

all this was not merely a household economy, but my burglar-trap.

On the sixth of August, at two o'clock in the morning, Sarah awakened me, and I immediately sat straight up in bed. There was an undoubtable noise of sawing, and I knew at once that a burglar was entering our home. Sarah was trembling, and I knew she was getting nervous, but I ordered her to remain calm.

'Sarah,' I said in a whisper, 'be calm! There is not the least danger. I have been expecting this for some time, and I only hope the burglar has no dependent family or poor old mother to support. Whatever happens, be calm and keep perfectly quiet.'

With that I released the steel cable from the head of my bed and let the glass case full of silver slide noiselessly to the sideboard.

'Edgar!' whispered Sarah in agonized tones, 'are you giving him our silver?'

'Sarah!' I whispered sternly, 'remember what I have just said. Be calm and keep perfectly quiet.' And I would say no more.

In a very short time I heard the window below us opened softly, and I knew the burglar was entering the parlor from the side porch. I counted twenty, which I had figured would be the time required for him to reach the dining-room, and then, when I was sure he must have seen the silver shining in the glass case, I slowly pulled on the steel cable and raised case and silver to the hall above. Sarah began to whisper to me, but I silenced her.

What I had expected happened. The burglar, seeing the silver rise through the ceiling, left the dining-room and went into the hall. There, from the foot of the stairs, he could see the case glowing in the hall above, and without hesitation he mounted the stairs. As he reached the top I had a good view of him, for he was silhouetted against the light that glowed from the silver case. He was a most brutal looking fellow of the prize-fighting type, but I almost laughed aloud when I saw his build: He was short and chunky. As he stepped forward to grasp the silver case, I let the steel cable run through my fingers, and the case and its precious contents slid noiselessly down to the dining-room. For only one instant the burglar seemed disconcerted, then he turned and ran downstairs again.

This time I did not wait so long to draw up the silver. I hardly gave him time to reach the dining-room door before I touched the cable, and the case was glowing in the upper hall. The burglar immediately stopped, turned, and mounted the stairs, but just as he reached the top I let the silver slide down again, and he had to turn and descend. Hardly had he reached the bottom step before I had the silver once more in the upper hall.

The burglar was a gritty fellow and was not to be so easily defeated. With some word which I could not catch, but which I have no doubt was profane, or at least vulgar, he dashed up the stairs, and just as his hand touched the case I let the silver drop to the dining-room. I smiled as I saw his next move. He carefully removed his coat and vest, rolled up his sleeves, and took off his collar. This evidently meant that he intended to get the silver if it took the whole night, and nothing could have pleased me more. I lay in my comfortable bed fairly shaking with suppressed laughter, and had to stuff a corner of a pillow in my mouth to smother the sound of my mirth. I did not allow the least pity for the unfortunate fellow to weaken my nerve.

A low, long screech from the hall told me that I had a man of uncommon brain to contend with, for I knew the sound came from his hands drawing along the banister, and that, to husband his strength and to save time, he was sliding down. But this did not disconcert me. It pleased me. 'The quicker he went down, the oftener he would have to walk up!'

For half an hour I played with him, giving him just time to get down to the foot of the stairs before I raised the silver, and just time to reach the top before I lowered it, and then I grew tired of the sport—for it was nothing else to me—and decided to finish him off. I was getting sleepy, but it was evident that the

burglar was not, and I was a little afraid I might fall asleep and thus defeat myself. The burglar had that advantage because he was used to night work. So I quickened my movements a little. When the burglar slid down I gave him just time to see the silver rise through the ceiling, and when he climbed the stairs I only allowed him to see it descend through the floor. In this way I made him double his pace, and as I quickened my movements I soon had him dashing up the stairs and sliding down again as if for a wager. I did not give him a moment of rest, and he was soon panting terribly and beginning to stumble; but with almost superhuman nerve he kept up the chase. He was an unusually tough burglar.

But quick as he was I was always quicker, and a glimpse of the glowing case was all I let him have at either end of his climb or slide. No sooner was he down than it was up, and no sooner was the case up than he was up after it. In this way I kept increasing his speed until it was something terrific, and the whole house shook, like an automobile with a very powerful motor. But still his speed increased. I saw then that I had brought him to the place I had prepared for, where he had but one object in life, and that was to beat the case up or down stairs; and as I was now so sleepy I could hardly keep my eyes open, I did what I had intended to do from the first. I lowered the case until it was exactly between the ceiling of the dining-room and the floor of the hall above—and turned out the electric light. I then tied the steel cable securely to the head of my bed, turned over, and went to sleep, lulled by the shaking of the house as the burglar dashed up and down the stairs.

Just how long this continued I do not know, for my sleep was deep and dreamless, but I should judge that the burglar ran himself to death sometime between half-past three and a-quarter after four. So great had been his efforts that when I went to remove him I did not recognise him at all. When I had seen him last in the glow of the glass silver case he had been a stout, chunky fellow, and now his remains were those of an emaciated man. He must have run off one hundred and twenty pounds of flesh before he gave out.

Only one thing clouded my triumph. Our silver consisted of but a half dozen each of knives, forks, and spoons, a butter knife, and a sugar spoon, all plated, and worth probably five dollars, and to save this I had made the burglar wear to rags a Wilton stair carpet worth twenty-nine dollars. But I have now corrected this. I have bought fifty dollars' worth of silver.—*Southern Cross.*

## THE GUEST OF HONOR

Mr. Tiller, seventy years old and spry for his age, sat on a box in the barn, patiently sewing upon a curiously shaped bag, patterned after the one he had carried on many long marches, back in the sixties.

Little Mary Ellen sat on the floor at his side, ready to thread her grandfather's needle. The rest of the family were occupied with their various duties; the father and the boys were at work in the fields, the mother was busy in the kitchen; only Mr. Tiller and Mary Ellen, one of whom was considered too old to work, and the other too young, were exempt from labor, and they kept each other company with great satisfaction.

'I belonged to the infantry, Mary Ellen,' explained the old man to the child, who was a most interested listener. 'And marched for almost five years. With arms, mind you! Now what's to hinder a man with his faculties marching a trifle of two hundred miles to the reunion, toting nothing but this knapsack? Why, it's not worth considering! I'm not blind, neither am I deaf or dumb, and I could keep up row for row with your papa any day—only he's so hard-headed. There, now, Mary Ellen, one more needleful, and I reckon you and I will be done with our job; and a pretty fair one we've made of it, too.'

'Are you going as soon as your bag is sewed, grandpa?' inquired Mary Ellen, as she laboriously threaded the needle once more.

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