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On light nights, from the upper windows, with white bands round the hats, that gave them the appearance of a troop of mourners at a funeral, marching with military precision along a valley not far distant, and filling off to a small wood, where they were in the habit of holding an almost nightly rendezvous. Of attacks upon neighboring mansions we continually heard; but as in every instance these were for arms, and only attempted where such were known to be, we felt more equanimity than might have been supposed, considering there was so much of disturbance around us.

"Sure everybody knows that we don't keep a popgun in the house," aunt would say, "and what need we mind?"

"She never allowed even a servant to have firearms of any kind, declaring that she thought it the safest way. We had to be sure, such precautions taken as at the period were universally adopted—strong iron bars fixed outside to all the lower windows, and so close that, as Parks observed, "a mouse couldn't get in or out," and those gave our habitation very much the appearance of a jail; and, besides, new and more substantial internal fastenings were procured for the back and front doors; and to these Aunt Osborne triumphantly pointed when remonstrated with on our lonely position, and reminded, moreover, that she was well known to be wealthy, and possessed of a large quantity of plate and jewels of great value, and that in these troubled days desperadoes of every description were going about in plenty, so that an attack upon us, even though we had no fire-arms to attract the cupidity of robbers, might nevertheless be by no means an improbable thing. Once upon a time aunt thought of locking the plate and other valuables in the bank until the present storm blew over, but was always dissuaded by Parks, who maintained that "there was no fear in the world;" nor, indeed, did we ourselves entertain the least.

One day I well remember. Mrs. Osborne had gone to pay a distant visit, and would not be back, she told me, till late. Parks, of course, had driven the carriage. Mrs. Gwynne, our cook, was at the time in the hospital of the town, slowly recovering from a long and severe attack of fever. Susan had undertaken to do all the work during the cook's illness, so as to obviate the necessity of any temporary hand being employed, as my aunt disliked new people about her in the servant line, so that the housemaid and myself were the only occupants of the house. I had a very bad cold, and was unable to accompany my aunt, as I otherwise should. It was near the end of the day—a dull, gloomy one in the month of November. I was standing close to the window, reading, trying to catch the last gleam of evening light, and deeply absorbed in my book. I was suddenly startled from my pursuit by a dark shadow from outside quite blocking up the window. I gazed in terror, and saw a man on the grass-plot just under the casement looking earnestly in. All the front windows were low, reaching to the ground. The book dropped from my hand as I hastily retreated, and with difficulty suppressed a scream. He made a motion to me with his hand, put his finger on his lip to intimate silence, and pointed to the hall door, implying that he wished me to go to it. On closer scrutiny I perceived to my surprise that the man was a Catholic priest of the parish, a person I had several times met upon the road, and who had always seemed very civil. I had heard too that he was a man greatly beloved by the poor of his own flock. Some-what reassured, yet still nervous and excited, and curious to know the object of this unusual and late call, I hastened to the window in obedience to his sign. When I opened it he seemed disappointed, as in the dusky twilight he had evidently mistaken me for my aunt.

"Is Mrs. Osborne in?" he asked, in a low, hurried voice.

"No, Sir," I replied, "but I am expecting her every moment."

"Oh, indeed?" And then he stood on the step as if in thought for a minute.

"Who else is in the house?" he asked, abruptly.

"No one just now," I said, "but Susan, the house-maid; Mrs. Gwynne is in the hospital."

"Yes, I know she is; just as well perhaps. Look, young lady," he resumed, "I need a bit of paper, and I'll write a message I want to leave for Mrs. Osborne, and be quick, please."

"If you'll come this way," I replied, "I'll get it for you," and he followed me into the sitting-room. A sheet of letter paper was lying on the table.

"Here this will do," he took it up, and tearing it across, folded one half of it into the form of a note. "Have a pencil," he said; and taking a book in his hand as a support for the note he went up to the window, and with his eye close to the paper to get the full benefit of the light he began to write a few lines rapidly, standing with his back to me; he then turned round and said, in the same sharp, quick tones that he had employed from the first, "I must seal this; can you make me out a bit of wax?" I supplied him at once, and twisting up the remainder of the sheet of paper into a match he lit it at the fire.

