

## *Saved by a Telephone*

by Ella Higginson

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"Is the proprietor in?"

I turned with a start, for I had heard no step nor rustle, and had supposed myself to be alone. It was about five o'clock of a dull October afternoon and already dusk—for night comes early in the Grand Ronde Valley. And, in that dim uncertain light, I could only discern that the speaker was a woman, tall, slight, and, I fancied, young.

Six months previous to this time, my husband had opened a well-stocked drug and notion store in the new town of Lawrence, in Eastern Oregon. As our business was not very large at first, I had filled the place of a clerk, having had a little experience in the drug business before my marriage.

It was about the time the Oregon Short Line was completed, and no mining-camp life could have been wilder or rougher than we found it in Lawrence.

Every second building was a saloon or low dive; and we, having rooms behind our store, were so completely surrounded by dens of every description that each night was one perpetual horror to me. Violin, banjo, and accordion kept up an incessant din until broad daylight, mingled with coarse singing, fights, pistol-shots, and stabbing affrays.

The town was not incorporated, and gambling, lawlessness, and crime ran riot in our midst.

A queer life, truly, for a refined woman. But the truth was, we were making money, and I summoned all my strength of mind to my aid, and gradually schooled myself to bear it all with equanimity.

Besides, the roughest and lowest of both sexes seemed to have a certain respect for me, as the only lady with whom they were brought in contact.

And, then, the serene peaceful loveliness of the valley almost reconciled one to the roughness of the town[.] The long sweep of fields, golden with waving grain; the timber-banked river winding away to lose itself in broader waters; the soft bluish haze lingering over the dimpled mountains, and the pale cloud-flecked sky bending eternally above all, make a picture varying always in light and shadow and color, but one that is always grandly beautiful.

Even when

"Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,  
And the winter winds are wearily sighing,"

the wide stretch of undulating whiteness and the blaze of scarlet in the winter sky hold one entranced.

But all this time I have left a lady standing in our store-door in the dusk of an October evening.

“Is the proprietor in?” she repeated, in a clear sweet voice, as I hesitated.

“No; he is not,” I replied. “But I can wait upon you.”

“I wished to see him on business,” she said, hesitatingly. “Do you expect him in soon?”

“Very soon. Will you sit down and wait?”

She accepted my invitation.

I gave her an easy chair, stirred the fire, and then climbed upon a high stool and lighted the chandelier.

The reader will doubtless surmise what I next did.

I turned and looked curiously in her face. She appeared to be about twenty-five years old and was very handsome. She had large, soft, dark eyes, black fluffy hair, good features, a delicious mouth, and a perfect complexion; above all, she had the appearance of a refined woman, and was dressed quietly and becomingly.

“It seems odd to see a lady in a drugstore,” she remarked, pleasantly but not familiarly, as I seated myself opposite her.

“I am my husband’s only clerk,” I replied, briefly. “We get along very nicely.”

“I like a self-reliant woman,” she said, with an admiring glance at me that would have certainly touched my vanity had I not been slightly suspicious of her. “Before my mother died,” with a little pathetic fall in her voice, “she taught me to depend upon myself instead of others, and I have blessed her for it a thousand times.”

“Has your mother been dead long?” I asked, stupidly, not knowing what to say.

“Only a year,” and she turned aside her head. Instead of saying something pretty in sympathy, I fell to thinking what a beautiful profile she had; and, before I had ceased thinking about it, my husband came in.

“John,” said I, coolly, for I must confess I never did relish having pretty women inquiring for my husband, “here is a lady who wishes to see you.”

She arose and looked at him in timid entreaty.

“I am a jeweler,” she began, evidently speaking with difficulty. “I have to support myself, and, as I am not able to rent a whole building, I thought—perhaps—as you have such large windows, you might rent one of them reasonably to me. Only a small corner,” she added, looking earnestly up into his face, “just to give me a chance. I will be so careful not to be in your way.”

John began asking her questions, and, to my dismay, I soon discovered that he was favorably considering her proposition.

I tried to catch his attention and caution him by one look; but his attention declined to be caught. Then I tried to step on his toe; but he only moved slightly and said: “Beg pardon,” without looking at me. I even stooped so low as to give him an undignified “nudge” with my elbow; but, if his left side had been paralyzed, he could not have paid less heed.

