

## Dick's Homecoming.

A BEAUTIFUL full moon shone from a clear December sky and brightened up a lonely country road over which a man of dark and gloomy countenance slowly trudged. He arrived at the little siding Eurema by the 9.30 train and was now making his way to his native home, on the outskirts of a village nine miles from Eurema.

Only a week ago he had been released from an Alberta prison where he had been sentenced to spend four years for theft. Six years had come and gone from the time when a mere boy, he ran away from his pleasant home, leaving a mother and sister to watch and wait for his return. As a thief, in the contaminated world he never thought of them; but, when thrown behind prison bars, all the happy days of his youth crowded back to his memory, bringing with them the anguish and pain belonging to a mis-spent life together with the longing to see again the faces of his mother and sister. Often had he looked forward to the time of his release when he could return to his dear old home and be happy. The long-wished-for day had come. The hope which he had entertained for so long was, he thought, about to be realized.

As he passed by the old familiar bridge, just below the gate of the homestead and heard the well-remembered sound of the waters beneath, and saw the quaint house among the firs, whose heads seemed to reach the jewel-studded sky, thoughts of the wickedness of his past life came into his mind and awakened anew, pangs of grief and shame. The moon shone softly down on the white ermine robe in which Mother Earth had lately been enveloped, her bright light reflected on the windows of the room that Richard remembered so well—the room where his mother and sister, doubtless passed so many nights of worry, yearning and prayer. He stopped. Would it only break his mother's heart

to know that her only son was a thief! But the old home trees seemed to whisper and nod their heads towards him, inviting him to come in. The old veranda on whose rude planks he had played when a child, was plainly visible and it too seemed to call him. He set off again at a brisk pace and was soon walking up the short lane, leading to the house.

Wondering how his mother would receive her ungrateful son, he hesitatingly knocked at the same door, which he had before so often opened. He waited but no reply came. He knocked again. No answer. Then and not till then, came the terrible thought that his mother and sister had gone. He opened the door and entered. The creaking of the windows and the flapping of an old window blind alone disturbed the dreary stillness as Dick stood there, gazing on the barn-like appearance of his once cosy home. All the early scenes of his boyhood days crowded thick and fast upon him. How bright and happy they were. Then in turn came the dark and evil days of the latter part of his life. A score of demons surrounded him. He cursed the world and the God who made him, and plunged in the depths of despair, left the old house, and with only evil in his heart made his way towards the village.

Thus baffled by the unkind world, Dick lost all hope of future happiness. The hope, which but an hour ago had almost set his heart on fire was now extinguished, and, regardless of consequences, he resolved to renew his old profession.

He had by this time entered the village and was standing before a well-stocked store. By the bright moonlight he could easily see the interior; in one corner, was a large iron safe. There was his prey! He looked about for a convenient point of entrance and soon discovered a small window at the back of the building. It was securely locked it is true, but what was that to a thief grown desperate by disappointment. His only instrument was a pocket knife but that did effective work and in a very few minutes the window was forced open. The intruder, thus far successful, crawled in. But the hardest part was yet to be

accomplished. The safe was locked by a combination lock. Twenty minutes, that seemed as many hours to him, passed and still the thief worked at his job. Although the night was cold he wiped great drops of sweat from his forehead. Still he worked on. Suddenly he heard a loud noise and he rushed to the window. It was only the village clock, striking the midnight hour. He resumed his work; ten long minutes passed and the heavy iron door was opened. Eagerly grasping the bundle of notes, he started for the window again. He had almost escaped when a clear feminine voice shrieking Richard! Richard! fell upon his ears; the next moment his sister, Grace, stood before him. The shock was too great for him. He swooned and fell. When he awoke he found Grace kneeling beside him in the house of the man he had robbed.

Dick's mother, having given up her son as lost, died soon after he ran away. At her mother's death Grace went to work with the village merchant. On the night of the event just related she was thinking of Dick and when she went to bed, fell into a troubled sleep. In a dream she saw Dick enter the store and open the safe just as it actually happened. She quickly dressed and arrived at the store just in time to change a life of darkness and misery to one of brightness and happiness.