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TOO LATE! TOO LATE!

They stole all my lightning before it struck, And bottled my thunder before it burst! Shakespeare and Plato and Kant were in luck, They were born, they were born the first!

There is Homer, too, has been highly praised For writing my thoughts before I was born, He fills the trumpet of Fame upraised, I, the little end of the horn!

And the world unites to praise Cicero, The while they laugh my conceits to scorn, And Montague, and Chaucer, and Pindar and Poe, Who robbed me before I was born.

They spoke before I had ever a chance, These pirates who scuttled my song-ships grand, And boarded my extremes of gay romance Before I could take command.

They wrote my thoughts and were covered with praise, They spoke my thoughts and men called them great; While I languish unknown in these subsequent days, A man who was born too late!

—S. W. Foss, in Yankee Blade.

FIGHTING WITH BURGLARS.

Two Victorious Encounters with Mignight Marauders.

ADVENTURE NO. 1.

Twice in my life I have been placed in positions that served to "harrow up" my soul, freeze my young blood," and turned my hair as gray as a rat's before my fortieth birthday.

I had been hired, when a small lad, as an under-clerk or apprentice in a wholesale hardware store in New York. After several years' service, during which I gained a good practical knowledge of the business and gradual promotion, I became the head salesman, and enjoyed the fullest confidence of my employers.

I was nearly twenty years of age when the adventure which I am about to relate occurred. The work of my early apprenticeship had enlarged and strengthened my muscular system, my health was at its best, and as I had never been exposed to peril I knew but little of the sensation of fear.

For many years I had slept alone in the store. Every evening the doors and windows in the rear were protected with heavy iron shutters, swung from outside and strongly barred and bolted inside; the hatchways leading to the cellar and second floor were securely covered and fastened; one of the massive wooden front doors was bolted at the top and bottom, while the other was only carefully locked, and the key was seldom removed.

My bed occupied a corner of the counting-room, midway between the front and rear of the store. Upon retiring I always turned off all the gas, for, if necessary, I could, from long familiarity with the store and its contents, make my way safely about all parts of it in the most profound darkness.

In all my mercantile life the premises had never been beset by burglars, and, indeed, the store was so carefully closed and guarded against intruders that it was deemed invulnerable.

One night I was suddenly awakened by some noise that seemed to come from outside of the store. As I raised myself in bed to listen I heard a neighboring city clock strike two. When its vibrations ceased, I felt sure that something was wrong at the front door. There seemed to be a saw and other sharp implements in operation. Thus impressed, I quietly rose, dressed, and made my way in the dark to the front.

Listening for a few seconds, I could hear faint whispers, and then the sound of a small saw. Then I knew that burglars were cutting a hole in the door, in order that the key might be reached and turned. From marks discovered on the key, during a subsequent examination, it was evident that they had tried to turn it with nippers, but it was too cumbersome, and the effort had been abandoned.

I could have frightened away the intruders by making a noise and lighting the gas, but I wished, if possible, to thwart their purpose in another manner, and capture one of the marauders. With this intention I cautiously crept to a package of stout bed-cords, one of which I seized, and returned to the door. In the end of the cord I made an easy-running noose, and strongly fastened the bight to the leg of a neighboring counter that supported heavy boxes of tin-plate.

Then I carefully held the noose around the place where the burglars were cutting the hole. After waiting a few minutes, I heard them remove the piece of wood which they had sawed out. The light of a bull's-eye lantern flared for an instant at the aperture, sufficiently to reveal its outline and enable me to adjust the noose. Then a man's arm was thrust through the hole.

This was the opportunity for which I had waited. A quick and vigorous movement drew the noose tightly around the fellow's wrist, and then I hauled on the cord with all my strength until I had pulled the arm through the hole as far as I could, notwithstanding the opposition manifested by its owner.

There was no noise, although the fellow was undoubtedly in great pain; and when I had firmly secured the cord to the counter I felt along it until I touched the arm, and found that it had been forced through the opening almost to the shoulder.

I was not in the least frightened. I had one of the burglars a prisoner, and I knew that the others would not long remain with him. On the whole, I was rather pleasantly excited, and quite exultant over my success.

Sipping on my shoes, I lighted three or four gas-jets, unlatched a back door and shouted down the alley for a policeman. As soon as he came I let him inside of the store, and then we began to reconnoiter and ascertain the status of affairs at the front. The arm was still there, of course—I should have been exceedingly astonished if it had disappeared. The cord was tightly drawn around the wrist, and the hand was black, owing to the stoppage of the circulation of the blood.

The policeman then returned to the alley and made his way to the front, picking up another officer on the street to assist him. Presently I heard them shouting to me that the burglar was dead; that his companions, finding it impossible to release him, and fearful that he would expose them to the authorities, had cut his throat from ear to ear.

I was young and unused to dreadful acts like this, and the unexpected denouement not only astonished me, but so shocked my nerves that I nearly fainted. The return of the policeman to aid me in loosening the arm and open the front door partially restored me; but after the dead burglar had

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been removed and the doors were securely refastened. I could do nothing but walk the floor in great nervous distress until it was time to open the store for business in the morning.

Then, when the clerks arrived, and I had related my adventure to them, I was fain to go home and avoid the excitement that I knew would distract me if I remained to answer the thousand questions that would be asked of me.

I had only one satisfaction, but it was one that a lad of my age could thoroughly enjoy. I was a hero. The police, the press and the public freely expressed their admiration for the coolness and bravery I had manifested in capturing the burglar, and the sympathy and hearty congratulations of personal friends soon restored me to comparative quietude.

But the best of all was the kind consideration which I received from my employers. They were very profuse in the expressions of their esteem. They had sent for the policeman who assisted me, and he had told the story of the burglary in such a manner as to give me the sole credit of the capture. The result was a magnificent gift and a fortnight's leave of absence to recruit my shaken nerves.

