Harry had left his pistol for me loaded with blank cartridges; at first I had been deathly afraid of it, even empty. But we compromised with the blank cartridges, for, as I told Harry, the noise would surely be enough to scare any one away, and if it didn't, it was just the same, for I wouldn't shoot a loaded one, even at a burglar, for anything.

Finally mother and I went to bed, with the pistol on a convenient table, and the next thing we knew it was morning, and we were safe.

Consequently the second night we felt bolder, and when Bridget said about seven that she would like to go in town for a couple of hours, I had no especial objection.

But, alas for our false confidence, she had not been gone half an hour when the side-door bell rang loud and long. Mother and I jumped as if we had heard the crack of doom. My first thought was Harry; I was sure he had been killed in a railroad accident, and that this was the dispatch. Mother's first thought was burglars. Then we decided that messenger boys usually came to the front door, and that burglars did not ring at all, as a rule; however, fearing there might be exceptions, we decided to peep. I volunteered to do the act, and discovered the intruder was a queer-looking, slouchy man; to me he seemed a monster.

Just then another and still more violent peal of the bell sounded through the house. Mother started; I screamed. What should we do? At last I made a bold and desperate resolve. I went to the window, raised it and called: "Who is there? What do you want?"

My only answer was another ring of the bell, followed by what I suppose was a mild knock, but what seemed to us a terrific pounding, on the door.

"Go away," I cried, rendered desperate by fright; then, prompted by a sudden brilliant thought, I continued, "My husband says he will come down and send you off if you don't say right away what you want."

In vain! He continued to lean stolidly against the side of the door. He didn't even deign to glance up; on the contrary, he seemed to be looking all around the house, and I straightway imagined he was deciding the best place to force an entrance.

Just then I thought of my pistol. "Look here," I called out to my desperado; "I don't want to do it, but if you won't go, I am going to shoot."

When mother saw me go for the pistol she gave way entirely, and burst into tears, and declared we were both the same as dead, that we would never see father and her other children again; and went on so dreadfully I had a great mind to ask the man if he would go away if I would hand him the silver out the window. But it was my wedding silver, and I could not quite bring myself to that! Mother told me it was no use even if I did shoot him, for he was sure to have dozens of confederates hidden all around, and my nearest neighbors were about an eighth of a mile away, so that we would surely be murdered before they could get to us.

I cheerfully told her that the pistol had five barrels; that maybe when I had killed five of them the rest would run.

Indeed, the pistol seemed so dreadful to me, that I hardly considered blank cartridges less dangerous than bullets. Grasping it valiantly, and holding my arm well in front of me, I returned to the window. "Here," I said, "is your last chance. If you don't go, I shoot." I gave him a moment's grace whilst I counted ten; then I shut my eyes, extended my arm out of the window as far away from myself as I could reach, pointed at the stars, and pulled the trigger. The noise it made was terrific. Unfortunately, I had not an extra pair of hands for my ears!

Then, truly, the unexpected happened! I had hoped he would run! I had feared he would break into a volley of oaths, and bang the door down! But he only lifted his hand, beat a lazy tattoo on the door, and then fixed himself comfortably in a sitting posture on the steps; my great coup had failed.