"Hold this a moment, if you please," I held the burning paper for him, and as its transient glare fell upon his features while he sealed the note I observed that his usual ruddy and good humored face had an anxious, care worn aspect, and that he appeared pale and thin. As he looked up and caught my eye curiously fixed on him, "Take care," said he, "you'll burn your fingers," and taking the nearly consumed paper match from my hand he flung it unceremoniously on the carpet, extinguishing it with the heel of his boot. "You know who I am, I suppose?" he inquired.

"Yes," I replied, "Father Malachi."

"Well," said he, sinking his voice into an emulous whisper, "be sure to give that note into Mrs. Osborne's own hand; she's your aunt, I believe."

"Yes?"

"And, young lady," he continued, "I'll take it as a favor if you'll not mention to any one, Susan the maid, or any one else, this visit of mine, and tell Mrs. Osborne the same."

I promised him on the word of a lady that I would not.

"Thank you—good-night, and dragging his hat that he had not, during his short stay, removed at all from his head, down

over his brows, and wrapping the long camel-cloak that he wore closely round him, he strode out at the door, down the laurel walk, and was soon lost in the darkness. Soon I heard the sound of carriage wheels advancing, and quickly threw off the timidity and abstraction I was sure my countenance would betray, and met Aunt Osborne as if nothing had occurred. I kept the note safely, and did not tell her about it until we were alone after dinner. I then gave it, mentioning the circumstances under which it had been intrusted to me, as well as the accompanying caution in regard to the writer. My aunt seemed considerably surprised at what I told her, and hastily opened the strange missive. I noticed that she looked pained and perplexed as she read it, and holding the paper for several minutes in her hand she continued gazing in silence into the fire.

"Do you know the contents of this?" she asked at length, pointing to the note.

"No," I said, "he told me nothing about it."

"She handed it to me without a word; it ran as follows:

"MADAM.—From circumstances that have lately come to my knowledge, through whom, or in what way, I am not at liberty to mention, I have reason to believe that considerable danger threatens you, and that from a quarter that you might perhaps least apprehend; you will understand that a parish priest is often found in secrecy by the most sacred obligations, and I am almost breaking through the limits of official discretion and reserve in conveying this intimation. I therefore beseech you to be exceedingly on your guard, and do not speak; lose no time in removing from your house to some safe custody the valuables that you possess, and may imperceptibly be upon you not to convey the faintest hint to a single servant in your house that you have been in any way warned."

"I am your very wisher, "Pray burn this."

"Well," asked Aunt Osborne, "what do you think of it?"

"Think of it?" I exclaimed in horror, "why, if I were you I'd go, bag and baggage, into lodgings in M—tomorrow, and I'd put every thing worth two-pence into the bank, under Mr. Gregory's care."

"I shan't have an easy moment here now, and the long dark nights coming on."

"Oh, nonsense!" replied Mrs. Osborne, "I'm not a bit afraid of any one out here. I shall certainly see to morning, though about lodging the plate and some other matters in the bank; only I mustn't say a word to Parks—he would be quite offended."

"What on earth," I said, "can Father Malachi mean by danger from a quarter that we don't suspect. Isn't that what he says?" and I glanced again at his note.

"I suppose he means that it is the Whiteboys will attack us for money, though we haven't arms. Indeed, I heard the other day, I now remember, that they did break into one or two houses near Cork, for money alone; they want it, I suppose, to help out their shocking projects; any way, I'll consult Mr. Gregory in the morning about the whole matter, and whether it might not be well to have a gun or pistol, or something or other for Parks, in case any thing should happen; and by-the-way, Maggie, I promised to take Mrs. Gregory for a drive to-morrow, and said that we'd have an early dinner with them after, and he told me that he'd come home with us in the evening if we were at all afraid. I hope your cold will be well enough, and we can then settle about this business; possibly it might be better to move into the town for the winter. I must take care, though, and not betray the trust that poor Father Malachi has so kindly reposed in us; I declare it was a very good thing of him to do, more than I should have expected." And so saying, she threw his note into the fire.

