

you which communicating door he came through. Mr. Barnes looked around and was amazed to find that the only door in the room opened on the hall. The story told by his man was thus an impossibility. A thought came to him quickly, and he said:

"You have changed to another room since then. You were at that time in No. 234."

"And this is number 342, a floor higher up. But you are wrong. I have not changed my room. I will explain how your man has made this mistake. I know when I came here that your spy had probably followed me. I was tired of espionage. This is what I did. I registered and was given No. 234. I was shown to the room and at once sent for the clerk. When he came up, I asked for another room and desired him not to make any change on the register, as I had an inquisitive friend who would not hesitate to walk right up if he knew what room I was in. I explained that I wished to avoid him. My request was granted. I suppose your man asked for a room near that of his 'friend,' Mr. Mitchell. The clerk at once thought him to be the man whom I wished to avoid and gave him a room next to 234, which of course satisfied him, and I am sure pleased me as well."

Mr. Barnes was extremely disgusted, especially as during the interview he had become thoroughly satisfied that Mr. Mitchell was really sick and troubled with a bad cough. He returned to New York puzzled.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HISTORY OF THE RUBY.

During the next two weeks there were numerous references to the ruby robbery in the daily papers. Interviews were published purporting to have been held with every one of note who had been present. The police were twitted with their inability to discover the thief. The detectives from the central office came and went mysteriously, and were silent to all questions, the while maintaining an expression which plainly said, "We could and we would." One or two persons were even arrested, only to be promptly discharged when brought before the committing magistrates. So that interest in the affair soon died out. Another crime occurred, and all New York had something else to talk of. The Remsen ruby was forgotten by the masses.

Mr. Barnes, however, thought of little else. He racked his brain for a promising starting point, and the more he thought the more he was tempted to make a trip to New Orleans to unravel this, as he had many other mysteries, "from the other end." Yet he hated to leave the scene where were the chief actors in the drama, and as he felt certain the principal in one or all of the crimes. At last he decided to make a move, hoping little from it, yet unwilling longer to rest actually idle in this case. He wrote the following letter:

Mr. Arthur Randolph: DEAR SIR—Since you have engaged me to undertake to prove that Mr. Mitchell himself stole the ruby on the night of the festival, I presume that you will consent to give me some assistance in the matter. In the first interview that I had with you you may recall that you stated that your friend, in your opinion, is somewhat insane on the subject of elevated jewelry. You said, in effect, that if we were pressed a little on this line he would drift into the narration of tales of gems and crimes committed in the past. I would much like to hear Mr. Mitchell talk up on his hobby, but, as you know, he is on the defensive with me, and you in some way draw to have a talk with him yourself and range him out, while I should be secured where I could overhear the conversation. I should wish you to mention the loss of the ruby—to suggest, if not charge outright that he himself has taken the gem, and when he denies it, as he surely will, ask him whether there is any peculiar story connected with it—that is, whether it has ever been stolen before. From such a conversation I might get a hint which, seeming as nothing to you, might be valuable to me. Will you do this? Remember you yourself said that "all is fair," etc. Yours truly, J. BARNES.

In reply to this he received a note asking him to meet Mr. Randolph at his club on the following evening.

The next afternoon Mr. Mitchell called at the Hoffman House and went up to the room occupied by Mr. Thaurat, finding that gentleman at home. Mr. Thaurat yet advanced to meet him, and the two shook hands cordially.

"Thaurat," began Mr. Mitchell, "I want to talk to you seriously about that jewel robbery."

"I am all attention," said Mr. Thaurat, lighting a cigarette and dropping in to a comfortable rocking chair.

"To begin with, let me recapitulate. I will go back to our partnership arrangement. You and I became in a way secret partners, or perhaps 'gambling pals' would be more accurate. At that time I agreed to furnish the capital for our operations up to a certain point. It is a fact that our losses have been rather heavy and the further fact that you confidentially told me that you had a method or a system by which losses could be avoided, or at least controlled. Am I accurate?"

"Quite so, my friend. You have proved yourself an admirable silent partner, since you have allowed me to have my own way, paying the bills and asking no questions till now. Am I to understand that the losses among you, and that you wish an explanation?"

"You may give me one in a moment. There is another point. You promised to drop Adrian Fisher."

