

A PROFESSIONAL'S ESCAPADE.

IT was before my uncle died and left me his fortune. I was compelled to work those days, though I worked in my own way. Jack and I had quarrelled just on the eve of executing a plot arranged long before. Later I was hard pressed for money, and the town was fast becoming too warm for my liking, when a happy thought struck me. Why not do the thing myself? I had planned it, even to the details, for Jack never was of much help to me in that direction. Well, to make a long story short, I left town that day intending to try my hand alone the following night. It was a touchy job, but knowing that Jack was not for me, my mind was made up.

The house stood alone and well back from the road. The night, too, was in my favor; the wind howled and the moon was behind a black curtain of swift moving clouds. After a deal of trouble with a stubborn shutter, I was able to enter by a side window; and, once inside, I worked steadily for an hour, only stopping now and then to listen. I had succeeded in making my neatest haul in years when I was startled by a slight scraping noise at the window I had tapped. I confess I was a bit shaky, but my former training and my professional instinct stood me in good stead. Slipping the slide over the face of my lantern, I moved along the wall till I stood close beside the window. What was my surprise when, a moment later, I recognized the big head and clumsy form of Jack?

I wanted to laugh. It was all such a monstrous joke to think of Jack—to whom I owed a grudge—working my own game, and on the same night in the bargain!

I had reason to know that a laugh would cost me dear, besides, it's a poor joke that won't keep. I now heard a