

There was the problem—the inner room. Who would go in? We looked at each other a moment.

The room in which we were was a living room, and perhaps, when there were visitors in the little house, was a guest-room. At any rate, on one side was a huge davenport by day which could be transformed into a folding bed at night.

Lockwood looked about hastily and his eye fell on the door, then on this folding bed.

With a wrench, he opened it and seized the cotton mattress from the inside. With his gun ready he advanced toward the barricaded door, holding the mattress as a shield, for his experience in wild countries had taught him that a cotton mattress is about as good a thing to stop bullets as one could find on the spur of the moment.

Kennedy and the officer followed just behind, and the three threw their weights on the door almost before we knew what they were about.

"Chester—don't!" cried Inez in alarm, too late. "He'll—kill you!"

The excitement had been too much for her. She reeled, fainting, and I caught her.

Before I could restore the davenport to something like its original condition so that we could take care of her, the first onslaught was over.

Three guns were sticking their blue noses into the darkness of the next room.

"Hands up!" shouted Craig. "Drop your gun! Let me hear it fall!"

There followed a thud and Kennedy, followed by Lockwood and the officer entered.