## A DARING ROBBERY.

CHAPTER I.

Benham was not a place to invite bur-glary, one would think, judging from its appearance. It did not have the aspect of residential wealth, and in fact it had no pretentious features at all; it was simply a quiet, pleasant-enough little place, with its home like dwellings, its well-kept lawns, its little river like a silver ribbon glittering beneath the first gray light of dawn and the deep crimson of the setting sun, its pleasant groves and wooded ways, and its shaded thoroughtares. Bur one can never judge by appearances; appearances are deceitful, and Benham smiled on in its innocuous trar quillity as if it never had had an experience sufficiently sensational for a two-columned leader in a metropolitan

recorded. It is fact that is always the most improbable, and only fiction that is confined within the limits of the probable.

The Gordons were one of the prominent families in Benham, not because of their wealth, for wealth they had not, but because the head of the Gordon family was also the head of the church in Benham, or, more properly speaking, he was the rector of the Episcopal church in that place. The far ily was not a small one, and there was an elder daughter, a young lady of some twenty years, a handsome, high-spirited girl, a great favorite in social circles and raturally the pride of the parental heart, with no more culmination to the vain hop-

in hand, and youth and fear, it is said, are pretends, to learn its methods of governseldom companions. Selma Gordon, the ment; he is really here to get himself a aforementioned daughter, had youth on wife, and being himself very wealthy, did her side, and therefore superstition she not, I am assured, come for the purpose laughed at, but it is a strange anomaly of of selling his title. I shall take care that nature that oftentimes conviction is brought you and he are brought together during home to the minds of the most skeptical in ways and by means that seem to evidence do me credit, that is that you will do the sarcasm of the immaterial in nature, if not the cynicism, so to speak, and it is (Mrs. Houghton is a distant relatives.) always test not to declare one's invulnera-

usually too much for fear-that is nearly months, at least, and she tells Dick so. always the issue of overwrought nerves.

Selma was the eldest of the children, and the only daughter. She was engaged to marry one of the finest young men in Benham, and intended to settle down in a nice little home of their own and proceed to take all the cczy. home-comfort possible.

When she met Dick Burbank she decided that no one would ever understand her quite as well as he, and no one would ever answer to her rather old-fashioned ideas of honor and manliness, and chivalry Selma regarded as an essential desideratum in the husband she might choose, and Dick was all these things, and "many others too numerous to mention," she laughingly asserted. But Selma did not care about being married at once; she was yet young, and had a somewhat natural desi e to see something of the world; of course that meant from the outlook of a drawing-room.

She was fond of visiting about among triends since her graduation three years before, and, too, it was nice to have one's own free will, and have no responsibilities to tie one down, and yet, at the same time, to have some waiting and urging for sole proprietorship, and to always be having what a fine match it would be for both of Of course, Michael knew all about the opals, little birthday and holiday gifts, and flowers, and then to receive so many tender and romantic letters each day. To be sure it was a little fickle and foolish of S. lma, and she might have had all these attentiors from a husband, just the same, but she did I'm sure almost everybody else in Benham not think of that, and, too, she did dearly has!" love to tease Dick and make him sometimes threaten to find somebody else who would appreciate him more, when she knew very well that a queen upon her throne could not win Dick from berself, and it did seem like exercising a little power over him, you see, and a woman, they say, dearly loves to prove her power over the man whose heart she is sure of

Now, Dick Burbank had an uncle, a sea-captain sailing to foreign ports, whence he brought the most exquisite things as gitts to his favorite nephew's betrothed; rarest laces, the costliest nis pieces of bric-a-brac, exquisite silks fans, bi and jewels. The last time he reached home he brought her a necklace of opals.