"Well," Mr. Barnes had not done so. I requested you to wear the Ali Baba costume the other night, and yet you chose to give it to Fisher. Why was that?"

"It will be more simple to explain about the losses first and come to Fisher later. As you perhaps know, that detective Barnes has chosen to place a spy at my heels. Under the circumstances I thought it wise to play the spy upon my spy. Several times I have gone to the club and then placed myself where I could watch my man. In this way I soon discovered that he had become intimate with one of the club servants. One day I called this fellow, and partly by threatening to have him dismissed, but mainly by using money, I got out of him what the detective was asking about me. This was chiefly whether he lost or won when I play cards. I found that the result of every game that I played was being reported. Consequently after that I made it a rule to lose."

"To lose my money!"

"To lose our money, since we are partners. You are simply advancing the funds till I get remittances from Paris. You have my I O U's. If you are tired of the arrangement, I will pay you at once, though it would be inconvenient."

"No. The money is of no consequence. But tell me why did you think it best to lose?"

"It is very simple. From the fact that the detectives are investigating this point it is evident that they have heard of the winnings which I made when Fisher played with me. They may have concluded that I am a card sharper. I wish to dispel that notion."

"Naturally. But now tell me about Fisher. What has this to do with him?"

"As you know, I did not design to attend the festival. You went to Philadelphia, were taken ill and sent me a letter asking me to take your place and wear your dress, which I was to obtain by presenting your note to the costumer. I did this, fully intending to carry out your wishes."

"Then how was it that Fisher wore my costume?"

"I was coming to that. Just before leaving for the affair who should call here but the costumer, who informed me that a man had been to his place and had cathected him about me, explaining that he was a detective hunting down a celebrated criminal. He showed the fellow your note. Afterward he regretted having done so and came to notify me, as he expressed it, 'so that I might not get into any trouble.' I saw at once that this meant that Barnes would be at the festival, or at any rate one of his men."

"You were right in that. He was there."

"Yes, but I was not sure of it till after the robbery, when all unmasked. He wore one of the Forty Thieves dominos, and I failed to see through the disguise. With the knowledge thus obtained I determined to have some amusement at the expense of the great detective, and decided to wear one of the dominos instead of your dress. It was essential, however, that some one should impersonate Ali Baba in order that the tableaux might not be interrupted. Fisher was the only man I could ask to assume the role. He acquiesced, and that is all there was to that. I have not taken him up again, I assure you."

"Very good. That is satisfactory. You must pardon my questioning; but, after all, I did not understand and had a right to do so. Tell me, were you near when the robbery occurred? Did you see it done?"

"I must have been near, but I did not see it. I was awaiting to kiss the hand of the Scheherazade when Mr. Barnes suddenly cried out that a robbery had been committed and ordered masks off. I slipped out of my domino and went to him as soon as the lights were on."

"You might have suggested to him to search everybody, as he did on the train."

"By George, that is just what I did, but he declined. I guess that train experience made him dubious as to the value of that sort of thing."

"At this both men laughed heartily, as though enjoying the discomfiture of the detective."

"It seems," said Mr. Mitchell, "that Barnes suspected that the ruby was to be stolen and informed Mr. Rawlston early in the evening that there would be thieves in the audience."

"Did he indeed? Too bad that, with all his shrewdness, he was not able to catch the thief or thieves right, eh?"

Once more they both laughed. Then Mr. Mitchell suggested that they should go to the club, and thither they went. Upon entering the doorkeeper informed Mr. Mitchell that Mr. Randolph was in the parlor and desired to see him. He and Mr. Thaurat therefore went into the great reception room. Mr. Randolph arose as they appeared.

"Good evening, Randolph," said Mr. Mitchell. "You wish to see me?"

"Oh, nothing special. I came in to dine here and told the doorman to send you to me in case you should turn up. I wanted company, that is all."

"Don't like to eat alone, eh?"

"That's it. Eating is a nuisance, made tolerable only by good companionship. Mr. Thaurat, shall I have a place set for you also?"

"If you desire, I shall be most happy," said Mr. Thaurat.

"Very well," said Mr. Randolph. "I will attend to it. I have some letters to write now, if you will excuse me. Meet me promptly at 7 in the private dining room."

