

Mrs. Jones's Presence of Mind.

BY MARY KYLE BALLAS.

Mr. Jones was away, and I was shut up in our lonely suburban house with Biddy and baby. Biddy was a faithful and attached servant, and baby was a jewel; but it was lonely, and I had not received that letter from my husband which I confidently expected would come by the evening post.

I had my tea alone—a dismal proceeding enough—and as I sat by the grate Biddy brought me the paper.

"You haven't looked at it the day, mum," she said, "and there's some very interesting reading in it. There's accounts of the house-breaking in it."

"Of what?" cried I. "Of how the thieves got into the house of an old gentleman in a bit of a lonely place—the like of this—and took their silver and their money, and tied them to the bed posts, to say nothing of half-murdering the old gentleman himself. The saints be above us this night!"

There it was; certainly; a column and more, headed: "Outrageous Attack Upon a Wealthy Citizen of Sheeptown!" I read it through, and began to wish that Mr. Jones had never left home, or that I had had grandfather to stay with me. Then I began to think what I should do if burglars were to be found in our house while I was alone. My impulse would be to cover my head over with the counterpane, hold baby tight, and let them do what they chose. But, I said to myself that that would never do. I imagined a scene: I awakened, to find a burglar standing at my bedside, with a dark lantern in his hand. I said, "Young man, has't you a mother?" He trembled, and replied, "Yes." I continued, "And if she saw you now?" He trembled, burst into tears, cried out, "Ah! my mother!" and departed, begging my pardon.

However, it might be possible that I should find my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and be unable to utter my short and thrilling speech. I might even sleep soundly and wake up to find the spoons gone. I might be murdered in my bed. But, if awake, I would show the bravery which had descended to me from my Scottish ancestors, one of whom defended her castle against the foe during her husband's absence, and saved it, too.

I did not feel like retiring early. I just wrapped myself in my dressing-gown and sat beside the fire, and it was nearly twelve o'clock when the door opened and Bridget put in her head. My thoughts flew at once to burglars.

"Mum," said Biddy. "How many are there?" I asked. "How many which?" cried Bridget. "Thieves," said I. "Oh! it isn't thieves, mum," said Biddy. "At last it's no one but that thafe iv a wind that's tuck the roof cleave off the chicken-house, and there's the wee bits of chicks a starvin' to death wid cowlid."

"In this weather!" said I. "Oh! that will never do, Biddy. We must put them in the wood-house."

So, taking one peep at baby, I put on hood and cloak, and out we went into the garden.

It was cold, but clear; the moon gave us light enough to find all the poor little chickens. We had them all at last except one, and we heard its little voice, "swee, swee, swee," somewhere, and of course could not be so heartless as to forsake it. At last we found it, cold as a lump of ice, tangled up in some cord that was fast to a nail, and glad enough its mother was to see it. By the time we gave it to the old hen one o'clock struck. Baby had been alone an hour.

"Mizzers, darling sound asleep yet," I said, peeping into the cradle as I hurried into the room. Then I gave a scream. Baby was not there. In a moment the truth flashed into my mind. Burglars had entered the house during my absence and had stolen my treasure. Perhaps they were in the house yet.

"Guard the staircase, Biddy," I cried, and rushed up the stairs. There was a light in my bed-room; and as I peeped in, I saw that one of the burglars had hidden himself in my bed; and I also saw the mud-stained boots of another sticking from under it. I could only see the hair of the creature who had hidden himself under the counterpane. Whether he had baby or not, I could not tell; but I felt that on my presence of mind depended the life of my child, that of honest Bridget and my own. Noiselessly I drew the door to and looked it, then, with the key in my hand, I rushed down stairs.

"I've locked them in," I cried,

"They shall restore my baby!" and I ran wildly down the road.

Mulligan's tavern, the disgrace of the neighborhood, was open, as it always was all night. It was a very low place, but what cared I for that? Any man would help a woman in such an emergency.

Shaking like an aspen leaf, I tottered in at the door. Four men were playing at cards, several more drinking at the bar; one lay on the floor, and old Mrs. Mulligan dispensed the bottled ale, while her husband mixed more potent liquors. Everybody seemed to be uttering strings of oaths, but whether they were quarreling or not I did not stop to enquire.

"Oh, come, come!" I cried. "There are burglars in my house, and I'm afraid they're killing my baby! They have stolen it!"

"Stole the baby!" cried Mrs. Mulligan. "Go along, boys, and help the woman. It's Mrs. Jones, the next neighbor to ourselves. Take your pistols and away. Here, Missus Jones, mum, swally a drop of the poteen to drive the fear out of you."

"Oh, no, thank you. I can't stop," I sobbed, and in a moment more I was rushing up the road in the midst of an armed band, helped along by two of them. "I don't know how we got into the house or up-stairs, but there we were. I remember an awful tumult, shots, shrieks, more oaths. Then silence, and a loud laugh, and old Mulligan's voice, crying:

"It's all right, boys. I know the gentleman. It's Mr. Jones himself. It's only a bit of a mistake, that is all."

"Rather an unpleasant mistake if I had been shot in my bed," replied a voice that I knew to be my husband's. At that I rushed into the room. He was there, and he held baby in his arms. The air was full of gunpowder, furniture upset and broken, and the windows smashed. My protectors stood around with their pistols in their hands, but there were no house-breakers to be seen. I began to understand what I had done.

