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The Burglar Alarm

It Did Its Work Too Well

By EDNA BLAKEMAN

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"Did you lock the pantry door?" asked Mrs. Bradbury from her position halfway up the stairs.

Bradbury turned with a muttered exclamation and tramped back to the kitchen, where he rattled the pantry door viciously. "I knew I had locked it," he said in an injured tone as they took up the line of march for the second floor.

Once more Mrs. Bradbury paused and hesitated. "I can't remember whether I closed that window in the living room. You know, I opened it for a breath of fresh air and, Joe, do you mind going back and trying it?" she added persuasively.

Mr. Bradbury seriously objected. Mrs. Bradbury passed him with uplifted chin and sailed down the stairs. Her husband sat down on the landing and yawned drearily.

When she returned he awaited her coming with a portentous frown creasing his handsome brow.

"Heard you trying the pantry door again—for the third or fourth time since we started upstairs. You tried the living room windows for the fourth time and the parlor for the third time."

"I feel much more relieved in mind after I've tried them several times," said Louise amiably. "Let me pass—there's a good boy, thanks. You know I always let Bridget lock the kitchen, only tonight she's out, and I wanted to make sure everything was all right." Dear," said his wife seriously, "you are so very clever, don't you believe you might invent a burglar alarm, one that would prevent any one from entering the house at night?"

"I'll try, my love," promised Bradbury, rumpling his head in perplexity.

"CLEVER, ISN'T IT?"

"I might as well put in my spare time trying to invent something. Perhaps I can make a go of it."

"Will you put it on the market, Joe?" she asked, running a comb through her golden hair.

"Certainly."

"What are you going to call it? It will have to have a name."

"I shall call it 'Bradbury's Burglar Alarm,' said the inventor after some thought.

"Call it 'The Bradbury Burglar Alarm.' It's ever so much better sounding," urged Louise, flinging a golden braid over her shoulder.

"Nothing the matter with that either," assented Mr. Bradbury, jotting it down in his notebook.

Many weeks ensued before any mention was made of the burglar alarm. In the meantime Joseph Bradbury each night followed his wife from window to window of their little home trying each catch and lock after she had fastened it and then waiting patiently afterward while she once more made the rounds.

As time went on Mr. Bradbury spent much time of evenings at his own especial desk in the corner sketching plans and making abstruse calculations on scraps of paper.

One Thursday night Mr. Bradbury hurried home from the office at 5 o'clock. He came out on the trolley, and with him he carried a shabby leather suit case which hung heavily from one hand.

"What have you got, dear?" Mrs. Bradbury kissed her husband and looked curiously at the suit case.

"Anybody around?" asked Bradbury cautiously.

"Not a soul. Bridget's afternoon and evening, of course."

Bradbury knelt down before the case and opened it. Within was a tangle of wires and rods and bolts. "I've got it!" he whispered.

"What is it?" She leaned over the suit case, her pretty face puckered with curiosity and impatience.

"The Bradbury Burglar Alarm," announced the inventor proudly.

"Then you did invent it?" she squealed joyfully.

"Sure I did. Now, I've made arrangements with the electric light plant to run a line down from their feed wire. It will connect with this and this and this," displaying the tangle of silk covered wire and other bits of mechanism. All I've got to do is to switch on the current when I go to bed, and nobody can enter the house without being heard. Will ring all these eighteen bells I've got here and set off a signal down in the constable's office, besides turning on fifty colored electric lights here and giving the intruder a heavy shock of electricity. How's that? Going some, eh?"

"Joseph Bradbury," said Louise, solemnly, "you are a wonderful man!"

"Nonsense, my dear," protested Bradbury, immensely flattered.

"When are you going to set it up?" she asked after awhile.

"After dinner. I've arranged for an electrician to be here, and we'll have the whole thing completed inside of a couple of hours. No need to do the lockstep tonight," he added jokingly. "We'll leave that to the chap that tries to get inside, eh?"