Of course, her friends, while they exclaimed in raptures over them, at the same time, bewailed his selection (f gems, because opals were "so unlucky", and advised Selma to ask Captain Brewer to exchange them-for pearls, one suggested, but pearls mean tears, and they would be quite as unfortunate a possession, while another thought diamonds were more desirable. Selma listened to each and all, and quickly remarked that, unless she desired truly to be rid of the necklace, unlucky as the gems were supposed to be, she about forty tathoms, She never dreamed draped, wouldn't care to take the risk of offering of Dick's taking her at her word after this to foot. it to any one of them. And may be she fashion. was right; no girl would be blamed for trying to overcome her superstition for the sake of becoming the possesson of so

beautiful a gift. Probably a good deal of the delay regarding Selma's marriage came from her visits to Mrs. Houghton, in New York, a month, and was really beginning to have her month in New York, and had had her thee it shall be given to wed another, and of her mistress. her head turned by the splendors of a fill of gayety in which her heart was not. not the man to whom your troth has been home like Mrs. Houghton's and the ideas Dick's face rose up everywhere before her plighted, and thy marriage vows shall be which that lady put into it, which she termed "endeavoring to invest Miss Gordon's mind with a little ambition in a material

sense." all good for her, and decidedly not good for Dick Burbank's interest in her.

"You might just as well marry a duke, some well-remembered French word or phrase gleaned and garnered to the best of the little bothersome brood who are so made up her mind that she would see Dr. perhaps more.

her ability and opportunity from the novels she has real, with very little discretion as to the fitness thereof. She selects this papticular word because she imagines from its sound that it is just exactly what she wants wherewith to express Selma's ingen-uousness, and she rounds out her sentence with an air of superior self-satisf; ction that cannot fail to be impressive. "The very idea of your settling down in life with that

er—Mr. Burbank, I believe that is the
er—young man's name?" referring to
Selma through her lorgnetto, with decided
condescention in her tone as she refers to Dick, "is something really absurd. "He has no marked prospects in life, and while I respect this uncle of his who seems to be a man of some experience and ability, and also Mr. Burbank, the elder, and his estimable wife, yet the son of a village squire is scarcely the match for a girl like you with the blood of the Houghtons in her veins. But not only in the most unlikely place in all the county, but in the most unlikely family, one would think, the most on that exact inflection that tends inevitdaring robbery was perpetrated, accom-panied by the most peculiar features ever and descantations upon the lineal excellencies of the Houghton branch of the family with which Selma, through repeated reminiscences, is very familiar, and which she has learned to dread.

"Now, when Mr. Richard Burbank arrives at that point when he promises to endow you with all his worldly goods, it means only a continution of the life which your poor dear mother has led under the endowment process of a very worthy, but very moderately circumstanced, village church, and you know, yourself, what that and also the source of considerable anxiety | ing than to her never ending darning for in the light of matrimonial consideration, for, as has been intimated, the family treasury was not large and the needs of the family constantly increasing.

There's Earlswood, now, a very exemption of the family constantly increasing. Superstition and youth seldom go hand lary young man, who is in America, he

That was months ago that this converbility to the shafts of the "powers that be" sation, or rather, as Selma termed it, in too assertive a manner, as to do so monologue took place, but her mind rewould seem oftentimes to tempt the strange issues to the vagaries of immateriality.

Selma Gordon was twenty, healthy and happy, and as sound of mind as of body.

She had never become a care in her life part.

Monologue took place, but her mind revers to it now that she has the opals, and she is already beginning to plain suitable costumes for a winters' gayety, when she intends to let Dick see that he is not night's rain.

Lipole Bob (she calle him upple come) She had never known a care in her life, nor the only one who admires her, and is apever been overtaken by trouble in any preciative of her. Yes she is fully deform, and health, happiness and youth are | cided to go to New York for four or five

"Come, Selma, marry me off-hand," he her quietly. "Marry me, and go to the mist of lace should drift down and housekeeping this winter, instead of going | whirl about the soft billows of silk till she away. What's the use for you to post off looked like Guido's Aurora. there, going about in society, and meeting everybody, with no particular object in the world that I can see, since you are engaged to me," he says, in the most matter-of-fact tone, which Selma resents.

"Is that any reason why I shouldn't want my liberty a while longer and to see a little of the word?" She asks this half-indignantly, although knowing full well in her own heart that she cares nothing for society, and only means to be contrary.