Mr. Randolph left the apartment and went to the floor above. Here he joined Mr. Barnes, who was awaiting him.

"Well," said the detective, "can you manage it?"

"Everything is arranged. Mitchell is here, and he has brought Thaurat with him. I don't understand the intimacy that has sprung up between those two, but that is not to the point. They will dine with me in our private dining room. I shall arrange that our meal shall be served at a table immediately next to the large portiere that separates the private dining room from the main saloon. I shall also order a dinner for you at a table just on the other side of the curtain. If you have good ears, you should hear all that passes with little difficulty."

"I am satisfied with your arrangement and shall undoubtedly be able to hear at least the greater part of what occurs."

"Very well. Now go to the library, and at the farther end, hidden behind a newspaper file, you will be safe from the observation of prying eyes. Promptly at 7 and my guests will take our seats. Five minutes later your own place will be in readiness, and you can take it in safety."

Mr. Barnes followed these instructions, and Mr. Randolph went to the dining room to perfect his arrangements. At 7, on the minute, he was joined by his invited guests, and the three sat at table. Shortly after the noise of dishes on the other side of the portiere indicated that Mr. Barnes was being served. About the third course Mr. Randolph endeavored to lead the conversation in the desired direction.

"I trust," said he, addressing Mitchell, "that you have entirely recovered from that unfortunate illness that prevented you from attending the affair at Rawlston's?"

took it as a symptom of returning acidity that you should sneeze one of your hidden treasures. I have no doubt that you have others like it holed in some corner of your safe. Why not get one out and present it to the lady?"

"You are mistaken, Randolph. I cannot so easily produce a mate to that ruby."

"Why not? Was there anything peculiar about it?"

"Yes, but we will not talk of it."

This curt way of dismissing the subject was a surprise to Mr. Randolph, for however little Mr. Mitchell cared to show his gems he had never before been unwilling to encourage any opportunity to talk about them. Mr. Randolph started in a new direction, remembering the hints of the detective.

"Mitchell," said he, "I would almost be willing to wager that you not only can give Miss Remsen as good a ruby, but that you could actually give her the same one."

"I hope to do so," was the quiet reply.

"You don't understand me. I mean that I half believe that your sickness in Philadelphia was all a farce; that you came over and yourself stole the gem."

"Indeed? And what leads you to such a preposterous deduction?"

"I think that this is your way of endeavoring to win my wager. I think that no one but yourself could have taken the pin from Miss Remsen's hair, as for no one else would she have submitted."

"Randolph, your repeated allusions to Miss Remsen in this connection, and especially your insinuation that I would ask her to be an accomplice in such a piece of duplicity, and that she would consent, are distasteful to me in the extreme. If you will pardon my saying so, it is a poor entertainment to offer a guest."

"Oh, I meant no offense, old man, I assure you! We will drop the subject, of course."

This was followed by a silence. Mr. Randolph was at his wits' end to find a way to force Mr. Mitchell to talk. He felt that nothing had been accomplished. Mr. Barnes, however, thought differently, for he had at last come to a positive conclusion. From Mr. Mitchell's tone of voice and the words of his last speech the detective felt certain that whatever part Mr. Mitchell himself may have played in the robbery Miss Remsen was innocent. He also wondered whether the conversation would now drift back to the ruby. Perhaps it would have done so had not Mr. Thaurat, who, up to this point, had scarcely spoken during the progress of the meal, once more broached the subject.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Mitchell," said he, "but your remark just now, that there is something special about the lost ruby, has greatly excited my curiosity. Unless you have some private reason for not doing so, I beg that you will tell us the history of the gem, if it has one."

There was a pause, during which Mr. Mitchell looked at his plate and seemed as though studying a problem. Mr. Randolph was delighted that Mr. Thaurat had come to his assistance in this unexpected way, and as he observed

"The next change of owners was when Cleopatra killed herself. One of her handmaidens stole the two rubies, but she herself was taken, a slave, to Rome and sold. Her purchaser discovered the rubies, took them from her, and then secretly murdered her, lest she might tell that he had them. From this time on they have gone by the name of the 'Egyptian gems.' I need not give you the whole list of robberies and murders that have been connected with the two stones, though I have the written record complete, with names of all the victims. Suffice it to say that for years no one was the gainer by getting possession of them. They have always been impossible to sell until I bought this one, which is the first time either ever was offered honestly in the market. Before this each new owner had obtained the jewels either by theft or murder and dared not admit that he had them. Another curious thing is that no one has ever succeeded in hiding the jewels so that they could not be found. They have been secreted between the stones of a wall, they have been sewed under the hide of an ass and hidden in other equally obscure places, yet always the next thief has found and taken them."