"Why then," I rejoined, "I've almost given up when he kept his letter to himself, he has terrified me so with it."

Various conjectures and plans were expressed and discussed that evening; and at one time we thought of going to Father Malachi the next day and questioning him more closely, but then abandoned the idea as it might implicate him, and be a bad return for the favor he had shown. I also succeeded in diverting my aunt from the intention she had half adopted of confidentially disclosing the purport of the priest's letter, when consulting him as to what prudent steps we ought to take, for I maintained that would be a breach of faith, and it would answer quite as well to impute our apprehensions to the restless state of things in the country; and to this aunt ultimately agreed.

The next day my cold was to heavy too to think of venturing out. Aunt Osborne wanted to forego her intention of remaining to dinner. I insisted, however, on her abiding by the original arrangement, but she promised that she would be home as early as possible. She left soon after breakfast, as she wished to go to the hospital to take some things to Mrs. Gwynne, and had other places to call at before going to the Gregorys at the bank. The earlier part of the morning I employed myself writing, and then settled down at my favorite seat in the window that nearly faced the laurel walk, over the same book I had been reading on the preceding day. Susan sometimes came in to look after the fire, or I talk with me a little, as she said she was afraid I might be lonely; and on one of these occasions, as she stood by my chair,

"Oh! Miss Maggie," she exclaimed, "if here isn't Mike the peddler coming up the stairs, run, Susan, run!" and flinging down the candle, I flew to the front-door, and dashing out in the darkness, rushed with frantic speed down the laurel walk to get assistance from the lodge. I had not advanced half a dozen yards before I heard the heavy tread, with its crunching sound on the gravel of the avenue, in as I conjectured, rapid pursuit; this augmenting peril led me, of course, to strain every energy to the utmost in pressing on, and I soon had the satisfaction of hearing my pursuer start into the plantations, for the noise of the branches being broken and pushed aside conveyed to me this welcome assurance. Possibly, as I afterward thought, he never meant to follow me, nor knew at all which way I had gone, for the night was intensely dark, but may have been only concerned in effecting his escape after he had been detected. I found Brien, the gardener, at the gate lodge, and another workman with him, and brought them back as rapidly as possible to the house, for I felt anxious about poor Susan, knowing the fright she must be in. We discovered her shut up in the coal vault, half dead with fear. Mrs. Osborne's arrival in the midst of our consternation was a relief to all, and nothing could equal my aunt's distress when she learned what had happened and the alarm to which we had been subjected. Even Parks looked grave and uneasy, and himself that evening suggested the propriety of removing from the house any thing that might be a bait to plunderers. I could see that Aunt Osborne was relieved from some concern at this proposal emanating from the butler himself; she had arranged, she told me in the course of the evening, to convey all our valuables of every kind to Mr. Gregory; and it was a great comfort, she said, that Parks had now advised the same, for it made all matters smooth. We both concluded that the attempt made by this pretended peddler was what Father Malachi meant in his private warning; and, terrified as I had been by the trying adventure that had just occurred, I went to bed more at ease that night, as the vague alarm which the priest's letter had excited was now to a great degree set at rest; and I was further consoled by finding that my

has traveled some great distance. As he came to the window and touched his hat civilly he looked, I fancied, weary. I motioned him to the hall-door, and very soon Susan was on her knees in the hall closely examining the contents of his pack and trying to strike a bargain for some of his goods; there was altogether a multifarious assortment, ballads, some pictures in little tawdry gilt frames, boot-leaves, combs, rings, brooches, and other feminine decorations, but little that was useful. I remained in the hall while Susan was engaged with him, partly for amusement, as well that I did not wish a stranger to be there alone with the only servant. I could not help noticing in the man a listless indifference about selling his wares, while an occasional eagerness was manifestly assumed. At first I impudently tried the apathy arising from the fatigue until I observed, with considerable uneasiness, a restless movement of his eyes in every direction; now a glance into the room behind him, then toward the dining-room, again up stairs; while, when I once asked Susan what caused such a bitter wind, that surely she had not left the back door open, and when she answered that she was obliged to, the kitchen smoked so, I thought I could detect at once upon the peddler's face a look of inquisitive and excited curiosity as he said,

"Smoke, does it? Just let me look at it and I'll cure it for you."

