

## A WOMAN'S ADVENTURE.

IN the second year of the late civil war, I was married, and went to live with my husband in a small village on the Hudson, some fifty or sixty miles from New York. The house we occupied was a little apart from the rest of the village, surrounded by broad fields, and commanding a glorious view of the river and the hills of the Highlands. It had been built before the Revolution, by my husband's great-grandfather, and, though destitute of many "modern improvements," was still a comfortable and pleasant residence.

My husband was a lawyer and a large real-estate owner in the neighborhood, and at the period of which I write, was greatly perplexed, like many other persons in the North, by the perilous state of the times, and especially about the safe investment of his funds, as the suspension of specie payments, the great rise of gold, and the military disasters in Virginia, made it almost impossible to tell where it would be safe to deposit or to use one's money in any large amount.

In the course of his transactions in real estate, it happened, one day, that he received what was for us then a large sum, about ten thousand dollars, which he brought home and placed in my charge—telling me at the same time that he should have to be absent during the evening attending to some business on the other side of the river, and should not be at home till about midnight.

"You can place the money in the safe, dear," he said, as he gave it to me, "and to-morrow I will try and find some way to invest it securely."

So saying, he stepped into the buggy, which was standing at the door, and drove away, taking with him our hired man Silas, and leaving me with no one in the house but Dinah, an old colored woman, who fulfilled in our modest household the functions of cook and maid-of-all-work, as she had long done in the family of my own parents, who, on my marriage, had yielded her to me as a valuable part of my dower.

Dinah was indeed a character. She was tall and very stout, weighing, she would never tell how much, more than 200 pounds. She was very black, and as lazy as she was black. I do not think any one could move more deliberately than Dinah, did, that is to move at all.—And, by a wonderful dispensation, she seemed to feel that, whatever her other faults might be, she was strong on the point of locomotion. For, when she had been moving with a ponderous slowness, almost maddening to a person of ordinary quickness, one of her favorite expressions was, "Well, Miss Lillie, what shall I fly into next?" How she accomplished all she did, the brownies only know. We used sometimes almost to tremble when there was any special hurry about our domestic arrangements, and yet Dinah always managed to bring affairs to a consummation just when a minute more would have ruined everything; and, with undisturbed front, would slowly enunciate, "Well, miss, what shall I fly onto next?"

It was nearly dark when my husband departed, and, after giving my orders to Dinah, or rather my suggestions, I left her, and made the tour of the house, to see that all was safe and properly locked up. This duty attended to, I went to my bedroom, intending to pass the time in reading till my husband should return.

It was a large room on the ground-floor, with two French windows opening on a broad verandah. The windows were draped with long yellow silk curtains, between which the moonlight faintly entered, dimmed by the shadow of the roof of the piazza, and partly intercepted by the fringe of woodbine, which hung from it. My bed stood with its foot toward the windows, and with its head about half a yard from the wall. It was an old-fashioned structure, hung with yellow silk like the windows, but I slept with the hangings drawn back and fastened to the headboard. The bed was so large that no one ever thought of moving it, except in those seasons of household panic called house cleaning, when the combined strength of three or four was called into requisition to draw it into the middle of the room. So elaborately carved was it that it went by the name of Westminister Abbey in the family.—At one end of the room, at no great distance from the bed, was a large safe, built into the huge chimney of the mansion to enter, standing upright. Here I was accustomed to place, every evening, our silver plate on shelves which extend-

ed around the sides, on which also were placed boxes containing papers and other valuables. Opposite the foot of the bedstead, between the windows, was a mirror, running from the floor almost to the ceiling. Like all other furniture in the room, it was old and handsome. How many happy scenes it had reflected in the hundred years it had stood there!

The night was exceedingly hot, and I therefore left the windows open, though I drew the curtains before I seated myself at the table in the centre of the room, lighted the candles, and began to read in order to pass away the heavy time before the return of my husband.

After a while, I heard the clock strike nine, at which hour Dinah always went to bed. Her chamber was in the attic, the third story of the house. Remembering some household matter about which I wished to speak to her, I started hurriedly up, and went into the entry to intercept her before she got up stairs—I had to wait about a minute before she came, and our colloquy continued three or four minutes more.

