

"Why, what for? How unreasonable!"

What for, indeed! Bertha's brain was in such a whirl that she thought she was going crazy as she sat by the fire, trying to warm her trembling hands.

"Let's try some more magic," she said, desperately. "Hallow-eve only comes once a year. I don't feel in the least sleepy. Let's roast some chestnuts. That will be good fun."

"Chestnuts? Those that were gathered were all left outside in the storehouse. I know, for I wanted some to-day, and it rained too much to get them."

An idea darted into Bertha's head. She rose to her feet, saying, in careless tones, still intended for the listener who she was sure was just outside the kitchen door, "Well, come and get them now, then."

"Go out-doors at this time? Have you lost your wits? For mercy's sake, what makes you speak so loud?" She ended querulously.

Something in her sister's face checked her here, and brought her to her feet in obedience to an imperative motion from the latter, who already had taken the key of the outer door in her hand.

"Why should you be afraid?" Bertha said, forcing a laugh. "Nothing ever happens here. It's bright moonlight. We'll lock the door and be back in a few minutes with the chestnuts." And again checked the query on Lucy's white lips.

In a moment they were outside. Then without a word of explanation Bertha seized her sister's hand, saying, in an agitated whisper, "Don't stop to ask why. Run with me as fast as you can!" and she started swiftly down a side path, almost dragging her half-paralyzed sister with her.

If they were only not followed at once! It seemed to Bertha the only chance lay either in getting help or in drawing the robbers away in pursuit. She knew that the outlaw in the house would soon discover their flight, but she was most apprehensive of the accomplice concealed outside.

On she went at desperate speed, under wet branches and over sodden ground. Lucy kept at her side with difficulty. But just as they struck the main avenue near the street gate Bertha looked behind, and this time could not suppress a cry of alarm. A man's figure was dashing down through the moonlight in full pursuit. Lucy looked also, uttered a scream of terror, tore her hand from her sister's, and rushed away among the thick trees on the right. Bertha did not stop. She knew the man would not follow Lucy. He would pursue the one running toward the village, and stop her at all hazards. And the nearest house was at the cross-roads, a mile away!

She had been a famous runner in her girlhood. Remembering that her pursuer was heavy and thick-set, she took courage as she sped like an arrow along the lonely moon-lit road. On and on, past woods, past fields, past meadows, she ran as she had never run before, still spurred to fresh efforts by the quick footfalls behind.

On and on. Still the man behind her held his own, and even seemed to gain at times. Her brain whirled, her feet faltered, but the next turn would bring her in sight of the cottage, so again she took heart.

But her pursuer was also desperate. Despite her exertions he came nearer and nearer. She could hear his muttered curses and hard-drawn breath as she struggled on, still many rods distant from the cottage gate. Oh, better die than be caught and be at the mercy of that ruffian!

It was just then that she became aware of another sound, sharp and distinct, ringing through the night silence—the tramp of a horse on one of the cross-roads. It was surely approaching. With her last reserves of breath she uttered a wild scream for help that brought a volley of oaths from the miscreant, who had seemed to be almost overtaking her.

The tramp changed to a gallop.

Faster and faster it came on, and presently a rider dashed around the corner. Bertha recognized the tall form bending forward in the saddle, the eager gray eyes, and martial bearing. Colonel Dudley!" she cried, and the next moment only saved herself from falling by grasping the fence. Her deliverer was off his horse in a moment, uttering an exclamation of wonder.

"Miss Morris! Miss Bertha! What does this mean?"

It was not so easy to tell. Her pursuer had dashed into the woods at the first sight of the colonel, and she was near fainting; nevertheless, she managed to make the situation understood. The colonel wasted no words. He simply took her in his arms and carried her to the cottage door, around which his sturdy knocks soon brought the entire family.

"Mr. Johnson, get your gun, and saddle your horse, and follow me as soon as possible to our neighbor Morris's. There are robbers in his house. Bring your sons with you, or let them come on foot. Meanwhile your wife must take care of this young lady," and before anyone had recovered from their astonishment the colonel was off, riding at a great pace down the road.

Bertha was too much exhausted to be vividly conscious of anything during the hour that followed. She let the women take care of her, but did not attempt to answer questions or to move until one of the sons of the family came riding back in haste.

"It's all right," reported this messenger; "leastways the robbers is gone and nobody's hurt. But the young lady was found fainted out under the trees, and the silver's all taken. The feller in the house didn't have time to take no more. I'm to ride to town and get the village out to hunt him and the feller that run after you."