I instantly and decidedly declined, somewhat to Susan's surprise, who would have admitted him, I doubt not, at once. I had but one desire now, to get the fellow out—in fact I inwardly trembled with apprehension until he was clean off; and at last, to my inexpressible relief, he gathered up his goods after the servant had paid for her purchases, and trudged down the walk by which he had come. We both stood in the window watching him, while two or three times he looked back, as though to see if we were still there, when soon the turn in the avenue hid him from our view. Susan remained with me for a while descending on the cheapness and excellence of the articles which she had bought. I gave little heed to her eulogiums; uneasy thoughts about the man were running in my mind, and told the house-maid that I did not all like his way or appearance, and that I was sure I'd dream of him that night. I forgot how the rest of the day passed; I had a kind of luncheon dinner, and remained after it sitting by the fire in the twilight in a dreary doze; for my cold was oppressive. When Susan lit the candles and drew the curtains, stirred up the fire, and made the room look comfortable, I took the small candle that she had to get some work up stairs. At the top of the last flight, and near the door of my aunt's room, there was a sort of arched recess, where cloaks and other stray articles of that description were hung; and as I reached the landing I was attracted by the motion of one of these, a cloak, I believe it was. I thought I remember, that the lobby window must be open, and that a breeze from it shook the garment. I turned to see, and then, at a loss to understand what it could be, I was about to move into the recess itself to examine more closely, when I became reticent to the spot on observing quite distinctly the outline of a figure draped in a dark, heavy wrap or mantle, and that I was not to move as if he must have hurriedly folded it round him, probably on hearing my step, for it was clumsily managed. One foot projected, quite uncovered, and I at once recognized a peculiar kind of boot that I had noticed on the peddler when in the hall during the day. I know not how I kept from instantly betraying the startling discovery by a loud scream; my heart leaped to my throat, but I gained sufficient command over myself to pass into my room, and after a moment's delay, returning, I went down with as little appearance of haste as I could manage, though with a creeping shudder as I passed by the spot where the robber was hidden. Near the foot of the stairs I met Susan coming up. Laying my hand on her arm I whispered,

"Come with me."

Unfortunately my pale face so alarmed her that in a loud voice she cried, "Lord! Miss Maggie, what is it?"

Instantly there was a rustling sound overhead, and a man's step. I had but time to shriek out, "The peddler is up stairs, run, Susan, run!" and flinging down the candle, I flew to the front-door, and dashing out in the darkness, rushed with frantic speed down the laurel walk to get assistance from the lodge. I had not advanced half a dozen yards before I heard the heavy tread, with its crunching sound on the gravel of the avenue, in as I conjectured, rapid pursuit; this augmenting peril led me, of course, to strain every energy to the utmost in pressing on, and I soon had the satisfaction of hearing my pursuer start into the plantations, for the noise of the branches being broken and pushed aside conveyed to me this welcome assurance. Possibly, as I afterward thought, he never meant to follow me, nor knew at all which way I had gone, for the night was intensely dark, but may have been only concerned in effecting his escape after he had been detected. I found Brien, the gardener, at the gate lodge, and another workman with him, and brought them back as rapidly as possible to the house, for I felt anxious about poor Susan, knowing the fright she must be in. We discovered her shut up in the coal vault, half dead with fear. Mrs. Osborne's arrival in the midst of our consternation was a relief to all, and nothing could equal my aunt's distress when she learned what had happened and the alarm to which we had been subjected. Even Parks looked grave and uneasy, and himself that evening suggested the propriety of removing from the house any thing that might be a bait to plunderers. I could see that Aunt Osborne was relieved from some concern at this proposal emanating from the butler himself; she had arranged, she told me in the course of the evening, to convey all our valuables of every kind to Mr. Gregory; and it was a great comfort, she said, that Parks had now advised the same, for it made all matters smooth. We both concluded that the attempt made by this pretended peddler was what Father Malachi meant in his private warning; and, terrified as I had been by the trying adventure that had just occurred, I went to bed more at ease that night, as the vague alarm which the priest's letter had excited was now to a great degree set at rest; and I was further consoled by finding that my