And the result was, he then and there rented that window to that woman for ten dollars a month.

I do not wish to make myself appear ridiculous; but, of course, I have my faults—who, indeed, has not?—and one of them is an unjust and unreasonable prejudice against pretty women.

Perhaps it is because I am plain myself. Often have I marveled that John ever fell in love with me; for, besides being plain, my temper is none of the sweetest. But love me he must, for very sure am I he never married me for my money, for not a cent had I.

But of Miss Halyon, as she gave her name, I was suspicious from the first. What I suspected I could not define, even to my own satisfaction. But I watched her—oh, how I did watch her! Every movement, every expression, every act.

I have a great bump of caution, however, and I flatter myself she never perceived she was the object of secret concern on my part.

I must confess that her conduct was admirable. She was always quiet and unobtrusive; deferential alike to John and me; attended strictly to business, and never received company.

After a couple of months, I began to like her, and, as for John, I fancy he liked and pitied her from the first moment his eyes met her appealing ones.

She was unselfish, and made herself useful to us in many little ways; always insisting upon remaining in the store while we went out to our meals, and even sometimes assisting me in my light housework.

She also took a great interest in the drugstore and would sit for hours with the Dispensary upon her knee, reading and studying with the closest attention.

About this time, our little town became greatly disturbed over a series of burglaries, so successful and mysterious that they baffled the shrewdest among us. All sorts of crimes—gambling, drunkenness, street-robbery, murder—we were familiar with; but this sudden advent of home-burglars into our midst astonished us and benumbed our faculties.

We had slept with wide-open windows and unlocked doors, and in two successive nights some three thousand dollars' worth of jewelry and plate was taken from different houses, and no traces of them could be discovered.

Miss Halyon was besieged with inquiries in regard to them, but, as none of them were ever offered to her for sale, she could give no assistance in the search.

One winter evening, when the wind was blowing and the snow drifting in great heaps about our buildings, Miss Halyon and I were sitting quietly by the fire in the store, both reading and feeling a trifle nervous, as we were alone—John having gone to the lodge.

It was about nine o'clock. The train from the East had just come in, having been delayed by a snow-slide in Pyle Canyon, and I was expecting to hear the jingling of the sleigh-bells that always announced the arrival at our door of the Wells-Fargo Express.

The express-office proper was located at the old town of Lawrence, a mile distant; but we had a branch-office in our store, my husband acting as sub-agent under Mr. Wesley, the agent in the old town.

I had always demurred at this, as we had no safe, and yet, once in a while, were compelled to keep large sums of money in the store for a day or night, which always threw a weight on my mind.

Suddenly the door opened, and, before I could turn, a man's voice exclaimed abruptly:

“Is there any express for D. P. Hazen?”

I arose and went forward.

A small slim man stood near the door, which he had just closed. He was thinly covered with freshly-fallen snow. He could have been well described by the one word—insignificant. You would have passed him a hundred times and not have noticed him; and, if anybody had called your attention to him on the one-hundredth occasion that you passed him, you would have sworn that you had never seen him before.

This is the best description I can give of him. If I had lived in the same house with him fifty years, I think I could give no better.

“Hazen?” said I, reflectively. “No; I think not.”

“Please be sure,” said he, quietly; and, while I went to look on the book, he advanced and seated himself by the stove.

Miss Halyon drew aside slightly, as though she did not relish such close proximity to a stranger, I thought; and I smiled as I reflected that she would not notice such trifles when she had lived six months in Lawrence.

“Nothing for Hazen,” said I, aloud, as I resumed my seat near him.

“That is strange,” returned he, reflectively. “I fully expected a package.”

“It will doubtless be here tomorrow,” I remarked, carelessly, resuming my reading, for he did not seem worth much attention.

“I beg your pardon,” said he, quietly; and, as I looked up inquiringly, he took a small square card from his case and handed it to me. I found written on it, in fine beautiful chirography: “D. P. Hazen, Private Detective, W. F. & Co., Chicago.”

I lifted my eyes involuntarily to his, and found that he was quietly regarding me with a sphinx-like face. I felt the blood recede from my cheeks.

Could it be that anything was wrong with the company’s business so far as we were concerned? But no; impossible. What could be wrong? And yet—oh, why, why did the man look at me with such grave questioning eyes?

