

# THAT NIGHT.

I didn't like the looks of the room. That I silently followed as the swarthy attendant set the tallow candle on the little pine table, and prepared to leave. "Haven't you anything better than a?" I inquired, a trifle nervously, I ear, for my strange companion glanced curiously in my direction as he answered: "No'm; we does have one or two a leetle bigger than this are, but a good many strangerer cum along to-day, and this is all there is."

"But how do you fasten the door?" I continued, horror-struck at finding neither lock, key, bolt, nor bar.

"Oh, we doesn't fasten doors up there. Nobody round here wants anything anybody else has got. We earns all we wants—we does;" and with an expression of disgust on his loathsome features, turned and left me.

For the first time in my life I was conscious of being afraid—truly, literally afraid. Even the subject of praise. My mother had dubbed me daring and reckless, and my father, whose pet I was, although forced to admit that his daughter's organ of caution was not so largely developed as some other bump—combative, for instance—always closed his remarks after this fashion:

"But she's good grit, though, and I'll risk her anywhere."

I wonder what he would have thought could he have seen me as I stood in that dismal, comfortable room, candle in hand, my teeth fairly chattering with nervousness, trying my best to devise some means of barricading my door.

An accident had made it necessary for us to separate for a day or two, and as one of us must necessarily travel alone, I, who had been accustomed to this sort of thing for years, offered to do the solitary, meeting our party a couple of days hence at Benson's, properly reinforced, and in good traveling order.

A storm had delayed the stage in which I took passage, and at seven o'clock that evening, notwithstanding the clouds had lifted, and there seemed every prospect of fair weather, nothing could induce our driver to go on.

He would give no reason for this apparent obstinacy, simply declaring that if we knew when we were well off, we would just let him pitch a tent, make a camp-fire, have something to eat, and turn in.

The passengers consisted of a gentleman and his wife—nice, friendly folks, known to me by reputation—two strangers (gentlemen), and a colored servant.

Remaining at this place over night would just spoil my chances of meeting my friends at the time and place appointed, and I determined to proceed, if there was any certain way of accomplishing it.

Not long after, the rumbling of a wagon was heard, and, to my great satisfaction, I found that it was occupied by a man and a little girl, bound within two miles of the place where I had promised to be on the following day at noon.

He would willingly take a passenger, and knew where I could be sure of a good place to sleep and a good breakfast. That was enough, and I jumped into the lumbering old vehicle, quite delighted with my good fortune.

The driver looked daggers and swords and pistols at me, and every other description of weapon possible to conceive of, as he said:

"It's well you're no relation of mine, miss! If you was, you wouldn't stir an inch! It's just defying the Almighty—that's what 'is."

I laughingly bade him good-bye, and waved my handkerchief in defiance, as long as the old stage remained in sight.

What would I have given to be back again under that sturdy old driver's wing? How I wished that he had compelled me to remain, and really grew quite angry to think he had not forcibly detained me.

Emergencies try our consistency, as well as that consistency is the rarest of jewels. This was a predicament I had no wise bargained for, and what should I do, I asked myself, without a shadow of response. I shaded the candle with my hand (the wind blew in little fitful gusts through the ghostly apartment, in a manner so weird and suggestive of all the terrible things I had ever heard or read of, that my blood curdled in my veins), and endeavoring to explore the long entryway which led to this horrible den, in the hope of finding some one who would help make the situation a little more endurable.

As I stood wondering whether I should try and find my way to the part of the house occupied by the family, a sudden breeze slammed the door in my face, and extinguished the candle.

A step on the staircase announced the approach of some one, and I said, as calmly as I could:

"Please step this way and light my candle. The wind has just blown it out."

"All right—yes'm;" and the owner of the feminine voice shuffled towards me, stopped a moment to snuff her own tallow dip, and then relighted mine, saying:

"The wind howls round these parts pretty lively, ma'am. 'Bout as much as we can do to keep light enough to go to bed by."

I ventured to ask her if she couldn't help me contrive some means of fastening my door.

"Sakes!" she replied, with a laugh that seemed to me thoroughly demonic; "nobody never thinks of such a thing. There's nobody under the sun here but our folks, and two or three travelers, what have been abed and asleep for the last two hours or more. Hadn't you better take something to quiet your nerves a leetle? Got some good applejack and a keg of as nice rye whiskey as ever you put in your mouth. She had evidently been partaking of the last, for her breath,

redolent with the fumes of rum, onions, and the smoke of an old pipe, the stump of which she held between her sunken lips, was enough to turn the stomach of a cannibal.

