

"Oh, Aunt Zella, Papa's catin' gass, like the man in the Bible."

"You little gipsy," he cried, and tried to get hold of her, but she ran, and was out of reach in an instant.

"What's this?" said he in terror; "what noise is this? Ho! who's there? Who's in the bushes?" He rushed away like a maniac, tearing his clothes and hands at every step, but found no one.

"I'm a fool, there's no one here; can there be, or is it only fancy?"

"Only fancy," was repeated, close behind him; he fled like one distracted.

No sooner had he gone than a man slipped from behind a tree. He carried a lady's saddle in his hand.

"Wasn't he skeered putty, though," he soliloquized. "It done me good, it did," and he chuckled to himself. "He'll be skeered worse nur that afore night, I reckon; but I'll bide my time." This man was Jones.

At five the guests took their seats at the dinner table, the old, white-haired father at the head, dispensed hospitality with a patriarchal air. In the midst of the festivities a domestic entered, and informed the bride that a person in the hall wished to see her, and would not be put off.

"Who is it, Jenkins?"

"Jones, mam, the hostler at the Bluffs."

Excusing herself to the company, she rose and went into the hall. There stood Jones, his hat in one hand, the saddle in the other.

"Well, Jones, what is it?"

"This be a sorry day, mam; an sorry I be to see ye, mam."

"What's wrong, Jones?"

"Everything's wrong, mam; ef I'd only knowed it in time. Now it's too late—yer wed, mam?"

"Yes, but what has that to do with it?"

"Everything, as ye shall hear, mam. Ye see I went out the day to get some twigs, to make the garden chair as ye spoke uv. As I was goin' along the bit of wood where the deep gully is, I see summat shining down in the bed uv the stream. Ye see, mam, there be no-water there now, but in spring it be deep, an go roarin' down the hills."

"Hurry, Jones."

"I will, mam. Well, I jumped down into the gully, fur thinks I, mebbey there's gold here; and I begin to scratch and to dig at the shiny bit, an what should it be but the thrimmins like uv a saddle. I scratched it out uv the sand, all uv a thrimble, fur I been lookin' fur my lady's saddle over a year, and there it wur, mam, buried in the sand."

Zella was interested by this time.

"Yes, this is Mrs. Vining's saddle."

"Why was it thrown in the gully?"

"That's it, mam; that's what I said to myself, an turned it round and round, an here's what I found, the Lord preserve us," and he pointed to a strong, sharp iron nail, firmly secured in the under part of the saddle, in such

a manner as to pierce the horse terribly when the rider was seated.

Zella bent forward and fixed an eager gaze on the spot indicated. She staggered back, with eyes that seemed starting from their sockets.

"Bear up, mam, bear up, fur any sake. She's in heaven, I hope, poor lady."

Zella leaned against the wall groaning, her face the color of her wedding-robe.

"Oh my sister, my poor, murdered sister," she cried, putting her hands to her head, in a kind of crazed way; what perfidy! what cruelty! She was killed, Jones."

"No doubt of it, mam. May her soul rest in glory."

"Oh, unfortunate that I am, for I'm his wretched wife; but not one miserable hour will I bear the name. My father, my poor, father, this will kill him."

"I hope not, mam."

"I fear it, Jones, but now I must act—tomorrow I can weep. Wait here a moment, Jones, and when you hear the bell, come."

"Aye, aye, mam."

She returned to the dining-room and took her seat silently.

"Nothing unplesant, I hope, love," Frank said.

Receiving no answer, he looked at her. Where was the lovely, radiant bride of a few moments ago? This is a pale, stern woman, with an eye like steel.

"Zella, for heaven's sake, what ails you?"

She fixed her eyes on him steadfastly; she tried to speak, but utterance seemed denied her. At last the words came, hollow but distinctly—

"Oh, for the power of Medusa, to look you into stone. Oh, that every hair upon my head was each a separate snake, to sting you with a thousand deaths; detested wretch, your hands are full of blood; *you killed my sister, mam.*"

"For God's sake, Zella, compose yourself; you're not aware of what you're saying."

The one word, "murderer," hissed from her white lips.

The company rose to their feet; for one brief instant they stood looking at each other, as if horrified.

"This is madness," cried Frank, stamping, "yes, madness, or falsehood, base and cowardly. Some enemy is doing this. Ladies and gentlemen," turning to the company, "I appeal to you; you are all aware that my late wife was thrown from her horse and killed?"

"Yes, yes," responded many voices.

"How then, I ask, can I be supposed to have connived at her death, or be implicated in it in any way?"

"Surely not," some one replied.

"Ma'am," turning to Zella, "you have been rather premature in bringing so serious a charge against your husband; you should have had proof."

"Cruel wretch!" she replied, "unnatural monster! thus perish every token of our hated