

## A ROMANCE OF THE TELEGRAPH.

It was a lovely day in May, the sun was shining brightly, and the air was laden with that balmy fragrance that lends the special charm to spring days. I was standing upon the roof of one of the leading hotels in London.

I had been examining the telephone wires on the roof, on which we had lately placed a new patent arrangement for the purpose of overcoming induction from the neighboring telegraph wires.

I stood holding on with one hand to a standard for telephone wires for several minutes, lost in thought.

I had stood thus for, perhaps, five minutes, when I was brought back to the realization of my senses by a sound which, coming upon me so suddenly, seemed to freeze the blood in my veins, send a chill down my back, and a nervous tremor through my entire system; it was the unmistakable cry of a maniac!

Turning quickly towards the direction from which the sound came, I saw the author of it with his head just above the opening of the trap-door, through which I had gained access to the roof, and the door of which I had left swung back upon its hinges.

I recognised at once that the man was mad. His wild expression showed it quite plainly.

For an instant I stood motionless, not knowing what to do, when again that laugh rang out upon the air and I noticed that he was ascending to the roof. Quick as lightning my mind took in the situation, and rushing desperately towards the man I struck him with all my force, endeavouring to knock him backward down the flight of stairs to the floor below. He saw my intention, and tried to gain the roof before I could reach him; but the distance between us was only a few feet, and he had not risen above the roof higher than his waist when I forced him back.

I stood upon the door a short time, expecting every minute that he would renew the attack, when suddenly I heard the report of a pistol from below, and was conscious of a whizzing noise in the air.

Looking down, I noticed a small hole in the trap-door, and that the bullet had passed uncomfortably near my leg in its upward flight.

I did not relish the idea of being shot at in this manner, and stepped immediately off the door.

I had scarcely done so, when there was another report, and another hole in the door, directly upon the spot where I had been standing.

What was to be done?

All at once I noticed that the ends of the staple used for fastening the door on the inside projected through the thin boards for some distance.

Quickly passing a rope I had round the knob and under the sharp ends of the staple, I took two turns round them, which was all there was room for, and drawing the rope tightly, fastened the ends as securely as possible.

This whole performance lasted but a few seconds, but the pistol shots continued in rapid succession, and I judged that by this time he had emptied the seven chambers of his revolver.

The firing had ceased, and I noticed the door moving slightly, as though force was being brought to bear upon it from below.

I took hold of the door with my hands, and held it down as hard as I could. The madman seemed to be pushing against it with a tremendous force. What was to be done?

The rope was a weak thing at the best, and I felt that it could not long hold out against the efforts of a strong man.

All at once the thought of calling help by telegraph came into my mind. I had heard of cases of telegrams being sent without instruments from the scene of railway accidents, and I determined to try for myself, if the madman could only be kept within bounds long enough to allow me the opportunity.

I was an expert telegraphist, having spent a number of years in that business before entering the telephone field. Although I was an old telegraphist, I had never attempted the feat of telegraphing without an instrument.

But the situation called for a desperate act, and after looking at the fastenings on the door to see that they were secure as possible, I went quickly to the edge of the building, where a number of wires were strung on brackets. These wires I knew to lead to the B— Post Office.

I had a small pair of pliers in my pocket, and seizing a wire I cut into it with the pliers, and then bent the wire in order to break it. The pliers were small, and it required a strong effort to snap the wire, but I accomplished the feat in a few seconds. Now came the difficult part. I was trembling with nervous excitement. Putting the ends to my tongue, I felt the circuit close through it and all was still. No one was using the wire.

I now took the wires in each hand, and, as well as my trembling fingers would allow, I called B several times.