To use the conventional phrase, Bertha woke the next morning and found herself famous. The whole village was agog, and the greatest efforts were being made to capture the robbers. The carriage and horses were at the door waiting to take her home. There everything was in confusion. Lucy was in bed, and Mr. Morris, in a state of wild excitement, was actually dressed and downstairs. It appeared that Colonel Dudley had found a back window open and the robbers gone, and that Mr. Morris aroused and taking the colonel himself for a burglar, had actually crawled to the head of the stairs and shot at him, fortunately without effect.

Bertha had hard work to restore the distracted household to order. Late that evening, when Colonel Dudley rode over to announce the capture of the burglars and the regaining of most of the silver, the elder Miss Morris was still occupied with her father, whose efforts had brought on an agonizing attack of rheumatism. From Lucy's lips, however, the colonel heard the whole story of Bertha's adventure, and it is needless to say that he was greatly amused and amazed.

"So you dared not go into the cellar, Miss Lucy?" he said, rather quizzically. "Were you not even tempted by the possible sight of your true-love?"

"To tell the truth, I had been too unsuccessful with the lead. Bertha, I suppose, was curious to see if Fortune would smile upon her again."

"What was your sister's fortune?" Colonel Dudley asked, a little too eagerly. "What shape did the lead take for her?"

"The shape of a soldier's cap and musket," was the demure reply.

When the nine days' wonder of the attempted robbery had been talked over, the little village had another sensation, which was a matrimonial engagement between the two principal actors in that night's drama—Colonel Dudley and Miss Bertha Morris. And the first present which the bride expectant received from her fiancée was two little gold charms for a watch chain—one a tiny musket, the other an old-fashioned three-cornered soldier's cap.

STEVENS

New Demi-Bloc System

Here is a decided advance in the manufacture of double-barrel guns.

The features embodied are exclusive, and help make Stevens Shotguns vastly superior to all others.

By this new system, the barrel and lug are compressed and forged in one piece. This gives the strongest breech mechanism ever devised.

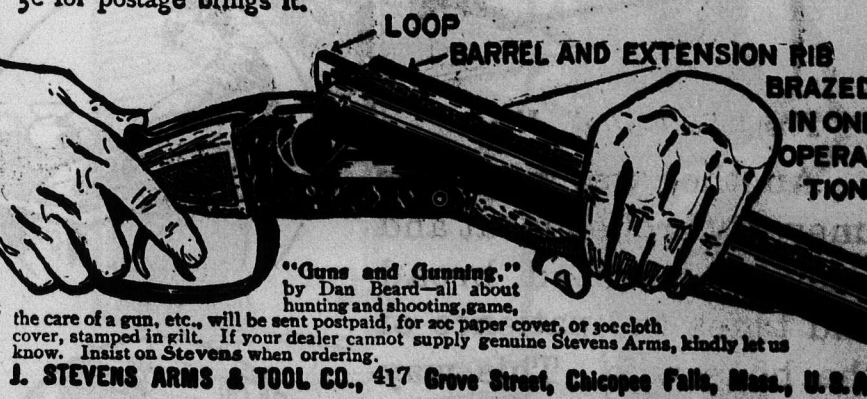
Then the loop, barrels and extension rib are brazed together in one operation. Observe illustration below. Thus the barrels are perfectly straight and true.

And a wall of metal of equal diameter is left around the chamber. So you can shoot as heavy a load as you like.

Also, Stevens guns have a solid Top Snap. This operating with our new rotary cross-bolt, makes the strongest fastening possible. Stevens guns can never shake loose.

If you'll send for the Stevens Catalog

you will learn all about these new and exclusive features. And all the other superiorities of Stevens firearms—Shotguns, Rifles, Pistols. 5c for postage brings it.



"Guns and Gunning," by Dan Beard—all about hunting and shooting, game, the care of a gun, etc., will be sent postpaid, for see paper cover, or see cloth cover, stamped in gilt. If your dealer cannot supply genuine Stevens Arms, kindly let us know. Insist on Stevens when ordering.

J. STEVENS ARMS & TOOL CO., 417 Grove Street, Chicopee Falls, Mass., U.S.A.

WHILE you are reading this, thousands of Birks' Catalogues are entering the mails, carrying with them in illustration the largest and most attractive assortment of Christmas Gift Suggestions ever assembled by a Mail Order House.

Send your Name and Address to-day for a Copy

HENRY BIRKS AND SONS, LIMITED

JEWELLERS

WINNIPEG

SILVERSMITHS

Christmas Gifts See our great offer on Page 3.