was more disposed to the arrangement that I had for some time urged—the moving into the town for the winter months. The next day proved one of determined success. We attended carrying the lodgment to be made with Mr. Gregory into M—that morning, but as well from the weather as at Parks's suggestion it was deferred till the succeeding day. It would be well, he said, to give all the silver a thorough cleaning before it was laid by, and he could do that in a few hours easily.

Notwithstanding the heavy rain Parks repaired to M—to give the authorities a description of the peddler (which he got first accurately from me and Susan), and to try and ascertain if he had any others connected with him, for he strenuously maintained that the fellow wasn't single-handed in whatever he was after, but must be one of a gang. It was mid-day before the butler returned, and when he did he called at once for Susan, to tell her that he had met a messenger on his way, from her home (it was about five miles distant, at the foot of a neighboring mountain), with the intelligence that her mother was dying.

"—A most off," he said, "Susy, she was; and that she implored you, for the love of God, to go to her, not to lose a moment, for her end was slow but sure."

The announcement of this sad impending catastrophe affected the poor girl, as may be supposed, with the greatest sorrow; the house resounded with her sobs and moans. We made her up with all the coats and mufflers she could wear; Parks assured her that he'd look after every thing of her work that was necessary, and with sympathetic tears Aunt Osborne and I saw her off upon her mournful errand.

For the remaining hours of daylight my aunt and Parks were busied over the different articles of silver that were being packed into a large plate-chest, in preparation for their removal on the succeeding day, and at dinner, I think, a little later than usual we dined in consequence. We had scarcely dined, I know, when we were considerably startled by a loud, impetuous, and incessant knocking at the door, and we were astonished when the angry claimant for admission turned out to be Susan back again. I saw that Parks looked greatly and wondering what might be the result, on her entrance; while, without ceremony, not even restrained by the presence of me, a feeling of respect for her mistress, she assailed him with extreme bitterness for what she termed "his sending her off in the wet upon a fool's errand. Nothing in life, ma'am, the matter with her. I met Tom, that's my brother, coming forenoon down the hill, and she never was better. You had a purpose in it you old black thief," she exclaimed in a rage, "I don't believe you ever met any one who told you she was ill. Come, tell us, who was it, now? What was he like? Oh, I have had a talk about you since, I can tell you; no matter," and the aggrieved girl ended a yet longer onset than I have attempted to describe, and that an interruption or remonstrance on our part could stop, by bursting into tears. I cautiously watched Park's countenance during this stormy scene. At first he seemed frightened, but that soon yielded to an expression of pent-up fury that horrified me by its violence; before long, however, he calmed down somewhat, and I saw a gleam of light in his eyes, and that he glared like a cat's in the dark; large drops gathered on his dark forehead; his heaving chest emitted gasps like the ominous growling of an angry beast; while his white teeth were pressed down into the thick under lip until the blood came. I thought at the moment that he would have done some fearful deed on the spot. I had heard of his once before being similarly excited, and that those who witnessed it said, "they would like to have a hand in aggression, a bloody," but had no idea of what he was capable of.

Aunt Osborne insisted on Susan's going early to bed. She dosed her with hot drinks and other cold preventatives, for the poor girl had been thoroughly saturated from the rain.