When I returned to my bed-room, feeling somewhat tired, I resolved to go to bed, as, at that late hour in the country, it was quite certain that no visitors would call, and my husband could let himself in with the latch key which he always carried. I thought, however, I would try to keep awake by reading, and accordingly placed a light stand and the candles at the head of my bed. I then closed and fastened the windows, undressed, and got into bed. The key of the safe I placed as usual, under my pillow.

After reading perhaps an hour, I grew weary of the book, and, quietly laying it down, remained for some time meditating with my eyes fixed upon the mirror opposite the foot of the bed in which I could see myself reflected, together with the yellow silk curtains behind my head. I was thinking, not unnaturally, how pretty I looked, and how happy I was, with such a loving husband and so fine a sum of money secured in our safe, when suddenly I saw in the mirror a sight that made my heart stand still. A hand appeared between the curtains, drawing them slowly apart, and grasping cautiously the head board. It was a man's hand, large, coarse and dark, as if belonging to a mulatto; or to one greatly tanned by exposure to the weather.

My first impulse was to start from the bed and scream for help. I repressed it by a strong effort of will, and lay perfectly motionless, except that I partially closed my eyes, keeping them only sufficiently open to watch the mirror. As quick as lightning my mind took in the situation. In the few minutes of my absence from the room, while taking to Dinah in the entry, a thief had stolen in by the piazza windows, and had hidden himself either under the bed or behind its draped head. He was doubtless armed; and if I cried out, and attempted to escape from the room, he could easily reach the door before I could. And for his own security would probably put me to death. Dinah was too distant, and too feeble and clumsy to afford me any assistance, and beside was by this time fast asleep in the third story. The man doubtless knew that my husband had that day received a large sum of money, and had gone across the river leaving me alone in the house.—He had entered, caring only for the money, and anxious above all things to escape undetected and unrecognized. If I let him know that I was aware of his presence, I should expose myself to murder, and perhaps to outrage worse than murder. My obvious policy was to keep quiet and to feign sleep. I thought also of the money, and was not altogether willing to resign that without an effort to save it, and to have at least some clue to the identity of the thief. I confess, however, that this last consideration was not a very strong one, and am afraid that if I could have seen my way clear to an escape from the room and the house, I should have fled incontinently, without stopping to see more than that terrible hand.

A moment which seemed an hour, passed while these thoughts rushed through my mind. I lay perfectly still, with my eyes half closed, watching the mirror. Slowly and noiselessly the frightful hand pulled up its owner until I could see the head and face reflected in the glass, and glaring at me with fierce, yet wary eyes. The man was a mulatto, very dark, with evil passions written in every lineament. I could scarcely refrain from shuddering at the sight of his hateful visage, and speedily closed my eyes to shut it out. I was not yet quite ready for the ordeal through which I knew I must soon pass. I wanted to move my light-stand a little out of the way and to

so arrange the bed clothes that I could spring from the bed without impediment. I therefore gave a little sigh and moved as if about to awake, slightly opening my eyes at the same time. The head and the hand instantly disappeared. I then composedly made the desired changes in the position of the stand and the arrangement of the clothes, put my watch with the key of the safe under my pillow—so near the edge that they could easily be taken out, as I knew they would be—extinguished one of my candles, said my prayers, and closing my eyes, resigned myself to my fate, with no very sanguine of definite hope of being extricated from my perilous condition.

I made my breathing regular, and a little louder than when I was awake, and lay with my head, counterfeiting sleep. At last the stillness became more horrible than even the first agony of fear.—Several times I fancied that I heard a soft step approach from the place of concealment. As often I was deceived.—Then again that dreadful stillness, in which I counted the tickings of the watch through the pillow! It was a positive relief when he came out from behind the curtain, stepped at the table and stood looking at me as I was well aware, though my eyes were closed. I forced myself to breathe regularly and audibly. He came closer; he bent over me. He passed the lighted candle slowly before my face two or three times. I felt the heat and saw the light through my closed lids, which must have quivered, though he did not seem to observe their motion. Heaven gave me strength not to move or cry out. Satisfied, apparently, he put back the candlestick on the stand, and his hand crept softly and slowly under the pillow, and one by one he removed my watch and the key of the safe. He stood so long looking at me that I felt impelled to open my eyes suddenly upon him.

As he walked softly toward the safe, I did partly open them, and cautiously watched him through my eyelashes. I heard him fumbling with the lock, and once he looked over toward the bed. My eyes were wide open, but I closed them in time not to be detected. Watching him stealthily, I saw him open the door of the safe which he entered without withdrawing the key from the lock.