"I'll drag my bunk in here, if you say so," she continued. "I don't s'pose the old man 'ud have no objections. He purty much ginrally likes me sunnwhere close by; but, I reckon, if I tell him as how there's a young woman what's afeard of somethin' or another—" and here she suddenly halted, then resumed as suddenly: "What be you afeard of, mum—robbers or ghosts? I should like to tell the old man, if he asks me. Just like the old man, will, for he's powerful inquisitive about most things."

This last query and remark of the old woman had, as you may imagine, touched the key-note of the ludicrous, and for the moment I forgot all fear in the comicality of my surroundings.

We mutually had a queer picture about that time. The old hag's consternation evidently knew no bounds as she listened to my peals of laughter.

There she stood, candle in one hand, the other on the latch of the door, and with a look of wonderment written all over her face impossible to describe.

The old black stump fell from her mouth—I imagined the first time in years, by the eagerness she displayed in replacing it; and there she stood, glaring at me with an intensity of gaze I never saw equaled.

The more she looked, the more I laughed, and when at last the pent-up nervousness found a vent possible by the means of this cabination, and a longer, louder, and heartier peal followed, the strange creature silently and gravely left the room.

She might have been indignant, supposing herself the object of my merriment, or she might have put this and that together, after the style of a certain class of modern ignoramus and decided that I was insane.

It mattered very little to me. My fears were entirely dispelled, and I set about my preparations for retiring with as good a stock of courage as I ever possessed.

I decided to barricade the door; but how was it to be done? The bedstead was a ponderous affair made of oak, and of such strange design and proportion, that it seemed to me "b. c." might be carved on the footboard with the most perfect propriety.

This article of furniture was only about a yard from the door, and it seemed, as I contemplated the performance, an easy matter to move it that distance; but I reckoned without my host. One push demonstrated that the legs of said bedstead were set in some sort of earthen vessels, and that these vessels were filled some kind of liquid—what, I had no means of telling. To remove these required almost herculean strength.

It suddenly dawned upon me what these bowls were intended for, and then, as you may imagine, I concluded, tired as I was, that that straw wouldn't rustle beneath my weight that night. Ugh! my flesh creeps now as I think of it. What should I do with myself? A closer examination proved that the cracks of the floor were swarming with blood-thirsty vermin.

I gathered my garments closer about me, and took another view of the situation, and was forced at last to acknowledge my inability to secure a night's rest.

There was nothing to do but seat myself with my back to the door, place my feet in another chair, and wait, with as much patience as I could summon, the dawn of day.

A pocket in my underskirt contained a tiny silver mounted affair, which, as my brother aptly remarked when he presented it to me, would "put the squeak out of a fellow in less time than it takes to say Jack Robinson."

I had used it for fun a great many times; but as I carefully examined it to see that it was in good killing order, I was impressed with the idea that there would be serious business accomplished with it before morning, and just as singular, if not in the least frightened with the prospect.

There was no way of keeping my candle burning. It flickered and sputtered pitifully, and finally succumbed altogether to the force of the draft. Where that wind came from is a mystery to me to this day.

The window was a little port-hole concern, which I had closed upon entering the room, supposing of course, that the obnoxious intruder had entered from that quarter, and after a close examination of every nook and corner in that room, I was forced to the conviction that these breezes were without doubt a distinguishing feature of said apartment. Another such night as that, and every hair in my head would be white, I know.

I groped round, found the aperture, and threw back the sash, then seated myself with the back of my chair against the door, my feet carefully tucked up in another chair. The tiny revolver lay on my lap all ready for use, and no baby ever received more petting than did this weapon of destruction on this occasion. It was at once companion and protector, and although, as the hours advanced, I was conscious of growing more and more impatient and nervous, or yet not once did I lose self-possession, or succumb to fear.

I was thoroughly aware that some adventure was in store for me, knew it, expected it—how, you must ask one wiser than I. It was precisely as if some good angel had whispered in my ear:

"You must not be caught off your guard for one moment. Danger lurks very near. Only extreme vigilance can avert it."

Those very words kept ringing through my ears, and this danger was so imminent, so near, that I found myself at times holding my breath to listen to the sound of approaching footsteps.

I appeared to go to bed, was perfectly

noiseless in my movements when preparing my quarters for the night. My money was in my bosom, and there I sat waiting to see, or, rather, feel, who or what was to besiege my citadel.