For a long time after tea that evening we sat silently at our work in the drawing room. I could think of nothing but the terrible face of the black. I felt that it would be painfully impressed upon me as long as I lived. I was silent, too; for at least during this day, if not before, a kind of maddened apprehension that I scarce liked to express had been creeping over me that Parks was a man not to be trusted. Now, since dinner, the vague feeling had gathered strength; a phantom, so to speak, suddenly assumed a bodily form; and yet the sickening alarm that the idea gave rise to was such that I tried to dismiss it from my thoughts as altogether groundless, but I could not. Even silence about it now was becoming oppressive. I looked up from my work; my dear companion at the other side of the table was at some embroidery that seemed to try her sight too much as she leaned close over it, and I noticed a shade of troubled anxiety disturbed that usually sweet, serene face.

"Aunt," I said, suddenly, "did it ever at all occur to you, and I hesitated to try and shape my unpleasant thought in less unpleasant words, "that—that—Parks is not worthy of the trust you repose in him?"

"What makes you say so?" she replied, hurriedly, dropping the work from her hand and looking nervously up at me.

"I can hardly tell you," I rejoined. "I don't like what I have seen for days back. I can't help suspecting something wrong, though I don't well know what about this matter of Susan's; but what influences me most now is the awful look he had at the time at dinner that she attacked him. You did not see it, but I never can forget it; and I tell you 'what, aunt,' I continued, "it has pressed strongly on my mind more than once to-day that in the priest's note, the covert allusion was to him."

"Well, but you know, Parks being a Protestant might have biased his mind, even if he did refer to him."

"Oh, depend upon it," I rejoined, "religion, one way or the other, had nothing to do with it."

My aunt seemed lost in thought for a few moments. "Very true," she said at last, with a deep sigh. "He has hitherto hindered me, I almost thought strangely, in sending away the plate. Curious, too, he drew all his money out of the bank. I heard this only yesterday, and I fancy that Mr. Gregory suspects him. To tell you the honest truth, Maggie, I have not felt very comfortable about him myself for the last

week, though till this moment I hardly allowed myself to entertain the thought. Please God, come what may, we'll be off into M—that once."

"I wish we were safe through this very night!" I almost unconsciously ejaculated.

I had scarce expressed the wish, uttered in a low voice, when we were both suddenly terrified by the sound of a cry. I appeared to be at a distance, but had a kind of muffled or smothered tone. Wherever it was, it was like the last wild utterance of some creature in mortal anguish, and sounded fearfully in the stillness of the night.

"Oh! what's that?" said my aunt, bounding up.

I rose from my seat, too petrified to say a word. We stood listening with blanched faces, but no other sound or stir reached us, and in a few moments Frisk, a small dog, gave a half growl, half bark under the window.

"Oh, there!" I said, with a deep breath of relief; "I know what it was. Frisk after a rabbit, I'll engage. I heard just such a cry, I'm sure, the other day from one that he killed in the walk; and, of course, it was more startling at this hour."

"Perhaps it was," rejoined my aunt. "It certainly seemed to be outside; but, dear, it sounded so awful!"

We remained a while longer at our work, more quieted, though still not altogether at ease.

"Look, Maggie," said my aunt. "I want to run up for a bit of thread to finish this, and then I think we'll go to bed, for I declare I'm in a tremor since we heard that noise."

"Yes, and I must sleep with you to-night," I said, "for I should be afraid to stay alone, and your door in the only one in the house, I think, that has both lock and key. I was thinking the other day that there was another spot, above or below, that one can lock themselves up in, if they required it."

"You are right, child, I believe," rejoined my aunt, laughing; "however, if we go to M—, it will not be worth while to get any thing done to them at present."

"If indeed!" I said, in a kind of soliloquy, as she left the room.