“I am happy to meet you,” I murmured, and my voice sounded oddly to my own ears. “You come on business connected with—with—”

“With a robbery of Wells-Fargo Express,” he replied, without moving his eyes from my face. “It lies between this town and Upham.”

“I have heard nothing of it,” I faltered, confused by that horrible fear—many an innocent person has known it—that I was going to be accused of something of which I was guiltless.

“Probably not,” replied Mr. Hazen, indifferently, rising and buttoning his great-coat. “It has been kept a secret, and—you will do well to say nothing about it. Tell your husband”—as carelessly as though he had known me all his life—“that I will call to see him tomorrow morning.”

He bowed courteously to us both and went out into the bitter stormy night, leaving me almost dazed.

“How did he know I had a husband?” I asked Miss Halyon, shivering and drawing nearer to the fire.

“He seems to know a good deal,” she replied, thoughtfully. And then we dropped the subject, but “D. P. Hazen, Private Detective,” was not out of my mind one minute that entire evening.

However, I was slightly reassured after his visit to my husband. All he asked of us was to be allowed to loiter about the store and watch everyone who came in on express-business.

“There are parties living in this valley,” he said, “who, sooner or later, will come here and send a package to a certain address, and I must see them, to be able to identify them. They may come within a week, and they may not come for a month; but to this office they will be sure to come, as it is nearer the depot—and right here I must stay. I will wander about town and try to ferret out something in regard to these recent burglaries, just for recreation,” he added, smiling his weary smile, that never seemed to have any mirth in it.

At the close of two days, that fellow knew the name and reputation of every man, woman, and child in Lawrence. He knew the boy who played the best game of baseball, the girl who had the biggest doll, and the men who abused their wives. He knew that a little band of sheep grazed, at night, away up on the side of the hills—so far, that the “tinkle, tinkle” of their musical bells could not be heard down in the valley.

He laughed about the many petitions we had sent to Washington for the removal of the post-office from the old town to the new, and the many times we had been disappointed.

All our little hobbies and scandals were an open secret to him: in short, he knew all about our town and its people, and all about every other town in Oregon.

He entertained us, those long winter evenings, with personal reminiscences and detective stories that won our hearts, despite their secret resolves not to be won. There was a hotel he desired to watch, which could only be seen from my kitchen window, and another which was only visible from my bedroom; so that it came to pass that a private detective lounged in my home, fell asleep on my sofa, and dined sometimes at my table.

And, what is more, he made himself so agreeable—was so courteous and unselfish—that we all liked him and reposed perfect confidence in him, except perhaps Miss Halyon, who tried to avoid his company.

One evening, she and I were alone in the store. Mr. Hazen had been away somewhere in the valley for a couple of days, and John was at the lodge.

Miss Halyon had been trying to persuade me to go to bed, as I was not feeling very well. Everything was so quiet, that we both started when the telephone suddenly pealed out our call. We had no switchboard, and each office had a separate call, ours being three short rings.

“How it startled me!” exclaimed Miss Halyon, turning pale. “I wouldn’t answer it, Mrs. Austin; it is probably a dispatch, and you cannot go out such a night as this.”

I remember I laughed as I shook my head and went around behind the prescription case and gave the answering ring.

“Hullo!” said a sharp quick voice, which seemed faintly familiar to me, though I knew I had never heard it over the wire before.

“Hullo!” I replied.

There was a slight hesitation, and then “Is that you?” said the voice, with a significant emphasis.

As I was not above a little joke through the telephone, I instantly responded in the affirmative.

“Is everything all right?”

“All right.”

“Has anything come?” eagerly.

“Yes,” said I, rather doubtfully, fearful that I was going too far with my joke.

“When shall it be? Tonight?”

“When shall what be?” I cried, bursting out laughing. “And who in the world are you, anyhow? And what are you talking about?”

There was an exclamation that sounded like an oath, and then “Who are you?” exclaimed my interlocutor, savagely. “If you have fooled me, by heaven I’ll make you regret it!”

“I shall very likely regret it, then,” I replied, still laughing: “for I have certainly fooled you in first-class style.”

There was another terrible oath, and then the instrument was closed violently.

Somehow, this little incident impressed me deeply. I could not banish it from my mind during the whole evening. Who was my questioner? And for whom did he mistake me?