Three hours must certainly have elapsed, and my limbs commenced to ache most pitifully with the forced quiet I had subjected them to, when a slight noise, as of some one carefully opening and closing a door, warned me to hold to my position. After this all was quiet for a few moments, and I tried to assure myself that the sound had no significance for me, when I distinctly heard footsteps, apparently at the extreme end of the long hallway. They drew gradually nearer, and I knew that there were two men approaching on tiptoe.

I had not marked out any plan of operations, but I found myself immediately on my feet, prepared to meet in good shape whoever might be disposed to invade my quarters.

I have wondered at this a million times since—wondered why I had not, women fashion (for I know that under less dangerous circumstances I should certainly have done so), sat still, and braced the chair against the door, and endeavor, for a while at least, to keep the villains at bay.

The steps halted, as I supposed they would, right before the entrance, and a low, whispered dialogue took place.

"I tell you this is the room. Jake said he put her here, and she was frightened to death because there was no fastening on the door. She cum down with old Prime. I reckon I know," as his companion ventured to contradict him.

"We'll overhaul the men's pockets arter we've been through her'n. Don't go to being chicken hearted now. Her money is under her piller—of course 'tis—that's where they allus keep it, the little fools! Them men's jus' rotten with spondulix, they be."

Then I knew they alluded to the travelers the old woman told me about.

"Old Perkins' head was level when he made up his mind not to go any farther into the woods. That makes three times he has spoiled our game, but I'll get even with him before long—see if I don't."

"Perkins" was our driver—the man who had been so distressed and enraged at the idea of my leaving the party, and now the reason was plain. He had scented the battle afar off; knew that danger, in the shape of these midnight marauders, lurked near, and was determined to save without alarming us—and by my willfulness I had rushed right into the very trouble he would have prevented.

"She's asleep, fast enough! Gals that age forget their troubles mighty sudden. You go in ahead, and while I hunt for the spon, you wet the rag and put it to her nose, and then we'll go for the others."

"You'd better git one job done at a time!" growled his companion, whose intuitions in respect to the ease with which this job was to be consummated were evidently more correct.

"I've knowed you to slip up afore this, arter a considerable bragging, too, and mebbe—"

"Hold your gab, you infernal fool, while I turn the glim. Shet up!" and I knew that they were coming.

My rising from the chair had set the door ajar, the latch being of no more account than the other articles in the room.

In this way I heard every word they uttered.

The door was cautiously tried. I stepped noiselessly behind it, in obedience to the same instinct that had guided me all the way through.

Oh, the sickening, nauseating! The horrible wretch that obeyed his instructions literally, for the room was filled with the deadly effluvia.

For one second the "glim was turned," and I saw the situation of the desperados. They, too, had evidently discovered that the bed had no occupant.

With the coolness of Satan himself, I waited for the ringleader to face my part of the room.

This he shortly did.

Click! I went the precious little pistol, and down went my man.

With a quick yell of rage, his companion rushed for the door, without receiving any harm from the ball leveled in his direction. It never was found, so, perhaps, he has got it somewhere.

This din, naturally enough, aroused every inmate of the house. I was afraid to stir, for fear of stepping on the wounded man.

His groans subsided instantly, and I know he had either fainted or died. To tell the truth, I didn't care which. He would have ended my mortal career with as little remorse as I would have killed a mosquito, and whatever fate had befallen him was none of my business.

In the moment between the villain's fall and the assembling of the members of the household, I had plenty of time to think this matter over, and my woman's conscience quite absolved me.

Judge of my astonishment when the very first person entering the room I discovered to be my brother, who had arrived very unexpectedly.

They had found friends going down, willing to take charge of our invalid with the sprained ankle, and they had thus been able to return a whole day sooner than they expected.

"How in the world was his first exclamation, 'why in the world came your here, and what have you been and done and do?' Why, this fellow is as dead as a doornail, and, as true as I'm a sinner, it's 'Scaffold Dick,' as infernal a wretch as ever went unhung!"

I had just finished my explanations to my friends when the old woman shuffled in, and following her the longest, crookedest, and most forlorn specimen of the masculine gender I ever laid my eyes upon.

"What's up here?" she asked, in a queer, husky tone. "That gal's shot a man, they tell me—knocked the wind clean out of him! Take a squint at him, old man, and tell me if it's anybody you've ever seed afore."

