"A TWELVE O'CLOCK TEA."

It was nearly midnight, but Mrs. Burdick still sat at her desk writing. It was very quiet in the library save for the sound of her pen, which went scratching briskly across the page. Outside the wind shrilled about the corners of the house, and occasionally there came fierce, sudden gusts of rain against the window pane, but the suggestion of storm and discomfort without only made the warmth and luxuriousness of the room more pronounced. A cat slumbered peacefully before the fire, and the soft light, filtered through the red gas globes, gave the apartment an appearance of comfort and good cheer.

At last with a sigh of relief Mrs. Burdick threw down her pen and pushed her paper aside. "An hour before John will be in," she sighed, impatiently glancing at the clock. "That is what it means to be the wife of a travelling man — waiting until all hours of the night for him to come home!"

The air of the room was heavy with the perfume of some hyacinths nearby, and she was thoroughly tired. A delicious sense of drowsiness, born of the senses of a duty well discharged, began to steal over her. The clock softly chimed the hour, the cat aroused itself, purred gently for a moment, then relapsed into slumber again, and all was still.

Suddenly Mrs. Burdick became vaguely conscious of a change in the conditions surrounding her. She had in the midst of her half dreams one of those premonitions of danger which come to all of us sometimes from no testimony of the senses, but rather from some mysterious source within. She knew instinctively that an element of evil had entered into this peaceful scene, and she became at once wide awake.

Then there came to her ears a sound other than that of the storm without. It was that of stealthy footsteps on the bare floor of the adjoining room. They came nearer, then paused a moment, and a cautious hand was laid upon the knob of the door behind her.

Mrs. Burdick was not a particularly courageous woman, and a cold perspiration started out upon her body. It seemed to her as if all the blood had rushed to her head and was trickling out at the roots of her hair. She had sometimes wondered what she would do if she were to find a burglar in the house. She had supposed that she would probably scream and faint away, according to conventional procedure. She experienced a sense of surprise to find herself doing nothing of the sort, but turning her chair swiftly about to face the intruder.

In the doorway stood a man. He was tall, slight and youngish looking, with a drooping yellow moustache, which did not hide the lines of a sneering smile upon his lips. He wore a shabby overcoat, buttoned tightly over his narrow chest, and a brown Derby hat, also somewhat the worse for wear, drawn well over his eyes. In his hand he held a revolver, the shining length of which he was pointing directly at her, while he fastened upon her a cruel, triumphant gaze.

Mrs. Burdick tried to think what an up-to-date woman like herself should do under such circumstances, but she could remember no precedent by which to be guided, so she took a firm grip upon her failing senses and sought for her voice, which seemed to have descended somewhere into her shoes.

"Good evening," she remarked at length pleasantly and looking the intruder squarely in the eyes.

The man appeared to be somewhat surprised at this unexpected greeting, but in a moment he showed a line of even, white teeth in a broader smile and responded: "Good evening," at the same time allowing the hand holding the revolver to drop at his side.

"I suppose you have called to see my husband?" she said, as calmly as if it were a common occurrence for strange men to appear unannounced in her library at midnight. "I am sorry he is not in. I am expecting him in a short time, however, on the fast mail. Perhaps you will be seated and wait until he arrives."

The man laughed aloud. "Well, you are a game one," he said, "and no mistake. But that's too thin. You don't expect him at all to-night. I took pains to make sure that he would not leave York until to-morrow morning."

"Oh, very well," said she, quietly, although her heart was thumping wildly. "Perhaps you are better posted as to his whereabouts than I am, but I certainly received a letter from him this morning telling me to expect him to-night. However, since you didn't call to see him, perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me what is your business here?"

"Not a bit," said the man. "I'm after your diamonds and your silver. I know you've got 'em both. I've seen you wear the diamonds and I found out how much silver you've got from the cook that left here last week. I'll thank you to show me where they are—the quicker the better—and then I'll skip out before the night watchman comes along this way."

"And if I refuse?" she asked, steadily.

"The man tapped his revolver significantly. "It would be better for you not to," he said.

