

attention to you, but you can help yourself to what you see on the table there, and rest near the stove till I speak to my master as to how we may stow you for the night."

"You mean to say you trust me in the house here; that you believe what I say?"

"Why should I not, when I see the truth of a striving, maybe tempted man in your face?" challenged Mrs. Warden steadily. "I have had trouble myself and I feel sorry for you, and I am glad to help you."

Burglar Bill told his story in fragments while he ate like a famished man. Then a bell summoned Mrs. Warden to another part of the house and he was left alone.

"A fine woman, a true woman," he mused gratefully. "What comfort after the long, hard tramp!" And, well fed and content, he snuggled down in his chair by the warm, cheery kitchen fire.

He noted drowsily that the housekeeper passed through the kitchen. He saw her return with an axe, and wondered. He roused up in a strange amazement as soon thereafter there sounded from the upper part of the house a vast thudding, crashing noise. It was as if that axe was being used to batter something to pieces.

Mrs. Warden came down into the kitchen looking flustered and breathless, as though she had been undergoing some very forcible exercise. She came straight up to Bill and looked him earnestly in the face.

"You said you were a burglar—" she began.

"Once, madam," returned Bill—"reformed now."

"Will you do something for me?"

"Anything in my power, surely I will."

"Will you break open a safe for me?"

"Oh, now!" fairly shouted Bill, springing to his feet in the wildest excitement. "I promised never to do that same again."

"Not if it was to get at a person's own property and baffle a wicked schemer, and do a good deed?"

"That looks different," said Bill.

"Well, I wish a safe broken open. I have been trying to do it myself with an axe."

"Hammer and chisel is all I need," observed Bill, with a slight remnant of his old professional pride. "If you could explain a little farther—"

"I will do so," said the housekeeper. "In an upper room of this house an old man, John Noble, is lying desperately ill. My dear sweet mistress, Anabel Bryce, his granddaughter, is with him. For a month her cousin, Dr. Boyd, a villain, has attended Mr. Noble. He has kept his aged relative under the influence of dangerous drugs all along and has induced him to sign certain papers that would rob my pretty Anabel and her lover of their fortune, should Mr. Noble die and the doctor produce them. These papers Boyd, who went away yesterday for a few days, locked in the safe and took the key with him. Mr. Noble has awakened to the truth and wishes the papers destroyed before Boyd returns. The safe is an old-fashioned one and with your skill—"

"It will be as easy as opening an old iron box," declared Bill. "Get me a chisel and hammer, madam, and count the work done."

"Some good in the world after all," Burglar Bill congratulated himself, as he deftly opened the old safe in the room of the invalid and saw a package of papers taken therefrom and cast into the blazing grate.

Then old Mr. Noble put out safeguards to keep his evil-minded relative from coming into the house again. He began to recover his health, and a month later, closing up all his business affairs, after the marriage of his granddaughter to Earle Summer, he went with them to their new home.

Meantime Burglar Bill had worked around the place as a hired man.