Our store was the principal telephone office. In the old town of Lawrence, a mile distant, there were instruments only in the livery stable and in the doctor’s office; and, in Ilman, three miles down the valley, one in the drugstore and another in the warehouse.

Through which of these had those questions been asked? I sat down and looked thoughtfully into the fire. Miss Halyon laughed, and declared it was someone playing a joke on me; but, though I tried hard to regard it in that light, my mind was still uneasy.

I was finally aroused from my reverie by the entrance of a customer, who desired an ounce of chloroform for toothache.

I smiled as I went to the poison closet; for, only a few moments before John’s departure for the lodge, we both had occasion to go to this closet at the same time, and John said, tapping the chloroform bottle with his pencil:

“I declare, I haven’t sold a drop of chloroform for a month!”

“Nor I,” I returned, laughing. “Only see how thick the dust is on the bottle.”

And now, so soon after this conversation, I had a call for it.

I opened the door of the closet carefully, and the bell attached gave its little sharp clear “ting, ting” to remind me that I was about to handle poisons. I took down the chloroform bottle and had my lips already pursed up to blow off the dust, when, to my astonishment, I perceived that there was no dust on it. Even the stopper was clean, and, what was more, a few drops of the liquid had trickled down, staining the label and settling on the shelf.

I was certainly surprised at this; but I immediately reflected that John must have sold some just before going out, and I soon forgot all about it; nor did I think to speak to him of it when he came home.

About ten o’clock the following morning, John came into my room, where I was sitting with Miss Halyon, with an open telegram in his hand.

“I have just received a dispatch,” said he, glancing at his watch, “calling me to Pendleton on business connected with this express-robbery, and I have barely time to catch the train. If only Hazen were here. I don’t understand their sending for me. Will you be afraid to remain alone with Miss Halyon?”

“N-no,” returned I, doubtfully. For I was a veritable coward.

“I would not go on any less important business,” said John, looking worried and perplexed. “But this must be attended to. Be careful that everything is locked up safely, and do not forget that there are ten thousand dollars in gold in the house.”

Miss Halyon gave a little cry.

“Oh, do you think it safe to leave so much?” she asked.

“Oh, yes,” said John, smiling. “Nobody knows it is here. It came by express, this morning. Put it in your pillow,” he added, turning to me; “and do not forget it for a moment.”

Shortly after his departure, Miss Halyon asked me coaxingly if I would make a chocolate cake, a delicacy of which she was particularly fond.

“I will light the fire for you,” she cried, gayly. “And then I will stay in the store, and, if anyone come in—which isn’t likely, this dull day—I’ll call you. Come, now—isn’t that, fair?”

She looked so bright and lovely, that I involuntarily put my arm around her and kissed her.

“Who could resist you?” I asked, laughing. “I suppose I must do it, to please you. But the kitchen is so far back, it takes a long time to call me when anyone is waiting.”



With a merry retort, she ran away to build a fire. And, presently, when the stove was hot, I donned my white apron and went out, prepared for a good hour's baking.

A man was standing at the half-open door, with a long box on his arms.

"Your husband sent me to the express-office fur a telephone," said he, "and told me fur to put it up in your bedroom."

I then recollected that John had ordered another instrument from San Francisco, to be put in our chamber for greater convenience at night. By some mistake, this had come by Pacific Express, instead of Wells-Fargo.

Our bedroom opened into the kitchen, so I threw open the door, showed the man where to put the telephone, and then resumed my occupation.

Probably half an hour had passed, and I was just frosting the top layer of my cake, when a loud ring told me that the man had succeeded in connecting this instrument with the others on the circuit. Not having a switchboard, one instrument could not be rung without all on the line ringing at the same time. Thus, when Number One called Number Two, the ring was heard by Number Three—who, if so disposed, could listen and overhear a whole conversation not intended for his ears.

John had very strictly forbidden me ever to listen to the dialogues of others, and I had always been careful to obey him.

"Is it all right?" I asked, running into the room, spatula in hand.

"I reckon so," replied the man, dubiously, scratching his head. "I heerd the thing ring."

The bell again tinkled out the call of the drugstore at Ilman, and almost instantly came the reply.

"I'll see if it works all right," said I, thinking it would do no harm to listen once.