Mrs. Burdick made no further remark, but sat leaning back in her chair looking curiously at the man, who stood now quite near her.

"Well," he said at length, with a surly frown, "why don't you start? What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, nothing," said she. "I was looking at you, and I must say I am surprised."

"Why?"

"Why? Because you don't look at all as I expected you to."

"Expected me to! What do you mean? Why did you expect me to look like anything? You never even heard of me!"

"No; but I suppose—— Well, you really are a burglar, aren't you?"

"You bet I am, and I'm a good one, too. I can show you several tricks of my trade if you don't show up those sparklers pretty quick. Hurry up, will you?"

The lady made no movement to rise. "Well," she said at length, reflectively, "I've looked for you under the bed every night for a good many years, and I always thought you would be a sort of villainous-looking fellow, with matted black hair and dirty hands. But you—— Why, you look almost like a gentleman!"

A wave of hot color swept over the man's sallow face. "How do you know but what I have been one and am one yet?" he asked, sarcastically, laying the revolver upon her desk, against which he leaned with folded arms.

"Maybe you've been one, but you're not one now. Gentleman," said Mrs. Burdick, haughtily, "don't wear their hats in the presence of ladies, nor bring mud into their houses on their feet," she added, glancing with indignation at his dirt-encrusted shoes.

The burglar removed his hat and laid it on the desk, after which he lifted first one foot and then the other and gazed critically at them.

"Ten thousand pardons!" he exclaimed, as he carefully gathered up several pieces of mud and threw them in the grate. "There wasn't any door at the window where I came in, and I was in a hurry."

"Besides," she continued, her rising wrath sweeping away her fear, "no gentleman would come in my house at midnight demanding my private property. How dare you do such a thing, sir? You've no business to have my things."

"I have just as good a right to have the things as you have, only I haven't been so lucky as to get them the way I'd like to. 'Tisn't my fault that I have to get things this way. The world owes me a living, and I'm going to have my share," he continued, doggedly.

"It seems to me that a smaller share got in a safe and respectable way would be more satisfactory than a fortune gained in such a risky—er—profession as yours."

"It may be risky, but it isn't any worse than the Stock Exchange," said the burglar, meaningly, "and it's just about as honest, too. That's where your father got the money he gave you to build this house with."

Mrs. Burdick flushed angrily and opened her mouth for an indignant response, but she thought better of it. The next moment she laughed good-naturedly and said: "Well, you seem to know all about my private affairs, and are as plain-spoken as I am myself. We'll not try to discuss the matter, please. Do you know I was just thinking about your wife. I should think it would be quite unpleasant for her to have you away so much at night and never know whether you are going to come home with your full share or be landed in the police station."

"My wife," said the burglar. "Oh, she don't mind. She's in the same business herself."

"Dear me! And she is a burglar, too?"

"Well—not exactly. She's — well—she's a shoplifter."

"Oh, I see! And have you any family?"

"One. Boy just past four."

"And he is a burglar, too?"

"Well, I should say not!" said the man, with indignation. "You ought to see the kid. I tell you he's as high-toned a little chap as anybody's. He goes to school and we keep him dressed up nice all the time, and he don't mix with everybody's young ones, either. We're bringing him up straight, we are, and after a while we're going to quit and live different and take him in good society."

"That will be nice," said she, nodding her head approvingly. "I'm glad to hear you talk that way. It shows you have the right feeling for your child, even if you are a burglar. We all want our children to have something better than we have ourselves. I'm always interested in people with children. We have a boy, too, and that's the way we feel about him. He's not as old as yours nearly, but he is such a darling! You ought to see my baby! He's the handsomest little fellow and unusually bright for his age. He's only ten months old, and he has six teeth and says 'Papa' already."

"I'd like to see him," said the burglar, with interest. "I'm awful fond of children, but I guess you'd better not disturb him."

"No; I think I won't. He's afraid of strangers, too. Do you drink tea?" she asked, suddenly.

"When I can't get anything stronger."

"Well, I think I'll make some. I always have a cup for Mr. Burdick when he comes in, and a sandwich, too; but since you say he's not coming to-night, we'll not wait. If you will have a seat, I shall be pleased to serve you," she added, politely.