I don't know how long Aunt Osborne was absent. I was pondering so deeply upon the occurrence of the past day or two, and wondering what might be the result, that I was not aware of her return, and did not notice her coming back into the apartment until the light of the candle fell upon the work I still held in my hand, though I had not put in a stitch for several minutes, and I turned to say something. Shall I ever forget her appearance! I rose from my chair, gazing at her, transfixed with horror. Her face was white like snow; even her lips were the pallor of death; and she trembled so, that only I caught her I think she would have fallen. She seemed trying to speak, but her tongue refused to utter an articulate word. I felt my own face growing as ghastly as hers; I took the candle from her nerveless hand, and almost forced her into the seat that I had vacated.

"For mercy's sake," I whispered, "what is it; tell me; what have you seen?" I reached from the table a tumbler of water, that had been left there for some medicine that I was to take for my cold, and made her swallow two or three sips.

"Oh, Maggie!" she at last gasped out, "tis all true—Parks and she shook from head to foot, 'his above, behind my bed; 'tis pushed a little down from the wall; I saw him first by the reflection in the looking-glass, and then, for fear of a mistake—I don't know how I got courage—I looked more closely at the bed and saw him plainly through an opening in the back curtain, with a knife or some sharp thing in his hand. He means to murder me most surely!"

I tried, on my poor aunt's account, to nerve myself up, though against this appalling intelligence I was almost insensible.

"Are you certain," I asked—and how un- naturally hollow my whispering voice sounded—"that he does not suspect you saw him?"

"No! God strength at the moment, somehow, and walked quietly from the room; but oh, Maggie, what are we to do?"

"We must," said I, bracing myself for this fearful emergency, "first of all gently wake up Susan, and then try, all three, and get out the door and off before he finds out that he's discovered. Where are the keys?"

"Great goodness! they have been taken up, we then remembered, as was the custom every night, and left in a small basket on a table in my aunt's room."

"Sure I saw it there," she exclaimed, "and the table you know, is just by the bed; but I forgot in my fright what it was, and all about it. Now there is no earthly hope left; we can't possibly escape from the house; the windows are barred, the doors are locked, and the keys up close to where that fearful wretch is lurking."

"I fear, indeed, dear aunt," I exclaimed, bursting into tears, and throwing my arms round her, "that our destruction is inevitable." And I shook with convulsive but suppressed sobs.

"Don't, don't, my poor darling child!" said my beloved relative soothingly, now aroused and excited by the violence of my emotion. "There is One who can help us in the last extremity; let us ask Him."

And with our arms encircling one another we sank upon our knees, while Aunt Osborne uttered a few trembling broken petitions, in a whispered but earnest voice. We rose strengthened and encouraged.

"If," I said, "to call up poor Susan. It comes to a last struggle, these three together might do something; you'll not be afraid to stay here if I slip down to her?"

"No, dear," she answered; "you know he has no idea that we suspect any thing, and he'll be quiet for a while."

I stole softly out, and down the stairs to the basement; the room which the housemaid occupied, and the cook with her when she was at home, was in a remote part of the house, off a passage at the other side of the kitchen; while the man's apartment was at the opposite extreme end of the lower story. I passed quickly on, and opening the door, called out in a low tone, "Susan, Susan?" There was no reply. Going up to the bed, "She has covered herself up in the quilt," I muttered; "poor thing, she was so tired and sleepy; how tossed, though all the clothes are!" I drew down the coverlet. Useless to try and describe the sight that met me, the icy chill I felt; she had been barbarously murdered! A handkerchief or string of some kind was tied so tightly round the throat that it had cut the skin, the eyes were protruding with a glassy stare, and a frothy mucus covered the part

ed lips; both hands were clenched, as in the last agony. That there had been a fierce struggle was evident, as well from the disordered state of the bed-clothes as that one of the shut hands contained a woolly curl that I have never seen torn in the conflict from the murderer's head. The coldness and rigidity of death were already creeping over her frame. "Poor unfortunate girl!" I groaned out as I staggered against the wall, "this was the cry we heard." In some strange way the sight of that disfigured corpse imparted a sudden and almost unnatural courage. "God helping me, I'll thwart this ruffian yet," I said, "and there's no time to be lost; my poor, kind-hearted Susan!" I reverently drew the quilt again over the dead discolored face; and with a firmer tread than I had entered, left the room. "Let me see," I said, "I must try and not tell aunt yet, and when I returned, 'On second thoughts,' said I, 'I have determined not to waken Susan a while, at all events till we see what may be done; she would be sure to cause some disturbance in her fright.'"