She kept entirely aloof, and he seemed also inclined to; but, yielding at last to her importunities, he drew near, and, after a long and careful survey of the body, said, in a whisper:

"It's the shot! I told you 'twas when I heard the dick. I felt afore I went to bed that his dish'd be turned bottom upward, and by somebody in this house, too. Young woman, that man was my son, and I'm glad you've put an end to him. Everybody said he'd die on the gallows, but he's just escaped that by the skin of his teeth."

The old hag rocked herself forward and backward, right and left, in her chair, and then, with the old stump of a pipe still between her lips, gave one despairing yell, and threw herself upon the body of her son.

Then I grew dizzy and knew very little for three days.

When I finally came to my senses, I was in camp at the Adirondacks.

I have told this story now, and hope in this way to forget it forever.

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### India as a Fighting Power.

If a war in Afghanistan shall take place the bulk of the British army opposing the Russian advance will be formed of native troops. There are 190,000 of these on the regular Indian establishment, and these are supplemented by about the same number of military frontier police—soldiers to all intents and purposes, and of equal, if not superior, quality to the "regulars." Thus about 300,000 armed men are under orders of the government in India, without a single European being sent from England. All these native troops are officered by Englishmen. These troops vary in quality from the Madras and Bengal Sepoys to the martial Sikhs or the daring Ghoorkas, the fighting qualities of the two latter being equal to anything they are likely to encounter. Then the armies of the Native Independent States are generally at the command of England, for they would be likely offered—as they have been before—and accepted—a contingent and doubtless would, furnish a each and double service. Their armies aggregate 300,000 men. Then there is a population of 200,000,000 to recruit from, so that Lord Beaconsfield's remark that a million soldiers could be easily raised in India is a reasonable one.

From the foregoing figures it is seen that over a million men are under arms already in the service of Queen Victoria and the Empress of India, with indefinite powers of expansion, leaving out the colonial forces of Canada, Australia, the Cap, the West Indies, etc.

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### Fish That Tastes Like Flesh.

Porpoise fishing promises to become one of the principal industries on the New Jersey coast. The experiment made last fall at Cape May proved so successful that the facilities there were greatly increased and other porpoise fisheries will be established in both Cape May and Atlantic Counties. At first porpoise were caught for their skin and blubber alone, the carcasses being thrown away or in a few instances used as fertilizers. From the blubber is extracted a very fine oil, while the skin makes a superior quality of leather. Some time last fall it was discovered that porpoise flesh was savory to the taste, and it soon became popular as an article of food and was in great demand. The juicy red meat, which is taken from beneath a layer of fat next to the skin, is pronounced by epicures to be more palatable than any porter-house steak ever cooked. In appearance it resembles beef, but is more solid and of finer grain and tastes tender. Some persons say that it tastes like venison, and that there is nothing of the fishy taste about it. Last fall New York fish dealers offered two cents per pound for the carcasses, but they will command a much higher figure next summer.

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### The Earth-Men's Funeral Ceremony.

N'Co-N'Qui, king of the N'Chubbas, in mourning over his dead wife, N'Arbecy, who died Monday, after several days sickness, colored his face with bits of soft black and red stones brought from Africa. He was in the room at the West Side Hotel where his dead wife lay. Mr. Healy, their manager, kept close watch over the grief-stricken pigmies who, he says, when at home in the Kalahara Desert, frequently stab themselves with poisoned arrows while grieving for dead friends. N'Co-N'Qui first drew a line from forehead to chin with the soft stone, then one from ear to ear across his nose. He afterward drew circles round his eyes. Next he smeared his body and arms with a red liquid which was supplied him in place of the blood of an animal, as he had desired. Before this liquid was dry he drew with his fingers rude arabesques upon his chest and arms. The four other pigmies also decorated themselves in the same manner as the king. All then danced very slowly around the bed on which lay the body of N'Arbecy, meanwhile keeping their faces covered with their hands and clucking softly with their tongues in a weird chant. Presently they put their hands on the dead woman and gave a wild yell, immediately afterward casting themselves on the floor with their ears placed to it, as if listening for a sound. Soon they gave another yell and sprang to their feet. This concluded the wild funeral ceremony. N'Co-N'Qui accompanied his wife's body to the Forest Home Cemetery, where she was buried. The dead queen was 43 years old. A few days ago she gave birth to a male infant weighing two pounds. The child died within a few hours.

