'I hain't snored a mite.'

'Hain't ye?' snorted Eben. 'Well, t'was the best imitation ever. I listened to.'

'Maybe I might ha' lost myself for a minute,' Cephas admitted, 'but I shan't again.'

'If I have a watcher,' said Eben, 'I want one to watch, not to show me how many different keys he can snore in.'

Cephas looked hurt. For a time he held himself upright in the chair. Yet the rally was but short-lived. Gradually the stiffness of his pose relaxed. He sank lower in the chair. Again his jaw dropped, and again he sent forth a series of guttural gurgles which surpassed all former efforts.

Eben, who had dropped into a doze himself, was rudely awakened. He sat up in bed, staring at the man in the chair.

'Don't it beat time,' he burst out, 'that a man can't be sick peaceable in his own house! Hey, there, Cephas! What you doin'? Just "lost yourself" again, I s'pose! Lost yourself pretty thorough this time, ain't ye?'

His voice had risen to a shout, but Cephas snored on. An angry light appeared in Eben's eyes. He came out of the bed with a bound.

'I guess you need the bed more'n I do,' he said, under his breath. 'Next thing I know, you'll pitch head first out of that chair and break your neck.'

He snatched up his clothes from another chair and began jerking them on. Then he lifted Cephas and laid him gently on the bed. Cephas' eyes did not open; his grunts and gurgles went on noisily.

There was an extra blanket on the footboard of the bed, and Eben, wrapping this about himself, sat down in the chair, a grim smile curving his lips. It grew more pronounced as he glanced at the recumbent form on the patchwork coverlet.

'I guess I'll have to put off dyin' till I can find some decent watchers,' he ruminated.

Mary Catherine, coming downstairs early the next morning, paused at the door of her father's bedroom and caught from within the sound of heavy, regular breathing.

'Guess I won't disturb 'em now,' she observed, and it was not until breakfast was on the table that she pushed open the bedroom door. The sight which met her eyes brought a gasp of astonishment from her. On the bed lay Cephas Blake, fully dressed and still snoring lustily, while in a chair by the bedside her father dozed peacefully, his chin sunk on his chest.

'Why, father,' she cried, 'you must be feelin' better!'

The old man started up and grinned sheepishly.

'I am,' he said, 'a good deal. I've slept pretty well, and I should ha' slept more if Cephas hadn't snored so. Goin' to get breakfast?'

'It's on the table. You comin' out?'

'Yes, I'll be out as soon as I can get him woke up,' he said.

He went to the bed and gave Cephas a series of vigorous shakes.

'Come!' he shouted. 'Come, it's time to get up! Breakfast's ready, and I guess you must be most starved after your night of "watchin'". The Companion.'

High Life

A certain portion of France is called the turpentine district, as it is largely given over to the production of turpentine that exudes from the enormous number of maritime pine trees. The process of obtaining the turpentine makes one think of the way maple sugar is made in America. A shingle is inserted in the tree, and from it is hung a small pail, into which the turpentine drips in a tiny stream. Each year the incision in the tree has to be made at a greater height, and on this account a most singular custom prevails.

All of the workmen use great stilts, upon which they stride about, examining the little pails and emptying them when full, although they may be hanging many feet from the ground. These stilts are usually about sixteen feet long, and the workmen wear them all day, just as steadily as they wear their boots or jackets.

The men who guard the flocks also find stilts very useful. Indeed, nearly all of the peasants of that region live, as one may say, up in the air. Each stilt-wearer carries a long staff, which has a round, flat top, upon which he sits to rest or when he eats his dinner. At the noon hour it is a strange sight to see a number of turpentine gatherers or herdsmen chatting and eating sixteen feet above the ground.

He was the cotta's only child,
They called him Little Jim,
And Death with scythe and hour-glass had
Called round to wait on him;
The mother wept, the father sobbed,
For death looked very sure,
But Little Jim's still in the swim
Through Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.