Here was the opportunity for which I had waited and watched. I sprang lightly from the bed, with one bound, reached the safe, dashed the door to, and turned the key, and with one long and loud shriek fell prostrate and senseless on the floor of the dark room.—How long I lay upon the floor, I do not know—probably for a few minutes only—but as I was unconscious, it seemed, when I came to myself, as if the interval had been a long one. I was aroused by his blows upon the iron door, and I found myself weak after the long, nervous tension, but still calm. I remember the satisfaction with which I thought, while I lay there before rising, that he could not escape, mingled with a vague and foolish dread that he might in his rage burn the valuable contents of the safe. He pounded desperately on the door, and swore fearfully at finding himself entrapped. But as I took no notice of his outcries, he soon grew quiet.

Presently I rose, and lighting a candle, dressed myself with all possible haste, and with trembling fingers, turning often to look at the safe, from under the closed door of which I more than half expected to see blood trickling—why, I cannot tell except that my mind was full of images of horror. I was soon in readiness. I had no means of ascertaining the time, as he had my watch in his pocket, and there was no clock in the room. Taking the candle I hastened to arouse Dinah, who, as I shook her, slowly opened her eyes, and with scarcely any more than her usual slowness pronounced her formula: "Well, Miss Lillie, what's de matter wid de chile? You ain't seen a ghost, have you honey?"

"No, Dinah; but I've seen something worse than a ghost. I've caught a robber, and he's in the safe. What time is it?" and looking at the clock that ticked slowly and deliberately—as how could Dinah's clock help doing?—I saw to my great relief that it was nearly midnight.

We had scarcely got down stairs when I heard the sound of wheels. A moment more, and my husband was in my arms, listening with amazement to a rapid narrative of my singular adventure.—I would not suffer him to open the safe until Silas had summoned assistance from the neighboring houses. I feared that my desperate prisoner might still escape. When the safe was opened, there sat the burglar on the trunk, half-stupefied for want of air, a knife in one hand,

the package of money in the other, and the burned-out candle at his feet. He was recognized as an old offender, who had not long been out of State Prison, to which, in due course of law, he was soon sent back for a term of years, which I devoutly hope, may last as long as he lives; for I confess I should not feel easy to hear that he was again at large. The look of rage he gave me on coming out of the safe will not soon be obliterated from my memory.

My husband, I need hardly say, was greatly pleased with my safe investment, and complimented me highly on the courage and coolness which had doubtless saved my life as well as our money.

## Matrimonial Anecdote.

THE Rev. Mr. O., a respectable clergyman in the interior of the State, relates the following anecdote. A couple came to him to get married. After the knot was tied, the bridegroom addressed him with—"How much do you ax, Mister?"

"Why," replied the clergyman, "I generally take what is offered me. Sometimes more, and sometimes less. I leave it to the bridegroom."

"Yes—but how much do you ax, I say?" replied the happy man.

"I have just said," returned the clergyman, "that I left it to the decision of the bridegroom. Some give me ten dollars; some five; some three; some two; some one; and some only a quarter of a one."

"A quarter, eh?" said the bridegroom.—"Well, that's reasonable as a body could ax." He took out his pocket-book—there was no money there; he fumbled in all his pockets, but not a sixpence could he find. "I thought," said he, "I had some money with me; but I recollect now 'twas in my other trousers pocket. Hetty, have you got such a thing as two shillings about ye?"

"Me!" said the bride with a mixture of shame and indignation—"I'm astonished at ye, to come here to be married without a cent of money to pay for it! If I'd known it afore, I wouldn't a come a step with ye; you might have gone alone to be married for all me."

"Yes, but consider, Hetty," said the bridegroom, in a soothing tone; "We're married now, and it can't be helped—if you have got such a thing as a couple of shillin's—"

"Here take 'em," interrupted the angry bride, who, during this speech, had been searching in her work-bag; "and don't you," said she, with a significant motion of her finger—"don't you serve me another sick-a-trick!"

## How it was Done.

A lawyer retained in a case of assault and battery, was cross-examining a witness in relation to the force of a blow.

"What kind of a blow was given?" asked the lawyer.

"A blow of the common kind."

"Describe the blow?"

"I am not good at description."

"Show me what kind of a blow it was?"

"I can't."

"You must."

"I won't."

