

"I certainly shall," said Dahlia, with dignity; but aren't you going?"

"I may as well stay," Bill Nixey said, with unhappy jocularity; I've a twist in my back, I think. The young toffs 'ud 'ave me before I'd gone half a mile."

"You've hurt yourself," said Dahlia, forgetting he was a burglar. "I'm so sorry!"

"You've hurt me, you an' your sister 'ave," Bill said, resignedly. "Not that I blames you. What did I go playin' the giddy goat for, gettin' into that ther chest. This'll break Sarah Jane's 'eart."

Dahlia looked on with many emotions chasing each other over her candid face. By this time she had ceased to be afraid of Bill Nixey. His round, rosy-cheeked countenance was indeed reassuring. It had been an asset to Bill in his professional career; and it explained how it was that a person as naturally shrewd as Sarah Jane had believed in him, even to his being the Sunday school teacher with which he had embellished his first legend about his being a locksmith's young man. To be sure, few people

which amusement and gratitude were oddly blent.

"I'm hanged," he said, "if you aren't the best little kid I ever met. An' I'll marry Sarah Jane my dear, I 'ope, an' I'll be a good man for your sake as well as 'ers, so 'elp me I will!"

He dragged himself painfully after the younger Miss Vivash, down the back stairs, and through what seemed to him unending passages and stone-flagged kitchens, till they reached a door which the servants had left open so that they might return by it. They were now nearly at their journey's end. There was a short ascent by a ladder in the stable-yard which tried all Bill's nerve to accomplish it, while Miss Dahlia stood at the foot of the ladder and held the candle, shaded by one little pink hand, to guide him.

At last he was at the top, in the loft, and was wondering whether he was safe in trusting the kid, when she called out to him to wait a minute. She ran off and came back carrying a bottle of wine, a loaf, a piece of cold beef, and a knife. "Here, take these," she said un-

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"Please, he is not to be followed," she said."

knew more about locks than he did. "Is Sarah Jane the young woman who gave you the mitten?" she asked, sympathetically.

"I didn't say she gave it to me. I said she would ha' given it to me if she'd known. Pore girl, I can't bear to deceive 'er; only if I could ha' married 'er it 'ud ha' been the savin' o' me. I never got no chance in my youth, or I'd ha' lived honest. Say, miss, do you think the toffs'll be long? The sooner I'm in 'ospital under the doctor the better."

By this time he had succeeded in straightening out his back and was looking the paler for the process.

"Oh, you musn't be taken; you must cheer up," said Dahlia, impulsively. "I know a place where I can hide you for a bit, till they've given up searching for you. I'll bring you food myself. You can get away when everything is quiet. And I hope you will marry Sarah Jane and be a good man, even if she didn't give you the mitten. Do you think you can move now?"

Bill Nixey turned on her a gaze in

burdening herself of them one after another. Her candle had blown out, and he could only feel what the benefactions were, but he blessed her aloud as he received them.

With a last injunction to draw up the ladder and bolt the door of the loft she was gone; and being no heroine, but only a little girl wound up to heroic deeds for the moment, she found the passage back through the almost empty house almost as great a strain on her nerves as had been her experience with the burglar.

She had hardly returned to the hall when there came a hammering at the door, and she heard her sister's voice.

"Have you got him?" cried Iris, coming in with half-a-dozen gentlemen, and feeling for Dahlia in the darkness. "Is your candle gone out? I hope you aren't dreadfully frightened Dahlia, dear."

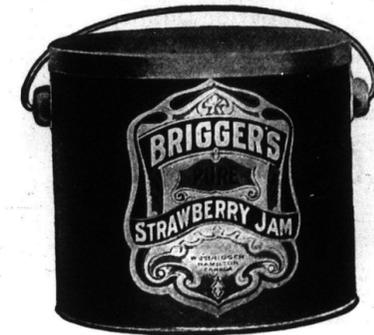
Someone struck a match and revealed Iris in the midst of half-a-dozen gentlemen in evening dress. She had, apparently come in a carriage, and the

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