"Oh, nonsense," aunt whispered, "I won't have the creature perhaps murdered in her bed without knowing or hearing a word; come, I'll go to her myself."

"Stop, aunt," I said, "you must not."

"Why?" she asked, "there is any thing more?" For she saw the agitation that I could not conceal.

"No use," said I, "in concealing it; he has murdered her already; we have but our own safety now to think of. I dread the effect of this intelligence upon one who was already so entirely unmoved by our terrible position; she sank back into her seat, and folded her hands with a look of passive despair."

"Poor thing!" she murmured, "I suppose she has only preceded us a little."

"Look now, dear aunt," I knelt down beside her chair, and my voice was wonderfully steady and strong. "I am resolved on one last effort for our lives. I'll just go up this moment and see if I can't get into that room and bring out the keys without his hearing me, and then we might readily escape. See, it is our sole chance."

Aunt Osborne shook her head, and seemed incredulous as to my ever succeeding. "I saw with fresh concern that a kind of apathetic stupor was stealing over her, and I dreaded that she might get a fit."

"Come, courage," I said; "God will not forsake us. I'm quite certain that I shall succeed."

Slipping off my shoes and folding my dress round my shoulders, so as to be less impeded, I literally *crept* up stairs, advancing with extreme care, lest the creaking of a board, or the slightest sound, might indicate my approach. When I reached the lobby, I stood by the cloak-hole, as we called it, already referred to, for some moments, to listen, but there was not the least sound; then with, if possible, a yet more stealthy movement, I went on to the door of the room, and again stopped, scarcely daring to draw breath for fear of arousing Park's suspicion. I had felt marvelously firm and nerveless up to this, but now that I was actually on the threshold of the apartment where the assassin was, the full consciousness of the impending danger came with such force that I felt the rapid beat of my heart, and my limbs shook so that I had to lean for support against the wall. I again called up the tragedy below, that had imparted such a feeling of indignation as to quell the overpowering nervousness that had preceded it. I passed my hand gently along the door, which was half open, to ascertain if any silence was maintained on the outside, and to my great joy I unexpectedly found it was; surely, I thought, a most merciful providence that it happened to be so. So somewhat reassured by this discovery, I went on into the room. Here I assumed a stooping posture, fearful lest a possible gleam from the window, falling on my full height, might do mischief. I had now, of course, need of the utmost caution; an unguarded stir, a sudden encounter with any article of furniture and we were ruined. To provide against the latter possibility, I had felt, and I had gently round me, treading softly by step, more, as I afterward thought, like a person picking his way through some morass, and carefully feeling every foothold for fear of sinking. At last I reached the small table; there in a momentary pause I heard from the bed a heavy breath, an articulate utterance, accompanied by a restless movement. I stretched out my hand quickly, too quickly in the intense eagerness to clutch the basket with the keys, and turned it over with a loud rattle. To grasp them all with one desperate effort, I turned my regard to the silence, and to drag the door after me and turn the key, all was the work of an instant. The relief with which I felt the key turn and heard the lock click may be better imagined than described. As rapidly as my feet could carry me I hurried down to my aunt, with presence of mind enough, however, to seize the garment that came first to hand, from where they were hung, as I passed the place on the lobby, with which to protect my poor old relative against the night air. I could hear as I descended the stairs, the wretched assassin making the most vigorous, but ineffectual, efforts to force his way out, but in the hall, as I was wrapping my aunt up in the cloak that I had brought, we heard the window above let down, and at once a long, low, peculiar whistle. "Quick!" I exclaimed, seizing by the arm my half-scarred companion,