As I put the tube to my ear, I was startled to hear the sharp quick tones I had heard the previous night exclaim:

"Hullo!"

"Hullo!"—and, to my still greater astonishment, I recognized Miss Halyon's voice.

"Well?" said the man's tones, sharply.

"It's the right person this time, Ned," said Miss Halyon, with a low soft laugh.

I had now certainly satisfied myself that the instrument “worked” well, and should have ceased listening to a private conversation; but something held me spellbound.

“How did you come to get me into such a scrape last night?” demanded the man, savagely.

“Oh,” said Miss Halyon, again laughing, but very slyly this time, “I couldn’t get her off to bed last night, to save me. Usually, I have only to suggest such a thing, and she takes me at my word; but last night—just because I made sure it would be all right—it was a complete failure. I almost jumped out of my dress when you did ring and she went to the telephone.”

“Curse a ‘she,’ anyhow!” returned the voice, vindictively. “I’d rather try to manage a man anytime.”

“I got her off to bake a cake about half an hour ago, so it’s all clear now, Ned. He has gone to Pendleton, in response to a telegram from Jule. It”—with a mysterious emphasis— “came this morning, and I telegraphed Jule to send for him.”

“We must do it tonight, then!”

“Oh, of course; tonight at half-past eleven.”

“What are you going to give her?”

“Chloroform.”

I now understood so much of the diabolical scheme on foot that I could stand only by leaning heavily against the wall. The shock was terrible. A cold perspiration stood all over my face, and there was a horrible ringing in my ears; but I strained them until I heard every word.

“Are you just going to give her enough to put her to sleep, or—”

A significant pause completed the sentence.

“‘Or,’ I think,” said Miss Halyon, with a horrible laugh that made me turn cold. “I stole enough chloroform yesterday, so that’s all right.”

“Everything will be ready, then, at half-past eleven.”

“Yes; be at the back door at that time exactly. Have the sleigh in the alley. Bring our disguises to the house, so we can dress with the aid of my lady’s mirror. We will reach Meacham’s in time for the morning train, and no one will ever dream that the old farmer and his wife have got ten thousand dollars at the bottom of their basket of eggs. Ah!—hush!—” she exclaimed, hurriedly—“someone is coming in!”

I heard first one instrument and then the other close; yet I stood there with the tube glued to my ear, too numb and bewildered to move, until suddenly the old Irishman spoke:

“Shure, mum, does she wurrk?”

I started as if I had been shot, and almost shrieked aloud, so great was the shock of hearing a human voice at my side: for, in the awful horror of the last few moments, I had forgotten that I was not alone.

But I controlled myself as well as I could, and closed the instrument.

“Yes, it works all right,” I said, hurriedly, drawing such hard short breaths I could only speak with difficulty. “You can go now. Please go at once, so I can lock the door and go in the store,” I added; for I knew if a customer had come in, Miss Halyon would come for me.

As soon as the old man had shouldered his tools and stumbled out the back gate, I ran to the side board and hastily drained a glass of wine, that soon brought the blood back to my face. I had just time to get into the kitchen and resume my work, when Miss Halyon entered.

I was sorely afraid my countenance would betray my knowledge of the fearful crime she was plotting, but I summoned all my courage to my aid, and bravely looked her full in the face.

“A boy wants some chloroform,” she said, smiling serenely and holding a little bottle airily toward me.

“And couldn’t you find it?” I asked, carelessly; but my eyes fell, unable to meet hers.

“No,” she said, with a merry laugh, “I looked every place. Is the cake finished?”

I nodded, and took the bottle, shrinking involuntarily as I touched her cool slim hand—the hand that had clasped mine in friendship, and which once I had even kissed when it ministered to my suffering in sickness; the hand that was, in a few hours, to murder me.

How I managed to control myself that she might suspect nothing, while suffering such an agony of doubt as to what course would be best to pursue, I do not know. But, now that I come to think of it, I fancy she was so occupied with the desire to throw me entirely off guard, that she did not notice my nervousness at all.

We ate luncheon together, and she drank a glass of wine with me, clinking her glass against mine with the charming abandon of a little bacchante.

“Here’s to your future happiness!” she said, looking at me over her glass, with a laughing demon in her beautiful eyes.