She arose from her chair and went over to the pretty wicker table with its handsome service and drew it out in front of the grate. The burglar watched her suspiciously for a moment or two, and his hand stole toward his revolver; but finding that she set herself to making the tea with evidently no other intention, he sat down close to the little table. The fire sputtered merrily in the grate, and the handsome white cat came and rubbed in a friendly fashion against his legs. He drew a sigh of comfort and leaned back in the depths of Burdick's luxurious easy-chair while he watched his hostess with as much composure as if he had all his life been accustomed to taking tea at midnight in ladies' parlors. And, indeed, watching Mrs. Burdick making tea was a sight which any man would enjoy, for Mrs. Burdick was a pretty and graceful young woman. She wore a handsome gown of scarlet silk trimmed with quantities of white lace, and her hands, which moved deftly among the tea things, were white and adorned with several gems. Her guest viewed the jewels with interest and the air of a connoisseur.

She glanced demurely at him from under her long eyelashes and said, smilingly, as she held the sugar tongs poised above the dainty Sevres cup: "One lump or two, Mr.——?"

"Smith, responded the burglar, after a few moments' hesitation. "Two, if you please, but no cream."

She handed the cup to him with all the grace and courtesy with which she would have served a prince. Then she took a cup herself and sat down with it in her revolving desk chair. The burglar gazed thoughtfully into the grate, and the lady watched him curiously. How thin he was, poor fellow, and how sad and tired his eyes were! Her heart quite warmed to him when she remembered how proudly he had spoken of the child.

"No man that loves his child so tenderly can be wholly bad," she thought. Once he looked at his silver spoon critically and weighed it upon his finger.

"I'll never see that again," she said to herself. But he laid it back on his saucer, and, taking a last draught, turned towards her.

"Another cup?" she asked, hospitably. "No? Perhaps you will smoke?" pushing towards him Mr. Burdick's generously filled cigar case.

"Thanks," he responded gravely, and with an air of reproach. "Gentlemen never smoke in the presence of ladies."

"Fairly caught!" exclaimed she, laughing gaily. "Well, then, if you will not smoke or drink any more tea, please tell me how you came to be a burglar?"

"It's a long story, and it isn't a very pretty one; but if you want to know, I'll tell you. Once," said the burglar, "I expected to have a home like this."

Mrs. Burdick nodded, sympathetically.

"Of course, we didn't begin at the top, like you have, but we lived decent, Lizzie and I. We had a little cottage with vines growing over it and we were as happy as a king and queen, especially after the kid came. Lizzie's father kept the biggest shop in the little town where we lived. He wasn't rich, but he was comfortable, and I worked for him. 'Twould have been all right if I'd been willing to wait. Suppose if I'd been square I'd been his partner some day and had it all, for Lizzie was an only child. But the salary was small, the old man was close and I wanted to see Lizzie and the kid have things that other folks had. So I fixed up the books in a way so I could take out something once in a while from the cash drawer.

"'Twasn't hard, for he trusted me with everything, and I did it regular for two years. Sometimes I thought I'd stop and save up so as I could pay it back. But Lizzie, she was so pleased when I brought her home a new dress or a geegaw for the kid. So I kept on, getting in deeper and deeper.

"Well, of course it couldn't end but one way. 'Twas all found out in the end. My, but wasn't the old man crazy! Nothing was too mean for him to say or do, and Lizzie, she sided right in with him. He took her and the kid right home and told me to go—somewhere and never show my face around there again. He couldn't prosecute on account of the disgrace to the family; but, Lord! he might as well! Everybody in town knew about it, and I couldn't have got a job of whitewashing. Lizzie left me, and I skipped out for the city and started on the road to a place he sent me to. I didn't seem like I cared what became of me after that. What's the use of keeping straight when nobody cares anything about you? So I kept going lower and lower, and took to drinking hard to forget it.

"One day I took a notion to go back to the old town. When I got there I found that Lizzie's folks hadn't prospered, either. Her father had failed in business, and that and his daughter's trouble had worried the old gent so he went off in a stroke one day. So there was Lizzie and the kid without anybody or anything.