"How would you like to have me off like that all over the country, when I ought to be at your side, dancing attendance upon rich girls, like Virginia Morton, for instance?" He looks at her sideways slyly for Dick Burbank's father, as an outside,

to see the effect of his words. Selma reddens visibly at the mention of Miss Mortion's name. She is the richest girl in all the country, and more than one in Selma's hearing, not knowing of her engagement to Dick Burbank, has intimated their affairs in the presence of Norah. them-both Dick and Virginia.

"To be sure," she answers, vivaciously, a little tinge of asperity in her tone, "there would be a desirable wife for you! Strange you haven't thought of it before;

Dick detects the slight sarcasm in her words and it rather pleases him than otherwise, because it denotes jealousy, and jeal- sion. ously is an untailing sign of love, he rea-

"Monotony," she goes on presently, "is going away, as I told you. I shall come but the truth was she never had been back in the spring all the better for the change-

"That's so, S lma," he breaks in, as if a sudden idea had struck him, "monotony is the word. I was beginning to teel wearied with the way things were going, and so I told uncle Bob that I wanted to go with and so it's all settled. You won't mind, He looks down at the toe of his boot, meditatively for a moment, then, rather doeful-

waiting; you won't have me, and I told directly in front of the bed. uncle Bob so, and we're off on the 20th. I didn't like to tell you before, but as you're going yourself it won't matter, of course," a figure as tall as that of an ordinary sized Selma's heart sinks, it seems to her,

How herrible it all was! Dick really gone, and with the possibility of him say-

ing to himself: "Shall I, like a fool," quote he
"For a haughty bizzy-dee,
She may go to—France—for me."

Had she been too exacting? She had had accusingly.

She grose nightly from Mrs. Houghton's | Beware!" dinner-table with never a backward glance at the silver and crystal, and hothouse the form melted away into the darkness. flowers, the carved oak, the glittering She strained her eyes to follow its going, was beginning to turn Selma's mind into buhl, the bronzes and the rugs. Not very worldly channels, which were not at that a moulding escaped her sense of the silence, and the ticking of the little clock beautiful, not a tint of Giorgionis, Titian on the mantel. nor Peruginos; she is not a connoisseur, She lay there, not daring to move, envelshe does not profess to be, but she is a oped in a cold perspiration, until gradually woman and what woman ever born, who she began to doze off again, and consciousworldly men find very enticing. your freshness and frankness of character, and your ful in art or nature? In her heart she carmorning, and in the light of day it seemed flashed out insolently, much to her own then she grew as motionless as a corpse. entire lack of—of—motif——" (Mrs. ries the love of all these things that money so absurd that she concluded it must have Houghton generally swoops down upon can purchase, but she longs to be back at been a hideous nightmare, and, well, poss-

dear to her, and back with Dick. How

she grieved that she had let him go!
She sees him now in the light of enchantment that absence lends against the fleece of rosy clouds of oriental sunsets, beneath the blue of Italian skies, kissed by the clouds of the far-away Alps, or drifting over Venetian waters, idealized by every phase of regretful fancy turned to homesick longing. And so she turned her back upon the elegance of Mrs. Houghton's Madison avenue house, upon the dazzling allurements of society, and went back home.

Nobody seemed to have heard anything from Dick, and Selma felt ashamed to exhibit such a sad lack of independence as to

question much about him.
Uncle Brewer had sailed on the 20th of the proceeding month, and, of course, Dick went with him, and everybody had settled down into the usual hum-drum monotony of their quiet village life.

There was nothing to look forward to now but Dick's letters, and Selma found herself anticipating them with more fo anxiety than she would have been willing to admit.

And so the days went by.

Norah, the one and only servant of the Gordons, was dreadfully afraid of the opals being in the house, and used to sleep, as she expressed it, "wid wan eye open and the other wan shut," to listen for the sound of burglars. She declared that she was "clane done out goin' widout me slape en toirely a watchin' fur thaves a-breakin' in afther the sthones that do be bringin' evil into the house," and so Selma agreed to put the casket with the opal necklace into an old carven sandalwood chest, that stood just at the top of the front hall stairs, under the light from the stained glass window, where she kept other of the trinkets and gifts that Captain Brewer had brought home to her at different times, because there was a secret lock on the chest that no one could divine at all, making it difficult for any thief, unacquainted with the mystery of the fastening, to gain access to the contents.