After luncheon, she always took a long walk over the crisp frozen fields. On this day, as soon as she was out of sight, I ran like some wild thing across the street, to a neighbor. Mr. Brown was a warm friend of my husband’s, and, to my inexpressible relief, he listened with credent ear to my unreasonable story.

“It certainly seems improbable,” he said, thoughtfully, when I had finished, “that such a diabolical plot could have been formed against you by Miss Halyon. But I will talk to a few of your friends about it, and you shall hear from me in an hour or two hours. In the meantime, try to find the chloroform she has secreted; and, if you find it, pour out all but enough to give it the required odor and fill it up with water; then replace the bottle where you find it. If you do find it,” he added, gravely, “you are in serious danger; but I will save you.”

At my agitated entreaty, he accompanied me to Miss Halyon’s room, which was in a private boardinghouse. Her room was locked. We were, of course, forced to take the landlady into our confidence; and, after trying at least a dozen keys, we found one which opened her door.

After a careful search of almost ten minutes, I found, in a corner of a bureau drawer, a small bottle filled with a colorless liquid. I removed the stopper and smelled the contents.

It was chloroform!

“My dear Mrs. Austin,” said Mr. Brown, turning very white, “run home and compose yourself, before that fiend returns. Mrs. Jenkins and I will arrange this little bottle so that the contents could not harm a fly. Make some excuse and come to my house in two hours, and I will have my plans all ready.”

I gladly obeyed.

I was sitting by the fire, quietly embroidering, when Miss Halyon returned.

“I wonder where Mr. Hazen is,” she said, carelessly, flinging her shawl over a chair.

I started, despite my efforts to the contrary. Where, indeed? Oh, if he were only here now! Why had I not thought of him before? And he had never liked or trusted Miss Halyon, I reflected, nor she him.

But it was too late now; and, besides, I had not the slightest idea as to his whereabouts. But, all that day, I watched and hoped for his coming.

As the clock struck three, I arose, feigning a yawn.

“As business is dull,” I said, carelessly throwing Miss Halyon’s shawl about my shoulders, “I will run over and get Mrs. Brown to teach me that new stitch. You can call me, if you need me.”

Miss Halyon nodded—with a look of relief, I fancied—and I hastened over to my neighbor’s.

“Well,” said Mr. Brown, smiling encouragingly at me as I entered his presence, “everything is nicely arranged. Be seated, my dear, while I tell you about it. First of all, I rode down to Hall’s drugstore at Ilman. Mr. Hall was alone and could give me no clue. He said he was out between ten o’clock and noon, but could not be quite positive as to the exact time; was out about half an

hour, leaving in charge a new clerk whom he has had only three or four days. We are all convinced that this is the man. He is short and stout, with strikingly black hair and mustache, but light eyes. Now, listen: Exert yourself to act as if nothing unusual had occurred; you are a strong woman, and I feel sure you can do it. Go to bed at the usual time and feign sleep. The girl will then, probably, chloroform you, and you must soon begin to breathe deeply and heavily, then gradually more faintly, until she thinks all safe. I will watch with a dozen men, and, the instant anyone enters your house, we will surround it and seize him.”

I was appalled by this plan, but was ashamed to confess it; and, after reflecting a moment, I told him that I was sure I could carry out his instructions faithfully. I fear his little complimentary allusion to the strength of my mind buoyed me up.

At this moment, Miss Halyon’s clear voice came ringing across the street, and I ran home to find several customers in the store, to wait upon whom kept me busy fully an hour.

The short winter afternoon wore away. I shivered more than once as darkness came on; but I had now fully made up my mind to carry out the difficult part assigned me. I waxed exceedingly cheerful on the thought that I was soon to become a heroine; my coolness and self-possession came back to my aid, and I grew remarkably brave and independent.

The evening passed quietly. Miss Halyon read aloud in a clear even voice that never once faltered, while I knitted. At nine o’clock, she suggested that we should retire. I put her off, and thus gained twenty minutes. Then I arose, yawning, and went sleepily about the store, counting up the sales, making some entries in the book, etc., etc.

Just as I was closing the doors, a man came in for some fluid extract of digitalis.

I went to the poison closet, and, as I opened the door, I received instantly the impression that something inside had been changed. This was important, and I racked my brain to discover what it was. By the time I had filled a small bottle with digitalis and labeled it, I knew what had happened: On a shelf which held only ounce bottles, all of which were labeled “Poison!” in scarlet letters on green background, one bottle had been removed and the others pushed along so as to conceal its removal.

