

"Get along with you and your angels," answered she, unconscious of the quotation. "Don't you hear your friend speaking to you?"

"Yes, I hear him; I found the muskets and hid them," said Darall coolly. "Things are bad enough as it is, without there being murder done."

"Yes, but it is becoming a question whether we or those scoundrels yonder are to be murdered," observed Landon, hotly. "Come, where did you hide these things?"

"I shall not tell you," answered Darall, decisively. "You may say what you like, but you will thank me for it some day, since a single shot——"

"Why, you young stoopid," interrupted Rebecca—she was his elder by about six months—"the guns ain't loaded; there is neither powder nor shot in the booth; you need only show the muskets, to frighten the fellows."

The young lady had, doubtless, some experience of the effect of the exhibition of fire-arms upon a crowd, and at all events, in their desperate case, it was quite worth while to try the experiment. Every minute that the besieged now spent in their little fortress added to their list of wounded, while, on the other hand, the forces of the enemy increased in number and audacity. Their sole hope, except in flight, lay in their being rescued by their friends the military at Woolwich, who would have been glad enough to have done battle for them, had they been aware of their hard straits; but, unhappily, Charlton Fair was as "taboo" to Her Majesty's forces, and for the same excellent reasons, as it was to the cadets themselves, not a uniform was to be seen among the crowd without. A general sally was therefore at once determined on.

Acting upon Landon's suggestion, the dozen or so of muskets that served for Richardson's stage army were served out to the wounded, who had instructions to level them at the enemy, but by no means to pull trigger, lest their harmless character should be thereby disclosed; thus it was hoped that the prowess of those who were least able to defend themselves would be most respected. These formed the first line of battle, as the whole Cadet Company issued forth from the back of the booth, and the effect of their appearance even exceeded expectation. The crowd who had rushed round to cut off the retreat at once fell back before the threatening muzzles of the muskets, and not until the retiring force had cleared the enclosure, and reached the lane, did they pluck up courage to fall upon the rear-guard, which was under the command of Landon himself. Then, indeed, that young gentleman had quite enough to do; the march of the main body was necessarily slow because of those who had been hurt, and were scarcely fit for marching, and this gave the crowd opportunity for "cutting out" expeditions, whereby a cadet