

GRANNY MORE.

GRANNY MORE lay dying, her old heart putting up a brave fight. It was anything but a peaceful end. Her friends round the bedside were concerned. It was so unlike her to give trouble. And at her age, too; she was over eighty. If she could only be got to close her eyes. No! there she would lie, her eyes fixed on the door, tense, expectant, full of fear. The frail old figure raised itself up, arm outstretched, finger pointing. "Dinna go near it!" she said.

"Lie doon, granny; ye'll never get the mend carryin' on that wey; there's naebody at the door." But she was not to be put off.

"Dinna go near that door, I tell ye; ye canna cheat me; I'm no' that far through but I can hear a chapp at the door."

She sank back exhausted. It had been going on for hours—the struggle. Periodically she would gather up some strength, and always she would expend it in the same way. "The door! The door!" The friends and helpers could not understand it. They tacked a quilt to the outside of the door lest anyone should disturb her by knocking. It was a strangely inappropriate ending to a quiet, gentle life.

"She's no' like herself at a' when she takes ane o' thae turns," they said.

The doctor would be in any minute now. If she would only keep quiet! But no! Her restlessness became worse. She fidgetted and fretted, disarranging the bedclothes with her nervous hands. Suddenly she

sprang up again, her face terror-stricken. "Wheesht!" she said. Her breathing was painfully difficult. She listened intently. They tried to get her to lie down. She shook them from her impatiently. "Dinna open that door, I tell ye; it'll be yer death if ye dae." Her eyes peered as at some object. All at once they became distended with fear. She seemed to recognise something—something frightful. "Dinna open that . . ." Breathless, choking, she fell back on the pillow.

The doctor came in, but he had only to close her eyes, and cross her hands over her breast.

Thus may a simple thing live through long years, slumbering in the sub-conscious mind and finally coming to life again with all the terror it originally excited. For that is what had happened to Granny More. The doctor knew. She had made him her confidant. It was a story nearly seventy years old.

As a little girl she had been staying with her aunt. One day she was left in sole charge of the house while her aunt visited a sick relative. It was a tenement house of four apartments, first door, one stair up. It had a long, narrow, dark strip of lobby from which the rooms and the kitchen led. The size of the house made her nervous, her father's house being one of only two apartments—a *but-an'-ben*. She had instructions not to open the door if anyone should knock. She closed all the room doors and sat in the kitchen. It was eerie sitting there alone. Not even a cat to keep her company. She sang little tunes for a time; she whistled; she made noises with the poker and tongs. And then she realised that she must be quiet, else

any one coming to the door would know there was some one in. She had heard of men who would put a foot inside the door to keep it from shutting. And her aunt had lots of things in the house—silver spoons and pictures and ornaments and a gold watch. It was only for two hours anyway.

She tried to read a book and found she was not reading. Every foot on the stair arrested her. Her heart seemed to stop beating, and not to start again until the foot would pass up or down the stair. One foot-step in particular kept her in anxious suspense. It seemed in doubt as to what to do. Finally, however, and after what seemed an interminable time, it stole rather than walked down the stair. No one knocked, at least for some time. How she loved the quick, cheery feet that went rattling by! It was the furtive, skiffy ones that brought her heart to her mouth. The time was wearing on. In another half-hour her aunt would be back. The hands of the clock moved very slowly. She closed her eyes and counted up to a hundred. The minute hand had moved only a tiny bit. Then she tried two hundred, three hundred. She was just in the two hundred and nineties, when she heard another foot on the stair. It was very like the one that had frightened her earlier. It stopped on the landing. Would it never go away? She listened. There was no knock at the door opposite. She was sure of that. Had it slipped away unawares? No! Yes! Not a sound now! She began to think she had been dreaming. There then came three quiet, almost apologetic, knocks.

"It'll be a beggar," she said to herself. She sat down bravely. He would be sure to go away when

there was no reply. A long pause. Other three knocks, less quiet. She was in a state of frenzied agitation. What would she do? Other three knocks, louder. It must be some friend. She crept along the lobby on her tiptoes. The knocking again! She would look through the keyhole and if it was a friend, she would open the door. But it required more courage than she possessed. By this time she was right up against the door. When the knocks came she could feel the vibrations on her body. She hung on to the door handle. Her eye was quite close to the keyhole. One look might put her out of all anxiety. She screwed up her courage and looked. At first she could see nothing. She ought to be able to see, for the staircase window shed its light on the landing. The person must be leaning against the keyhole. She looked again. She was dimly conscious of something, something luminous; what, she could not say. It seemed to move. Then a momentary ray of light coming between the object and the keyhole revealed to her all at once that she was looking at—*another eye!*

She fell back on the lobby floor. Her aunt found her lying there when she came in.