I ran my eye over the shelf and then over a list of the poisons it contained, said list being tacked on the inside of the door. I turned cold with an awful terror: for the bottle removed contained one of the deadliest known poisons—hydrocyanic acid.

I instantly reflected, however, that it was not as bad as chloroform, as she could not give it to me unless I drank something; and when, soon after the man departed, she offered me a glass of sherry, I politely declined.

It just was half-past ten o’clock when I at last lay down in my bed, with what feelings the reader can perhaps imagine. Presently, I began to feign sleep, and attempted my first snore; it sounded so forced and unnatural to my own ears, that I almost laughed aloud.

I thought better of it, however, and snored placidly away with all my might—first a long snore, then a short one, then a sigh, etc.—until at last I began to fear I might snore myself out, and was beginning to “fill in” with little sleepy murmurs and moans when suddenly there was a movement—and a soft damp cloth was thrown over my face.

An awful silence followed. I lay perfectly quiet; but, when I reflected that she thought she was giving me chloroform, while I knew she was giving me water, that terrible hysterical inclination to laugh again seized me. But again I conquered it and faithfully followed my instructions. The clock had struck eleven sometime before, and a dreamy sensation was stealing over me, when suddenly she removed the cloth, saturated it again, and instantly pressed it tightly all over my nostrils and mouth.

This meant suffocation if not chloroforming, and I became so violently angry, in spite of my dulled senses, that, with one bound, I darted up in bed and dashed the bottle out of her hand.

“Good heaven!” I cried. “Don’t you think I’ve got enough? It’s only water, anyhow!”

She uttered a shriek of mortal terror and sprang backward off the bed: and, as she fell, I saw her thrust her hand in her bosom. But I thought nothing of it—for, just then, I saw something else: a man had entered stealthily, and now, with a terrible oath, he dashed at me.

But, as I fell, there came a shout and a rush of many feet, and I knew I was saved. For a moment only, I lost consciousness; but, even in that short time, I perceived, when my mind became clear, that something terrible had taken place:

On the floor, prone, breathing slowly and laboriously, lay Miss Halyon. There was a thick froth about her mouth, and her eyes were protruded and staring with an agony which no words can describe.

“What is it?” I cried, staggering to her and immediately forgetting everything but her terrible suffering.

A dozen men were standing around; but kneeling beside her was the one for whom she had risked her life.

“God only knows what she has taken,” he said to me, brokenly. “She’s threatened to kill herself a hundred times. They’ve gone for the doctor—oh, if he would only come—only come!”

“Great heaven!” cried I—for, in bending over her, that awful odor of bitter almonds, which every druggist knows, had come to my nostrils—“she has taken hydrocyanic acid! she will be dead in a moment!”

Her glazing eyes turned to me and an awful convulsion shook her frame: but, in that last look, I read an agonized appeal for pardon. Her purple lips parted, and through her set teeth she gasped: “For—his—sake!” and, so gasping, died.

And the man for whom she sold her soul? He is serving a life-sentence in the penitentiary; and perhaps—who knows?—there are times when he envies the lot of the beautiful girl who sleeps in a lonely grave in the shadow of the Blue Mountains, and who would have been a happy honored woman had she never met him—who was none other than “D. P. Hazen, Private Detective.”

By pretending to be in Wells-Fargo’s employ, he had become familiar with every corner of our store and home. He confessed that he had been in Lawrence, under a different disguise, before Miss Halyon came, and had burglarized private houses, and Miss Halyon had sent the valuables away under our very eyes. We remembered when too late the many packages we had expressed for her to New York. By feigning a desire to learn the drug business, he had worked his way into the store in the neighboring town, where his accomplice could keep him informed, without arousing suspicion, of all that transpired in Lawrence, which could in any way regard their plans.

I tell my husband that the moral to this story is that a man should never befriend a lovely woman against his wife’s wishes and prejudices: in reply, he only shrugs his shoulders and looks scornful.

But there is a moral in the fate of the girl who lies with folded hands in an unknown grave, where only the night wind makes its sorrowful moan, and

“The pine, dropping burrs in the sweet autumn weather.  
Sadly and softly its rosary tells.”

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