"Ah, that is interesting!" said Mr. Thaurat. "But tell us frankly, since we are pledged not to repeat what we hear, do you suppose there is any power inherent in the stone which attracts persons to their discovery?"

"I cannot say, but that is one of the claims. This seems to be substantiated by recent events too."

"How so?"

"Well, my usual interest in large gems led me to police headquarters when that woman Rose Mitchell was killed, after having been robbed. The jewels, you remember, had been quickly recovered and are still in the hands of the police. I was allowed to see them, and the ruby in that lot is undoubtedly the mate to mine."

"You think that it was the presence of that stone which led to the discovery by the police of the satchel containing the jewels?"

Mr. Thaurat seemed much interested, but Mr. Mitchell merely shrugged his shoulders for answer, though it seemed plain that he did hold that opinion. Mr. Barnes wondered whether Mr. Thaurat's interest was due to the fact that, having stolen the jewels, he was astonished to hear of so strange an explanation of their recovery from the hotel where he had hidden them. Yet the man's next words seemed to dispel such a idea. He said:

"You may believe in that sort of thing, Mr. Mitchell, but I, who have only modern ideas, cannot accept any such theory. The fact that the stones have always been discovered when hidden has led those who know the history to mistake a chain of coincidences for evidence of supernatural power within the stones themselves. I think I can readily account for the series of hidings and findings."

"I should be pleased to have you do so," said Mr. Mitchell.

"Have you never read Edgar Poe's tale, the one where a letter is stolen and hidden? The detectives failed to find it, though it was in plain sight all the time, but another man did find it. He went upon the correct theory that the thief, knowing that a search would be made, and guessing that all obscure places would be explored first, would hide it in some common place manner. He visited the apartments, and found the letter in the letter rack. Now this is ingenious, but Mr. Poe here gives us a bit of special pleading and a curious

time came into the possession of Caesar. In his courtship of Cleopatra he soon discovered that extraordinary woman's passion for resplendent jewels, and he was anxious enough to present it to her. Fearing that this might be readily traced to him when the jewel was missed, as it would surely be, he told her secretly of his purpose and then tied about the neck of a pigeon, which flew with it directly to the palace of Cleopatra, who awaited the arrival of the bird on the rooftops. The pigeon, when nearly home, was attacked by a hawk, and Cleopatra ordered one of her archers to slay the larger bird with his arrow. This the man attempted, but struck the pigeon, which fell, bleeding and dead, at the queen's feet. She at once removed the gem, which was covered with blood and died with it a rich red."

"But, Mr. Mitchell," said Mr. Thaurat, "surely a ruby could not absorb blood?"

"It is the history of the gem," Mr. Mitchell spoke in so odd a tone that one almost thought that, carried away by his love of precious stones, he had imbibed some of the superstition connected with them. He spoke as though he believed the tale. Mr. Barnes began to understand what Mr. Randolph had meant when he said that perhaps the desire to possess a rare stone might tempt this gentleman to commit a crime. Mr. Mitchell continued:

"I need not follow the story of Cleopatra. It is too well known. But there is an incident that has not been written in the general history of her career. There was a fight between her and a man named Egbert her, and in a moment of impulse he dared to tell her of his attachment one day when alone with her. She seemed slightly amused at his ardor, and asked what he, a poor priest, could offer her, who had rich rials at her feet. In desperation he answered that he could give his life. The queen laughed and said: 'That is mine already. But you priests claim to be all wise. Find me the mate to my great ruby and perhaps I will listen to your love pleadings.' To her intense surprise the man replied: 'That I could do if I dared. The gem which you have has but returned to its proper place. It was once Pharaoh's. He also had the mate to it, which from him descended through his line to Ramesses the Great. It is buried in his coffin. 'Get it for me,' was the terse reply of Cleopatra, given now as a command rather than a request."

