

A CURIOUS ADVENTURE.

SOME years since a man was arrested in one of the country settlements of this Territory on rather a grave charge, and pending the action of the grand jury was imprisoned in the county jail, a not very secure structure, from which he soon contrived to effect his escape. He left no clue to the course he had taken, and after a brief search, hope of capturing him was abandoned and it was believed by his acquaintances that he had left the Territory.

Some weeks afterward the writer happened to be traveling in one of the southern counties of the Territory, and stopped in a town in which a mill was in course of construction, when, to his surprise, he noticed the culprit engaged upon the building, in company with a large number of other men there employed.

Being in conversation with the Bishop, who was superintending the work, at the time of making the discovery, I exclaimed, "What in the world is that fellow doing here?" The Bishop, true to his Yankee instinct, answered my query by asking if I knew the man, and when I assured him I did, gave his name, told of the crime with which he was charged and of his escape from the county jail, he shook his head incredulously. "You are mistaken," he said; "this man's name is Richardson. I have only known him for a few weeks, since he came here, but in that time he has shown himself to be a first-rate fellow and a perfect genius. He is boarding at my house, and is able to turn his hand to almost anything. He has mended clocks and done tinkering for the people, finished up the carpenter work on my house, and now, as you see, he is working as a mason, and he seems to be equally clever at everything. In fact he is quite a preacher as well; he gave us a discourse of about two hours' length on Sunday last, and it had a good many practical ideas in it. He may resemble the man you speak of, but I assure you he is quite a different person."

I could perceive that the Bishop was thoroughly captivated with his ingenious boarder, and it was not much to be wondered at, for he was intelligent and rather prepossessing, and really very expert in various lines as a workman; but rude as it might seem to shatter the Bishop's idol by undeceiving him as to the man's character, and ungenerous to prevent a man from making his way among strangers when ostracised

among his acquaintances, a sense of duty to the public impelled me to do so.

Taking the Bishop by the arm and starting towards where the man was employed, I said, "Come and be convinced!" but the fellow, who had also recognized me, was evidently in no mood for being interviewed; for as we approached him he dropped his tools and hastily made his way out of town. Even with this evidence of guilt before him, the Bishop refused to believe that the man was the criminal he was represented to be, or at least to act upon the suggestion offered to have him placed under arrest and communicate with the officers of the county whence he had escaped.

Having business with the justice of the peace in the place during the day, I called his attention to the character of the man who had found refuge in the settlement, but he too failed to realize the necessity for immediate action in having him arrested. However, as the refugee failed to put in an appearance during the afternoon, the justice of the peace began to feel that he ought to have acted with promptness on the first suggestion. Accordingly, after dark in the evening, in company with the constable, he called at the Bishop's house where I was staying and asked what I would recommend in the emergency. While we were talking a boy came in and reported that Richardson was just then peering through the window at us, but he managed to escape before the officers could get outside, and though diligent search was made for him that night it was unavailing.

Learning from the Bishop's wife that a coat, vest and watch belonging to her boarder were in the house, I ventured the opinion that he might remain secreted in the vicinity until after I had left, to recover them or possibly attempt to do so during the night, and remarked that if I heard him about the house I would get up. The members of the Bishop's household slept up-stairs, but I was shown to bed in a room on the lower floor, on entering which, in addition to the bed I was to occupy, I noticed a lounge with a pile of bed clothes upon it, but nothing more.

During the night I was aroused from my peaceful slumber by a slight noise, and on opening my eyes I could plainly discern by the light of the full moon which shone through the windows a human figure standing at the foot of my bed. Taking it for granted it was the fugitive, and, without stopping a moment

for thought, I sprang from the bed and, clutching him by throat, forced him backward upon the lounge where I held him until I feared if I did not slacken my grip on his windpipe he never would regain his breath. Accordingly I loosened my hold, when to my surprise, after gasping once or twice, he cried out "Mother!"

When excited a person thinks quickly. I did upon that occasion. The truth flashed upon my mind in an instant that it was the wrong person I was choking. The voice was too boyish for the robust man whom I had imagined I had in my grasp; and besides the latter would not be likely to call for maternal assistance if it were he. A glance at the bed clothes which I had noticed piled upon the lounge when I entered the room, but which were now tumbled partially upon the floor, and the scantily clothed form of the person I was holding down, satisfied me that whoever he was he must have been reposing upon that lounge during the earlier part of the night. Then, fearing the household might be aroused by his screams, I shut off his wind again long enough to command him to be still and make no noise, piled the bed clothes upon him while his eyes remained closed, and slipped back into bed, to ponder upon the scene in which I had just been an actor. When the ludicrousness of the situation presented itself fully before my mind, I could hardly control my inclination to laugh.

I had been lying awake fully an hour thinking of the episode and wondering who the young man could be whom I had choked, for I was under the impression the Bishop had no son at home, when I saw him rise to a sitting posture on the lounge, and look around the room as if in quest of his assailant, an act which convinced me that he had not observed me retire to bed after loosening my hold upon his throat, and that he had probably been too thoroughly frightened to open his eyes before. I could discern his head from where I lay, while he sat up, but I doubted whether he saw me, as I lay quite still. After satisfying his curiosity he again lay down, and when morning dawned and I arose and dressed myself, he was sound asleep.

On emerging from the house I found my hostess already astir, looking in vain through the chicken coops and other outhouses for her missing boarder. I inquired who my room-mate was, and she hur-