

shoot him first, and hang him after, see!" And some of the men nodded a grim assent.

But Cecile had heard. With eyes blazing mad defiance, she gazed from one to another of them, whose eyes fell, and then fully upon Berry, from whom she did not remove her gaze. "And so," she said, with sarcastic lips, "you will hang this man to shield your worthless son? If you do so, I shall forward this receipt and this letter to the authorities, and doubt it not, he shall be arrested. But as for you—for you all—you shall be lawfully hanged for murder. I myself will see that this is done." The men again felt her terrible eyes, and shifted uneasily in their chairs. Those the most sober among them began to think there might be something in Miss Weir's view of the situation. Mr. Berry was quick to notice the change.

"There, there, little Beauty," he said, attempting to come nearer to her, but standing away with hand soothingly extended, "You go away to bed—you can't go home to night, ye know,—that's it, little Beauty—let the Missus take ye away to bed, and we won't hurt your friend; not yet: we will think about it: yes, we'll think about it," with a grinning wink aside.

But even while he was speaking, Cecile held out her hand toward the most fierce-looking of all the men, "Your knife for a moment, please, Mr. French;" and the big, rough fellow, with a dazed wonderment as to what she would do with it, unsheathed his great blade and gave it into her hand.

She passed by the men and went over to their captive. They actually held their breaths in amazement as they saw her swiftly cut the cords that bound him to the chair, stoop and cut the cords from his feet; and Mr. Allen arose unbound, smiling, and, save for their presence, free. As Mr. Berry saw this, he reached for a revolver which he was about to aim at his breast, but at once Cecile stood between them.

"Mr. Berry," she said, "if I were you, I would not shoot."

"No—no," from several of the men, "Put up yer shootin' iron, Berry," and Dave himself added, "It's mighty unpleasant shootin' whar there is a lady—whar thar is ladies," with an apologetic bow toward Mrs. Berry, who sat huddled in her chair with her apron over her head, moaning fitfully.

"Yes, Mr. Berry," said Cecile, "it would be especially unpleasant for me, in this case; as you might kill both Mr. Allen and myself. And your young children are fond of me—you would not like to make little Mary cry?"

Mr. Berry had not thought of that; little Mary was the one darling of his heart—why, there she was, crouched in the corner gazing upon her father with wide, fearful eyes. He put down the revolver with resigned helplessness.

Cecile pushed Mr. Allen backward toward the door, he trying vainly to put her from before him. She, however, went over to the mantel piece with no appearance of fear or haste, and took therefrom Mr. Allen's things, which she returned to him together with his coat. What little wits still remained among the men seemed to be stupefied with wonder and something like admiration. But as the two reached the door, little Mary rushed forward and sank upon her trembling knees before her father, clasping his legs, "Oh, the cold—oh, the great snow," she gasped: "Don't let her go, dada—the poor teacher, in the cold, in the big snow," until, receiving no hope from her father's eyes, she went over to Cecile and tried with weak strength to drag her from the door.

And those men who saw, never while they lived, forgot the marvellous sweet change that came upon Cecile's face as she bent to brush the hair from the child's forehead. "Do not cry, little one," she said. "There, petite, do not weep; I shall be safe; but if I see the holy angels, I shall tell