There was a beautiful Persian wrap— the silk for which Captain Brewer had fetched on the last trip but one, so dainty that it could easily be drawn through Selma's ruby ring—then there was silk from China, white and soft as a cloud, yards upon yards of it. Selma meant that for her wedding-robe, some day, and then, too, there was such a quantity of lace, filmy lace; some from Brussels, some from Spain -and a veil, she meant that for a] bridal

times) said the silk was for a ball gown, and the lace was to drape it, but Selma had laid them away in the sandalwood chest with a secret intention to have urges, impetuously, after he has listened to it fashioned into a bridal robe, over which

> There were ever so many more exquisite gifts in the chest; little caskets with jewels, cases with exquisitely-wrought fans, tracelets, Spanish hair-combs and ornaments, Italian pins for the hair, in queer little caskets-so into the chest Selma put the case of opals.

After this, Norah felt more secure; because, she reasoned, no burglar would climb to a servant's room, at least until he had tried to secure possession of the chest at the top of the hall stairway, and this he could not effect without alarming the

Now, Norah had a lover who worked general-utility man, and all the Burbank family placed the utmost confidence in Michael, and talked over all the household affairs in his presence with the greatest freedom, and so did the Gordon family but he only laughed at Norah's fear, and assured her that she was in no danger from

It was a singular thing that happened months, but she had not cared to own that she was at all affected by what she had seen and heard on these especial occa-

Once she was minded to tell Dick about it, and then upon second thought she concluded that he would only laugh at her not a state after my own heart, and so I'm and tell her that she had been dreaming, wider awake in her life. She had been horribly scared and somehow, too, it had seemed to haunt her; she could not rid her mind of the memory of it.

What had happened on each occasion was this: She had retired rather early, and had fallen asleep directly upon going him when he sails; he goes you know in B to bed, but was awakened sometime after fortnight. He said for me to come along, midnight (that she knew because she heard the clock strike one sometime afterward) Selma; you can't miss me, Selma, if you by a noise in the room, which was so dark aren't here; there'll be so much there at she could discern nothing clearly, but Mrs. Houghton's to take up your mind." there was a rustling sound and as she opened her eyes and stared directly ahead, she could dimly see the outlines of a figure | as she reached the toot of the upper stairly: "You see, Selma, I got discouraged in some kind of dark shrouding, standing

Now ghosts are generally suppoed to be in white, but this was surely dark. It was person, and with an arm outstretched, and

Selma was too trightened to stir or cry out. She simply clung to the coverlet and shrank a little further down in bed, keep- bably be gas ged and bound, but she must ing her eyes fixed involuntarily upon the rouse the girl. figure. Presently something like a whisper issued from it, and she heard as distinctly as ever heard anything in her life, these

"Lo! and it shall come to pass that unto perforce, and not of thine own volition.

Then the outstretched arm dropped, and

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Leiter and get a prescription for overwrought nerves.

It was Friday, and well into the evening. The Gordons—all but—had gone out of town to attend the silver wedding anniversary celebration of a sister of the rector, leaving only Selma and Norah at home.

Norah, who had had her "afternoon out," was feeling tired, and had sought permission to retire to her own room directly after her last duties for the night, and Selma had sat up and read for an hour or

two after that. She naturally supposed that the girl had taken her usual precaution and attended to bolts and locks, but the truth was, Norah in her extreme weariness, had forgotten all about it, and had done nothing but get

to bed as soon as possible. Selma read awhile, and then followed Norah's example, but leaving her door ajar, as she had told Norah to do, as they were the only ones left in the house. She did not hear the twelve strokes of the midnight bells, but some half-hour later she was thoroughly awakened all at once by a noise in the hall-way. Quick as thought flashed into her mind the remem-

brance of the opals. Burglars! She listened a moment: there was no possible doubt about somebody being there in the hall, and almost within reaching distance of her hand. The blood seemed to instantly freeze in her veins, but she realized that to cry out might mean death,

should it be burglars.