"It didn't make much difference to her, though, poor girl! She was always delicate, and when I got there she was dying of consumption."

"Oh! So it isn't Lizzie that's a shoplifter," said Mrs. Burdick, with a sigh of relief.

"Bless you, no!" said the burglar. "I should say not! 'Twasn't likely I'd kept very choice company all the time I'd been away—the company I'd kept was like the life I'd led. The gang I trained with wasn't high-toned ladies and gents by a jugful! But I'm married again—one of my own kind. She isn't bad-hearted, if she does steal for a living, and she's mighty good to the kid. You see," he explained, "after Lizzie died I brought the kid back here. Lizzie asked me to, not knowing what a tough I'd got to be. He's a cute little fellow. He looks like Lizzie, and we are going to raise him like she'd want to have him—Sue and I are. He's smart, too, and she's awful proud of him. Some day we're going to buy a house in the suburbs and have a garden, and after a while maybe the kid'll go to college."

The burglar was silent and gazed thoughtfully into the fire. He seemed to have forgotten the reason of his being there in this handsome house and the presence of his touched and interested listener. Perhaps he saw in the firelight's dull glow visions of future happiness and respectability for the kid, which, somehow or other, he himself had missed.

Suddenly a sharp, trilling whistle was heard outside, directly under the window. He started to his feet and looked at Mrs. Burdick.

"That is my husband," she said, quickly. "He always whistles that way to let me know that he is here. You see, you were mistaken and I was right about his coming."

The revolver lay upon the desk within her reach. He made a rush for it, but she was too quick for him. She had taken it and was holding it behind her. She held up the other hand warningly.

"You can take it from me, of course, if you try," she said, "but I wouldn't if I were you. Mr. Burdick is always armed when he's out late at night. He's quick-tempered, too, and somebody might get hurt. I'm fond of him, and I should feel badly if he should be the one; and you—well, you know, you have the kid."

There was a jingle of keys even while she spoke, and in another moment the door opened and Mr. Burdick came into the room. The words of greeting died upon his lips as his eyes fell upon the unexpected sight of his wife in company with this seedy-looking stranger, with his threatening, scowling face. He looked from one to the other inquiringly.

"Good evening, John," said his wife, in a voice which sounded somewhat high and hysterical. "I'm glad you've come. It's been a long evening, but I haven't been lonely. I've had a friend with me. This is Mr. Smith. My husband, Mr. Burdick, Mr. Smith. He's just going, John. You must thank him for helping me to spent a pleasant hour. Will you show him to the door, my dear? Good-night, Mr. Smith. Remember me to the kid."

Mr. Burdick, marvelling much, did as his wife requested. When he and the burglar had exchanged the civilities of parting and he had closed and locked the door after him, he turned to his wife for an explanation of this curious happening. But where she had stood there was only a scarlet heap upon the floor. Mrs. Burdick had fainted at last.—Catharine Stoneman Long in Catholic Register.

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NEW INVENTIONS.

Patents recently issued by United States Patent Office:

656,210—Alphonse Piton, Quebec, Q., street sweepers.

658,172—Arthur Demers, Coleraine, Q., saw frame.

658,581—Alphonse Piton, Quebec, Q., trolley.

658,765 — Napoleon Dussault, Montreal, Q., hand lasting tool.

658,943—Joseph G. Dallaire, St. Laurent, I.O., Que., corset clasp.

660,151—Wilbrod Dorval, Binghampton, N.Y., filters.

660,146—Philias Charbonneau, Dorchester, Mass., chair.

660,495—Messrs. Evans & McArthur, Sturgeon Falls, Ont., cattle guard.

THE IRISH ARE KIND.

Speaking at a dinner in connection with St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin, recently, the president of the College of Surgeons said:

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Society Directory.

