

dreadful oaths when they spoke. One was for tying her up also, and the other said—I omit the oaths with which he garnished his speech—

What's the good of tying up a wench? One of us must stop here and watch them here swells, and the other can hunt for the swag. You go, Jack, and if this young 'ooman gives me any trouble, I'll find means to quiet her fast enough."

Jack laid his pistol on the table, besides his mate, and went in search of money. How I wished I could get free and seize the pistol on the table! I quietly tried my hands, and soon found it would be possible to slip them from the clumsily tied knot, but I did not see how I was to get free quickly enough to do any good. I saw Alice watching me as I tried to get my hands loose; and fearing the bushranger would also notice what I was about desisted. I had no wish for giving him the least temptation to make a target of me. Presently the tall fellow who was hunting for booty came back, and, showing a lot of trinkets belonging to Alice, went up to Arthur and demanded where he kept his money, warning him, in a manner more forcible than polite, that it would be as well to tell him, "for if I don't get the cash—the whole lot of it mind you—that you got for them 'jumbucks' you sold, I'll take it out of your hide." I told Arthur to tell him at once, as it was no use trying to save the money. So he told him it was in his room, and again he went off in search of it. I could hear him tossing everything about in the next room in his eagerness to find the money, and in a few minutes he called out—

"Here it is, Jack! We'll have a good burst over this lot next time we go to Melbourne for a spree."

Jack stepped towards the room, and in his hurry to know the result of the find, quite forgetting Alice, or not thinking a woman was likely to give much trouble, and no doubt trusting to our being tied securely, foolishly laid his pistol on the table beside his mate's.

Quick as thought Alice sprang forward, and catching them both up, held one out straight at the ruffian's head.

"Move but one finger," she said, in a low firm voice—looking, although pale with excitement, determined and fully able to carry out her threat—"and I fire."

For a moment I thought the man meant mischief, but something in Alice's face warned him not to tempt his fate, and he cowered like a cur before the fair, delicate girl. How beautiful she looked! Like a statue cut out of marble she stood; not a tremor showed the violent struggle within. Only in her eyes was there any sign of excitement.

Their soft expression was gone, and in its place blazed courage and determination, mixed with triumph and scorn. Little wonder that the miserable wretch shrunk beneath such a gaze, speechless with terror and amazement. Had he moved in the slightest degree, it would have been death; the pistol covered him with deadly aim, and was held there without wavering by a hand as cool and steady as if this game of life and death were childish play.

With a struggle I tore my hands free, and hastened to loose Arthur. Then, but not till then, Alice gave the pistols up to us, and saying "watch them—I am off to Kilmore for the police," hurried out of the room. Out into the lonely night she went. Did she not fear that more of the gang might be hidden outside, guarding against surprise? Where were the men-servants? All gone as soon as they knew the house was