She got up on elbow and peered through the crack of the door, as it stood ajar, and close to her ear: could clearly see the sandalwood chest as it stood there untouched. The moon to Selma at least three times within six filtered down through the stained glass, casting strange tints over it, and making everything look so weird. The burglars were probably in the lower hall-way, preparing for an attack upon the chest, for she could still hear the sound of persons

moving about softly. Then she determined to make a break for her life and satety by creeping noiselessly out from her own room and up to to the neighborhood, and summon the police before the chest could be broken into, or the house ransacked. She slipped neath it. out of bed, her heart beating so fast that she could scarcely breathe, and tossing on a loose robe and slipping her feet into a her gown closely about her to avoid the least rustle, and peered out into the hall.

Nobody was in sight. Then she crept forth, her strength fast failing her through fright and dread. Just case she felt a hand clasp her waist with tremendous power, and a figure of a man with a mask and a black slouch hat and a long dark clock, stood beside her.

Now Miss Gordon was not the kind of girl to faint when the hour of actual trial about forty fathoms, She never dreamed draped, as was the entire figure from head came. The crisis seemed to revive her, and give her a strange and peculiar coolheadedness and presence of mind. Sha, realized that after an outcry she would pro-

> Just then, however, she heard Norah coming out of her room. She, too, had been roused by unusual sounds in the lower hall, aud, frightened half out of her wits, was hastening to seek the protection

Before Selma had time to even motion to the girl, or to make significant gesture, a voice hissed into her ear: "If you try to give an alarm it will be the worse for you! In a moment more Norah was at her of march.

mistress's feet, wringing her hands and calling upon all the saints in a low, despairing sort of wail. Miss Gordon's indig- ously, with gritted teeth. "Keep silence, nation comes to her rescue: "If it is and yer all right. Go on, Jim!"

money you want, there isn't any. You are He felt one shudder go through the frame money you want, there isn't any. You are

"We'll, I'm blamed, but she's a cool hand! There were two of them, then-

"Two of you ought to be able to take gateway. Once the arms upholding her charge of two girls, one would think; please loosen your grip upon my wrist, you are hurting it." The cool self-possession of had fallen. the girl was not without its effect upon her

the man in whose possession her wrist was whisper, turning to his pal, and directly a strange, pale light flashed across her face which dazzled her, and put the figures of her captors in darkness. The operator of the light stood holding the queer lantern above his head, and with the other hand he grasped North by the

"The key to the chest-where is it?" Miss Gordon grew weaker as she heard these words sharply spoken, but deter-mined that she would die before she would give up the key, and her determination another joining in. It is the genuine ring kept pace with her fear. She gave Norah of jollity, a laugh to lift the gloom of terror. one glance as the poor girl crouched there, looking pitifully up into her face in mute fear. and big-eged terror.

"Give up the the key, or-" simultaneously with this implied threat, the man took a stout cord from somewhere in the recesses of the folds of his cloak and se cured her frail wrists, tying them together, credit, in a rather humane manner.

Then, as Selma resolutely shook her head, the leader turned and spoke a tew ion and accomplice, who did not, during lover--now her husband! all this time, release his hold upon the trembling Irish girl.

"You are rich. You have hidden treasures there in the chest. You will not give transgressor is his chum. our necks. eh, Jim?'

"Yer bet yer life!" came from the shad-

face of the prospective bride!" and a coarse town," stands bowing low before the laugh was muffled and suppressed beneath bride, hat in hand, and wondering if his go down the back way, and give the alarm lantern fell more Salars Contacts of the share in the plot will ever be forgiven by lantern fell upon Selma Gordon's rigid the stolen bride. Then the hubbu's comfeatures that gleamed white as marble be- mences; laughing and joking about burg-

"Yer a pretty 'un; ruther above the station of a burglar's bride eh? but yer'll mysterious chests with secret locks, do! Now hist yer clap-trap and yer won't | jollity itself seems let loose. pair of slippers, she gathered the folds of git hurt!" This to Norah, who began to tellar what'll ask yer the questions down narrow escape. by the gateway. Yer're sate to scoot then. Refuse and—

temple. Merciful Heaven! What fate is glasses click to the health of the brides "Och, an' the love o' the saints be wid

us!" moans Norah. The fateful words of the prophecy of the shrouded figure at her bedside came before | toasts.