Three hours afterward, as the clock was striking 10, Mr. Bradbury closed the door after the departing electrician and rubbed his hands delightedly. "It's all right now," he cried enthusiastically. "Let us be off to bed, Louise, and wait for our burglar, eh?"

I will not go into details concerning the Bradbury burglar alarm, for its inventor has not yet decided to place it on the market. It is sufficient to say that it was a pronounced success as evidenced by their trials that evening. The electrician had tested the system by every clever device he could think of, but in every case he was neatly trapped by the delighted inventor. The lights flashed warningly in all colors of the rainbow. The wires did not shock the electrician, for he wore rubber gloves, nor did the bell ring in the constable's office, for they cut off that connection, too, but in the matter of colored lights the alarm did work beautifully, while the eighteen bells jangled diabolically.

"I wish all these wires and things didn't have to be so exposed," complained Mrs. Bradbury. "They look horrid hanging around the doors and windows. Seems to me your invention might have been simpler, Joe. It spoils the artistic effect in the rooms."

"Better be safe than artistic," snapped Joe impatiently. "Ready to come up? Shall I turn out the lights?"

Halfway up the stairs Mrs. Bradbury paused and turned with a theatric gesture. "Joe!"

"Well, what is it now?" he grinned. "Rest easy about the pantry door—that's fastened all right."

"It isn't that—your best overcoat!"

"What about it?"

"I left it on the clothesline. I put it out to air. It smelled of camphor, and I forgot to bring it in."

"I'll get it. Hold the candle while I disconnect this—there, confound it! I've dropped that little plug down the register grating. I can't get out of the house, Louise, until that plug is found—understand? Until—that—plug—is—found." Mr. Bradbury's voice showed the strain of an overworked stock of patience.

"Why can't you go outside, Joe? Do you mean that we're inside—held prisoners by that burglar alarm?" Mrs. Bradbury was frightened.

"You have stated the cold facts in the case," returned her husband. "This little plug is my own device. When it is removed from this hole the current is on all around the house. When I thrust the plug in the current is off—just the reverse of the usual method. Clever, isn't it?"

"Very!" said his wife drily.

That was the beginning of a strenuous night. The furnace pipe that led to the hall register down which Bradbury had dropped his plug was taken down and found empty. Then it was replaced amid much dust and disorder in the cellar and the search continued all over the hall floor without result. At midnight Mrs. Bradbury suggested that they run the risk of losing Mr. Bradbury's best overcoat and go to bed, as that gentleman had just made an unsuccessful attempt to escape from the house by a second story window.

It was then that Bridget Lanigan arrived home, weary after a long afternoon of unalloyed pleasure. Her attack on the kitchen door was followed by an ear splitting shriek that brought the neighborhood out of their beds. Then it was that the Bradbury burglar alarm demonstrated its efficiency. The colored lights flashed intermittently all over the house; the eighteen bells rang incessantly; the constable and his aid rattled up on motor cycles, while Miss Lanigan proceeded to rend the air with her cries of pain.

When the tumult was over, when the current had been shut off from the feed wire and Bridget had been released from her unhappy position more frightened than hurt, for the current had not been a very heavy one after all; when the constable had been liberally fed for his trouble and all the neighbors had enjoyed their laugh to the utmost, Mr. Bradbury slammed the front door viciously upon the outside world and confronted his wife.

"Now, what are you going to do, Joe? You look desperate. Bridget says she brought in your overcoat at 2 o'clock, so you need not have tried to get out and"—

"My dear," said Bradbury with a great effort at self control. "Good night!"

Then when he was alone Mr. Bradbury proceeded to undo his earlier work of the evening. He tore down all his wires and other adjustments and restored the house to its "artistic" atmosphere. What he did with the debris from this devastation is not recorded.

When he had finished he went carefully around the house and locked each window and door. Then he made a second trip and tested each one.

"What are you doing, Joe?" called Louise from the stairs.

"The lockstep!" grunted Mr. Bradbury, with a grim smile at his own wit.

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