ADVENTURE NO. 2.

Two years later I was sent to Savannah, Ga., by my employers to open and manage a branch store in that city.

I was yet unmarried. The store had a bed-room in the rear, adjoining the office, and there I lodged. In it was one large window, which opened upon an alley, as did, also, the rear door of the store, in the adjoining entry. At night all the doors were locked and barred. The bed-room window had a tight, heavy outside shutter, made of boards and battened, which I could close and fasten inside. The window sill, with its broad ledge, was fully four feet above the floor.

One moonlight night, when I had been established in business for several months, the weather being very warm, I left the shutter unclosed and lowered the top sash a few inches to admit fresh air. I had not been disturbed by nocturnal intruders since my arrival, and had, owing to the heat, become quite careless. Besides, I kept within reach from my bed a formidable bowie-knife.

About midnight I awoke. The room was dark, although the moon was shining brightly. A slight noise attracted my attention to the window, and there I saw a stalwart fellow endeavoring to pry open the lower sash with a chisel, and knew that in a very few minutes he would effect an entrance. With a gun or pistol I could have killed him without rising, but as I had no weapon except the bowie-knife, I had to decide instantly upon some method of thwarting his purpose, for I felt that if he once gained admittance he would kill me if he could.

Getting out of bed into a dim corner as quietly as possible, and armed with the bowie-knife, I crept along the wall on my hands and knees until I was fairly under the ledge of the window sill. Then I carefully rested on one knee and prepared for an attack. I had no sooner done so than the lower sash yielded and was carefully raised and wedged with the chisel. Then I heard the fellow clambering in. As he gained the sill, barefooted, he paused an instant to reconnoiter, and lightly leaped into the room.

This was the most critical moment I had ever experienced. As he sprang from the ledge I suddenly rose and plunged the bowie-knife into his breast, and he fell dead, prostrating me with the force of his fall. In a second I was up again and looking out of the window to discover his confederate, if he had one, but all was quiet in the alley, and no one was visible.

As I turned to light a lamp and gain a better idea of the position, I felt the warm blood of the burglar laying my feet. There he lay, as dead as Julius Caesar, a big, burly negro, holding in his stiffened grasp a bowie-knife much larger than mine, and I was very, very thankful that he had found no opportunity to use it upon me.

I dressed myself hurriedly, with a nervous tremor that I had not noticed until then, and hastened to open the front door of the store. The street was bathed in moonlight, and midnight silence was over all. Again and again I shouted the name of the patrolman on that beat, with whom I had an intimate acquaintance, and in a few minutes he came, running, and quite excited by the novelty of being wanted.

After a brief relation of my adventure and a closer examination of the dead burglar, the guardian of the night identified him as an old offender, a desperate villain and well known to the police.

More officers were speedily called in, and the body, with the negro's bowie-knife and chisel, was removed.

I spent an unquiet hour, trembling with nervous excitement, in washing the floor and closing the shuttered window. Then I walked the floor another hour to soothe my rebellious nerves and then I went to bed and slept the sleep of the just until daylight.

This was my last encounter with a burglar. The sport is too exciting for frequent indulgence or for enjoyment.

I may say, in conclusion, that this adventure paved the way for my entrance into the firm as a partner. My "pluck," and possibly a serviceable supply of assurance, besides my constant fidelity to the interests of the business, served me in lieu of capital.

—Mat Hawthorn, in Chicago Journal.

Fight Between Insects.

A traveler in South Africa reports seeing a caterpillar crawling at a rapid pace, followed by hundreds of ants. Being quicker in their movements, the ants would catch up with the caterpillar, and one would mount his back and bite him. The caterpillar would turn his head and bite the ant and kill his tormentor. After slaughtering a dozen or more of his persecutors the caterpillar showed signs of fatigue. Betaking himself to a stalk of grass the caterpillar climbed up tall first, followed by the ants. As one approached he seized it in his jaws and threw it off the stalk. The ants seeing that the caterpillar had too strong a position for them, resorted to strategy. They began sawing through the grass stalk. In a few moments the stalk fell, and hundreds of ants pounced upon the caterpillar. He was killed at once.

Every body does not know, says a health journal, that soaps, especially in hotels, become, not infrequently, a source of disease. About every man in fifty has some sort of contagious skin disease. Soaps and towels in hotels and public institutions are often a means of communicating maladies not by any means easy to eradicate. Better go with dirty hands and face than to run the risk of contracting a distressing or offensive malady.

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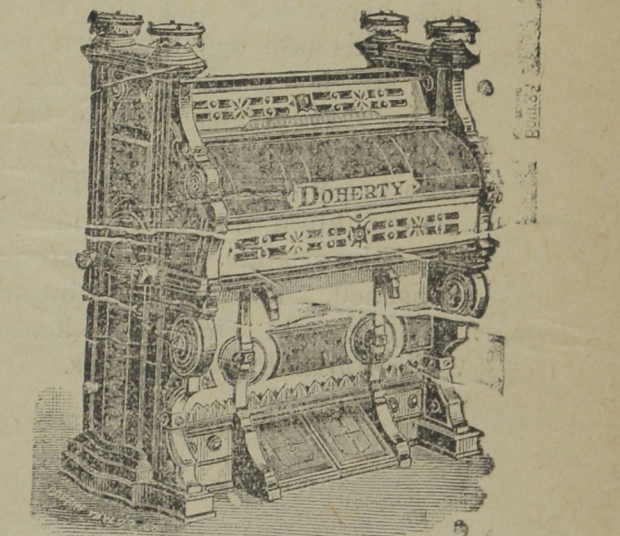
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