Selma in a vivid flash of horrible signifi-"Lo! and it shall come to pass that unto church service that came afterward, two

you shall it be given to wed another than whole months, until her feminine vanity the man to whom your troth has been swas satisfied by the most beautiful trousperforce, and not of thine own volition.

"Is all ready, Jim?" "All ready," was the reply.

CHAPTER IV.

M Suddenly, and without further warning, Be quiet and you shall have no harm done the leader lifted Selma in his ams, and his you—cry out and"—a significant accomplice, fastering a grip of steel upon Norah's arm, prepared to take up the line

"Halt! One whisper, even-one sound, and-" then he broke the warning, omin-

wended its way out of the house, and down the darkened paths beneath the overhanging boughs, and down the drive to the city, of its population, in the world

let her slip a little, and it woke her from

A little ruby gleam, a dim flish of light swayed among the dusk shadows, revealing 'Turn on the search-light!" she heard two other figures, evidently waiting. The long line of trees with their swaying branches, nodding there in the starless gloom, see med like sentinel witnesses. "Untill death do you part-"

The words sounded like dream-worls to the half-fainting girl as she heard them: She is conscious of having said something with half-palsied lips, but she does not

She feels the arms of her captor about her waist, and close upon the righteous indignation that supersedes the terror. comes a ringing laugh—then the voice of

"On with the calcium, Jim! Here's to the bride !"

The huge globes of the incandescent lamps above the archway of the entrance gateway, flash out, and flood the place like the full mid day sun. Four manly, palm to palm, dettly and swittly, but to his athletic figures close in about the strangely wedded pair; he with his left arm about Selma's waist, casts off his cloak, his slouch hat, mask, beard, and all, and words hurriedly in the ear of his compan- stands revealed Dick Burbank! Selma's

Simultaneously off come four other disguises, and "Jim" shows up his individ-Then again came that guttural whisper uality in the person of Mike Reardon, Norah's lover! The third is George Gordon, Selma's oldest brother, and the fourth

up the key. We do not intend to make a Norah gives one shriek, and falls into noise, but we mean to work quickly. It is her lover's arms as nearly fainting as it is better to have a bride with much riches possible for her to be, which means that than the treasure illy-got and at a risk of she is hysterical; but she rallies quickly in his ardent clasp.

The justice of the peace, George Gorowed lips beneath the mask and the slouch | don's friend, whose legal right it is to unite the fortunes of willing couples, and "Switch on the light, Jim; let's see the | who has but just opened an office "downlars-about getting the best of unprotected women keeping guard over the wealth of

It is of no use for Sel na to feigh indigmoan and find her voice. Then turning to nation, Dick won't permit it and her relief Selma: "Yer're rich, and it's handy to is too great. Norah scolds, and laughs, have a rich wife in case o' 'mergency. So and calls upon the saints for protection, in yer keep mum, an' only say 'yes' to the the very hysteria of joyful surprise and

Such a time as there is! and an hour later what a jolly company gathered bout "Click! goes something close to her a royal midnight banquet table where "All's fair in love and war!" Dick Bar-

bank asserts triumphantly, his voice sounding tantalizingly, in Salma's ear, lost to the others who are absorbed in the But Selma took her revenge by putting off the real wedding as she called the

plighted, and thy marriage vows shall be s au, all of which Dick declared was "non-He also declared it a misnomer, when they pronounced Selma, as she stood stately and radient in her wedding robes fashioned from a mist of lace, and crowned with her bridal veil, "Aurora the bride of the "he says it "wasn't that way at

all !"-Madame Higgins Glenerne, in Portland Transcript.

Locating the Trouble Customer (looking at himself in the glass)-The trousers are not the kind they are wearing this season, are they? They

seem to me to be out of style. Clothing Merchant-Mein friendt, dose pants vas all right, but your legs vas yoost a liddle out of shtyle.

Helena, Mont., claims to be the riches