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LADIES' AUXILIARY to the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Division No. 1.— Meets in St. Patrick's Hall, 92 St. Alexander Street, on the first Sunday, at 4 p.m., and third Thursday, at 8 p.m., of each month. President Sarah Allen; Vice-President, Statia Mack; Financial Secretary, Mary McMahan; treasurer, Mary O'Brien; Recording Secretary, Lizzie Howlatt, 383 Wellington street.—Application forms can be had from members, or at the hall before meetings.

A.O.H.—DIVISION NO. 2.— Meets in lower vestry of St. Gabriel New Church corner Centre and Laprairie streets, on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month, at 8 p.m. President, John Cavanagh, 885 St. Catherine street; Medical Adviser, Dr. Hugh Lennon, 255 Centre street, telephone Main 2239, Recording-Secretary, Thomas Donohue, 312 Hibernian street, — to whom all communications should be addressed; Peter Doyle, Financial Secretary; E. J. Colfer, Treasurer. Delegates to St. Patrick's League: —J. J. Cavanagh, D. S. McCarthy and J. Cavanagh.

A. O. H., DIVISION NO. 3.—Meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month, at No. 1863 Notre Dame street, near McGill. Officers: Ald. D. Gallery, president; T. McCarthy, vice-president; E. J. Devlin, recording-secretary, 1635 Ontario street; John Hughes, financial-secretary; L. Brophy, treasurer; M. Fennel, chairman of Standing Committee; marshal, M. Stafford.

A.O.H.—DIVISION NO. 9.—President, Wm. J. Clarke, 208 St. Antoine street; Rec.-Secretary, Jno. F. Hogan, 86 St. George street, (to whom all communications should be addressed); Fin.-Secretary, M. J. Doyle, 12 Mount St. Mary Ave.; Treasurer, A. J. Hanley, 796 Palace street; Chairman of Standing Committee, R. Diamond; Sentinel, M. Clarke; Marshal, J. Tivnan. Division meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of every month, in the York Chambers, 2444a St. Catherine street, at 8 p.m.

ST. ANN'S YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY organized 1885.—Meets in its hall, 157 Ottawa street, on the first Sunday of each month, at 2.30 p.m. Spiritual Adviser, Rev. E. Strubbe C.SS.R.; President, D. J. O'Neill; Secretary, J. Murray; Delegates to St. Patrick's League: J. Whitty, D. J. O'Neill and M. Casey.

ST. PATRICK'S T. A. & B. SOCIETY Meets on the second Sunday of every month in St. Patrick's Hall, 92 St. Alexander street, immediately after Vespers. Committee of Management meets in same hall the first Tuesday of every month, at 8 p.m. Rev. Father McGrath, Rev. President; James J. Costigan, 1st Vice-President; W. P. Doyle, Secretary, 220 St. Martin street.

C.M.B.A. OF CANADA, BRANCH 26, —(Organized, 13th November, 1883.)—Branch 26 meets at St. Patrick's Hall, 92 St. Alexander Street, on every Monday of each month. The regular meetings for the transaction of business are held on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month, at 8 p.m. Applicants for membership or any one desirous of information regarding the Branch may communicate with the following officers:—Jas. J. Costigan, President; P. J. McDonagh, Recording Secretary; Robt. Warren, Financial Secretary; Jas. H. Maiden, Treasurer.

YOUNG IRISHMEN'S L. & B. ASSOCIATION, organized April 1874. Incorporated, Dec. 1875.—Regular monthly meeting held in its hall, 19 Dupre street, first Wednesday of evesy month, at 8 o'clock, p.m. Committee of Management meets every second and fourth Wednesday of each month. President, Hugh O'Connor; Secretary, Jas. O'Loughlin. All communications to be addressed to the Hall. Delegates to St. Patrick's League, W. J. Hinphy, D. Gallery, Jas. McMahon.

ST. ANN'S T. A. & B. SOCIETY, established 1863. — Rev. Director, Rev. Father Flynn, President, John Killfeather; Secretary, James Brady, No. 97 Rosel Street. Meets on the second Sunday of every month, in St. Ann's Hall, corner Young and Ottawa streets, at 3.30 p.m. Delegates to St. Patrick's League: Messrs. J. Killfeather, T. Rogers and Andrew Cullen.

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