### The Russian Forces East of the Caspian.

According to the best available information, the following is the present distribution of the Russian forces east of the Caspian: At Merv, Yulistan, and Sarizayi, Col. Alikhanoff has 3,000 Russian troops, 1,000 Turkoman horse, and sixteen guns. At Sarakhs there are 2,000 men, but a portion of these have been moved to the Murgah. At Pul-i-Khatun and Zulicair there are detachments of Cossacks, a body of 150 of these horsemen at each place. At Pul-i-Khishti, on the Kushk, there are 500 trained Sarik Turkomans. The garrison of Ashkabad, which is normally only 4,000 men and 24 guns, will be increased to 8,000 when the reinforcements of 6,000 men sent from the Caucasus have arrived. These are at present only en route to their destination. At the same time it is believed that an attempt will be made to reinforce the Merv garrison from Khiva and Tarkestan.

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### ALWAYS AMONG THE MISSING.

A closed umbrella gathers no rain. Every man has a skeleton in his closet, a borrowed umbrella, for instance.

"Write something on Lent," said the managing editor. And the editor sat down and wrote: Umbrella.

There is a difference between an umbrella and little Bo Peep. Let it a loan and it never comes home.

The rain falls not alike on the just and unjust, for the simple reason that the unjust usually has the umbrella belonging to the just.

If a man has borrowed an umbrella he generally falls to return it. If he has stolen one he is naturally afraid to return it. These are some of the reasons why a certain man always has an umbrella.

Jones—What are you mad about, Smith? Smith (in a terrible rage)—What am I mad about? Why, this morning I found a silk umbrella in the hallway of my boarding-house, and as nobody seemed to own it I just captured it myself. I laid it down here not five minutes ago, and some rascally thief has gone off with it.

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### The Qualities of Precious Stones.

George F. Kuntz, one of the most successful young mineralogists, says: As worn, gems are of two forms, a few have the cabochon or rounded shape, such as caruncles and sometimes sapphires and rubies; all others are cut like the diamond.

Diamonds, according to the forms in which they are polished, are known as brilliants, rose diamonds, or table cut. The former is much the better method for showing the light of the gem, and it is in this shape that ninety-nine per cent. of the diamonds are worn. Gems of this class have thirty-two facets. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, the great diamond merchant and traveler of the seventeenth century, saw and described most of the now famous gems of Europe and Asia. The Grand Mogul spoken of by him is, however, supposed to be fictitious. The Regent, weighing 136 carats and valued at 12,000,000 francs, is the finest known diamond in the world. The Koh-i-noor weighs 162½ carats, but is "bad form." One hundred millions of dollars is invested in diamond mines and machinery. The stealing done there would cause a New York burglar to blush for his calling. Stolen diamonds worth \$700,000 were bought by one firm in four months, and without having the figures in the case I venture to estimate the amount stolen every month at \$1,000,000.

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### After Gettysburg.

After the battle of Gettysburg, when the baffled Confederates, worn, weary, heartsore, were recrossing the Potomac at dusk, many were groaning, some were cursing, while the majority felt too unhappy to express themselves boisterously. Finally they went into camp, cooked their frugal meal, and settled down to a grim quarrel with fortune or lapsed intoullen silence. All at once, swelling melodiously through the summer air, came a noble resonant tenor voice singing, "Give me a cot in the valley I love." The soldiers listened with rapture and the dear vision of home turned the bitterness in their hearts to sweetness and peace. All blasphemy, anger and unutterable anguish ceased. By the power of song Heaven descended upon the raging hell in their bosoms, and when the ballad lulled into an echo, dying plaintively away, it was as if an angel had passed and touched the valiant men in gray with the healing of his wing.

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### The Parsi Family.

Parsi ladies are compelled, by a very old custom, to conceal their hair under a thin white cloth or cap. Their complexions are fair, and they drive out in open carriages and even take walks in public of an evening. Altogether their position is far superior to the secluded Hindu Rani or the Mohammedan Begum; and we can not deem it a fault in their character that the Parsi girl is very anxious "to obtain a good husband," or that a married woman may "possess jewelry worth from £500 to £20,000." The Parsi matron attends to her household duties, directs the work of the servants, plies the needle, pays visits to her friends, and may be seen amid crowds of spectators when a new Viceroy lands on the Apollo Bunder, or the Governor lays the foundation-stone of a college or hospital. Both sexes now take their meals together. The Parsis smoke neither tobacco nor opium, and drink wine only at dinner and in moderation. Their houses are spacious and elegantly and well furnished, and splendidly lit up at night.

The loveliest flower seen at this season of the year is the shad roes.