The lawyer appealed to the court.—The court told the witness that if the counsel insisted upon his showing what kind of a blow it was, he must do so.

"Do you insist upon it?" asked the witness.

"I do."

"Well, then since you compel me to show you, it was this kind of a blow!" and at the same time sitting the act to the word, he knocked over the astonished disciple of Coke and Littleton.

## A Hard Story.

A young man of eighteen was recently discovered living with his mother in a town in Indiana, as her husband. She was a charming widow of thirty-five, her husband having died soon after the birth of this her only child. They are wealthy, intelligent and refined in manners, and in their native city of Baltimore were highly respected. Having determined upon this unnatural alliance they went to Indiana some months ago and were married, and have since been living together in the greatest apparent bliss and harmony. An old acquaintance accidentally came upon them and the facts were revealed.

A young lady on being asked what calling she wished her sweetheart to follow, blushing replied that she wished him to be a husbandman.

## Underground Fires.

THERE are many instances of vast masses of coal which have ignited and have been burning for years. When once well ignited, and all communication with the external air is not entirely cut off, (and some imperceptible fissures are quite sufficient to prevent this,) then the devouring element pursues its course without interruption. It partially burns the coal and calcines the sandstones and adjacent schists, changing their colors to a sort of red, and altering their composition. At Brule, near Saint Etienne, there is a coal mine which has been on fire from time immemorial. The soil at the surface is baked and barren; hot vapors escape from it; sulphur, alum, sal-ammoniac, and various natural products are deposited on it; it might be supposed to be a portion of the accursed cities formerly consumed by the fires of heaven and earth.

Other burning coal mines are cited in France; for example, those of Decazeville, in Aveyron, and of Commentry, in the department of Allier. The inhabitants have even for a long time kept up these fires for the sake of working the aluminous salts which are given off from the coal and are deposited on the surface of the soil as a whitish efflorescence.

In the carboniferous basins of the Saarbruck and Tilsen, there are likewise coal mines which have been on fire for a long time. In Belgium, between Namur and Charleroi, at a place called Falzolle, the fire has been alight for many years. The inhabitants formerly were in the habit of working the coal on their own account. Now it frequently happened that two parties came in contact, causing endless disputes and sometimes sanguinary fights. A favorite way of keeping rivals or competitors at a distance, was to throw pieces of old leather on a burning brazier, causing an insupportable stench. One day the fire extended also to the coal, since which time it has never ceased burning. The fire, which burns underground, is seen through fissures in the surface.—Sulphur deposits itself round these vents and acid gasses are evolved.

In the environs of Dudley there was formerly a coal mine on fire. The snow melted in the gardens as soon as it touched the ground. They gathered three crops a year; even tropical plants were cultivated; and, as in the Isle of Calypso, an eternal spring prevailed. In another Staffordshire colliery, the firing of which dates many years back, and which is called by the inhabitants "Burning Hill," it was noticed, as at Dudley, that the snow melted on reaching the ground, and that the grass in the meadows was always green. The people of the country conceived the idea of establishing a school of horticulture on the spot.—They imported colonial plants at a heavy expense, and cultivated them in this kind of open air conservatory. One fine day the fire went out, the soil gradually resumed its usual temperature, the tropical plants died, and the school of horticulture was under the necessity of transferring their gardens elsewhere.

## Curious things to know.

Besides the fact that ice is lighter than water, there is another curious thing about it which persons do not know, perhaps, viz., its purity. A lump of ice melted will always become purely distilled water. When the early navigators of the Arctic seas got out of water they melted fragments of those vast mountains of ice called icebergs, and were astonished to find that they yielded only fresh water. They thought that they were frozen salt water not knowing that they were formed on the land and in some way launched into the sea. But if they had been right the result would have just been the same.—The fact is, the water, in freezing turns out of it all that is not water—salt, air, coloring matter and all impurities. Frozen sea-water makes fresh-water ice. If you freeze a basin of indigo water it will make it as pure as that made of pure rain-water. When the cold is very sudden these foreign matters have no time to escape either by rising or sinking, and are thus entangled with the ice, but do not form any part of it.

BAD LUCK AND GOOD LUCK.—Bad luck is simply a man with his hands in his pockets and his pipe in his mouth, looking on to see how it will come out.—Good luck is a man of pluck, with his sleeves rolled up and working to make it come right.

The path of obedience is the path of fruitfulness.