"I'll leave Mrs. Jones to explain," said old Mulligan. "I'm proud I didn't kill you, though it's out of friendship for yourself I'd have done it. If yer own wife tuk ye for a housebreaker, how would we know better? The top iv the night and all sorts of apologies to ye. Come, boys."

And Mulligan and his merry men departed, and I stood looking at my husband and wondering what he would say to me. You see, of course, that he had come home while Biddy and I were out chicken hunting, and finding baby wide awake, had taken her up stairs with him; he thought to give me a little scare and a delightful surprise. The robber under the bed was represented by his muddy boots, and they were riddled with bullet holes.

As I took in the fact that I had placed both husband and baby in terrible danger, I forgot everything else, and distinguished myself by fainting away and being so ill afterwards that I never got the scolding I deserved. And now, when Jasper laughs at me, as he does sometimes about my presence of mind, and going to Mulligan's tavern at midnight, I tell him boldly that it was all his fault; and so it was. There now.

Wit and Wisdom.

Tell us not in mournful numbers Life is but an empty dream; When it costs a man five dollars To hear Miss Sarah rave and scream. Life is real, life is earnest, And a man must work damn hard, Ere he earns the cash to purchase Gallery seats to see Bernhardt!

Teacher in high school at— "Are pro and con synonymous or opposite terms?" Scholar—"Opposite." Teacher—"Give an example." Scholar—"Progress and Congress!"

An Oregon preacher had one of his horses stolen, and he went to his room and prayed that a quickened conscience might oblige the thief to return it. That very night the fellow returned and—stole the other.

A little girl read a composition before a Goanen, N. Y., minister the other day. The subject was "a cow." She wrote in this complimentary sentence—"A cow is the most useful animal in the world except religion."

A sentimental poetess asks: "Is there nothing for me to do?" "Oh! you bet there is. Return the flour you borrowed from the woman next door, patch up your husband's clothes, let poetry alone, and turn up that old last year's bonnet. There's plenty of work to do in this world. When you wish for advice enclose a stamp.

Fidgety Lady—"But what am I to do? I can't ride with my back to the engine." Insolent youth—"Better speak to the conductor. He'll turn the train round to oblige you."

LOVELL'S Province of Ontario Directory FOR 1881-82, TO BE PUBLISHED IN NOVEMBER, 1881. Price \$5.00.

MR. LOVELL, at the request of several Merchants and others of the Province of Ontario, of the City of Montreal, etc., begs to announce that his firm will publish a PROVINCE OF ONTARIO DIRECTORY, in November next, containing an Alphabetical Directory AND A THOROUGH CLASSIFIED BUSINESS DIRECTORY of the Business and Professional men in the Cities, Towns, and Villages of Ontario, with a Classified Business Directory OF THE CITY OF MONTREAL.

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NEUROUS DEBILITY. Victoria Harbor, Simcoe Co., Ont. My wife had been troubled for years with nervous debility; three bottles of the Indian Blood Syrup cured her. I thought it was dear at 50 cents per bottle. Now, I think it cheap.

RECOMMENDS IT TO ALL IN DISTRESS. The Indian Blood Syrup has greatly benefited my wife and myself. I recommend it to all in distress.

LIVER COMPLAINT AND DYSPEPSIA. I took one bottle of the Indian Blood Syrup, and I feel like a new man. I recommend it to all, for dyspepsia and liver complaint.

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HEART DISEASE CURED. Smithfield, North Co., Nt. I suffered very much from Palpitation of the heart and the doctors told me I was liable to drop off at any minute. I tried your Blood Syrup and was cured. I believe it to be the best medicine ever introduced.

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Cross Hill, Waterloo. I was troubled with cramps in the stomach and loss of appetite: your Indian Blood Syrup effected a speedy cure.

DYSPEPSIA AND INDIGESTION. Hampton, Durham Co., Ont. I had Dyspepsia, Indigestion and Biliousness for ten years. I had to give up work. I procured some of your Blood Syrup, and was fully restored to health in a short time. I gained twelve pounds in three weeks. I recommend it as a General Tonic, Cleanser and Blood Purifier.

HEART DISEASE AND LIVER COMPLAINT. Troy, Wentworth Co., Nt. I have been subject to Heart Disease and Liver Complaint for many years. I tried many doctors, but obtained no benefit until I tried your Indian Blood Syrup.

BEST MEDICINE I EVER TOOK. I have given your Indian Blood Syrup trial, and must say it is the best medicine I ever took.

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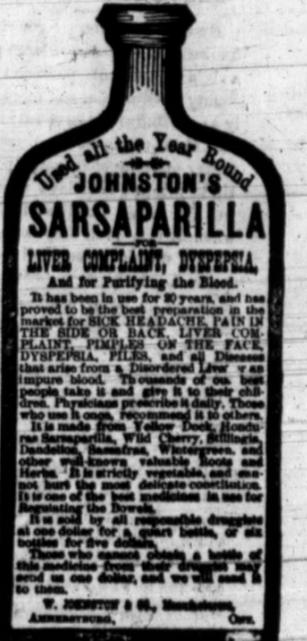
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