"In fear the priest went into the pyramid and stole the jewel. When he presented it to Cleopatra, she cried out at him: 'What fool's trick is this? Do you think this pale stone a match to mine?' The priest explained that hers had been dyed red in the blood of the pigeon. 'Ah, so,' she replied. 'Then this one shall be a richer red. You promised me your life once. I claim it, and in your blood this stone shall be steeped till it matches the other in color.' She carried out her threat, and the two stones were once more mates."

"What an absurdity!" exclaimed Mr. Randolph.

"Do not say so," said Mr. Thaurat. "We cannot tell what may happen in this world."

"The next change of owners was when Cleopatra killed herself. One of her handmaidens stole the two rubies, but she herself was taken, a slave, to Rome and sold. Her purchaser discovered the rubies, took them from her, and then secretly murdered her, lest she might tell that he had them. From this time on they have gone by the name of the 'Egyptian gems.' I need not give you the whole list of robberies and murders that have been connected with the two stones, though I have the written record complete, with names of all the victims. Suffice it to say that for years no one was the gainer by getting possession of them. They have always been impossible to sell until I bought this one, which is the first time either ever was offered honestly in the market. Before this each new owner had obtained the jewels either by theft or murder and dared not admit that he had them. Another curious thing is that no one has ever succeeded in hiding the jewels so that they could not be found. They have been secreted between the stones of a wall, they have been sewed under the hide of an ass and hidden in other equally obscure places, yet always the next thief has found and taken them."

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anomaly at the same time. He wishes to show that an obscure corner would be a bad hiding place, and so worked out his result. At the same time he draws a skillful thief who baffled expert police, and yet who hid his letter where the first man with brains easily found it. This is the anomaly. Where the article is small, as is the case with this lost ruby, there is but one safe place for the thief to hide his stolen property."

"And that place is?" asked Mr. Mitchell, himself betraying interest.

"Upon his own person, where at all times he could be on the alert to thwart the searching committee."

"Ah, you are forgetting," said Mr. Mitchell, "that idea was not overlooked by Edgar Poe. In the tale the man was waylaid by officers in disguise, who bound him, and then searched him. If the letter had been about him, it would have been found."

"Not at all. The letter was placed in an envelope, which had been turned, and then mailed so that on the reverse it received the postal imprint. This foiled the detectives when they examined the letter rack. It would have fooled them in exploring his pockets if found with other letters similarly addressed. On the other hand, had it been in his pocket the man who finally obtained it could have done so by creating a confusion in the street which attracted the man to the window. It would have been difficult for him even to guess that it was in the pocket. Besides with the ruby it would be simple, since it is an article that can be disposed of at a moment's notice."

"Very true," said Mr. Mitchell, "but—Here he paused for a moment and seemed abstracted. Quickly recovering, he said: 'What was I saying? I have lost the thread of our conversation.'"

"Mr. Thaurat suggested that the thief could keep the ruby about him," replied Mr. Randolph.

"Ah, exactly! Now I remember. Well, I should say that it would be a hazardous undertaking. I believe, had I stolen the gem—as, by the way, Randolph, you suggested—I could do better than that."

"Ah," said Mr. Randolph, "this is getting interesting. Come, tell us. How should you hide the jewel, supposing that you had taken it?"

"That is a leading question," said Mr. Mitchell. "I prefer not to answer it. Walls have ears, you know. He said this in a significant way that made Mr. Randolph uncomfortable for a moment. Mr. Mitchell at once continued, 'I will say this, however, that the thief, whoever he is, cannot profit by his theft.'"

"Why not?" asked Mr. Thaurat.

"Because there is not another gem in existence save those two which are so absolutely perfect in color. In fact, they are the standards by which rubies are valued. It is claimed that the expression 'pigeon blood ruby' owes its existence to the staining of one of these gems in the manner described. Dealers sometimes cut a pigeon's throat to compare the blood with the color of a gem being appraised. The significance of this is that the stolen gem cannot be sold as it is because it would be recognized, and I have notified all the great dealers in the world that my 'Egyptian gem' has been stolen. If it were attempted to have it cut up, the lapidary would at once report the matter, as the reward offered by me is greater than could be earned by recutting the stone."

"Suppose that the thief himself is a gem cutter?" asked Thaurat.

"Even then the perfect color would at once tell the first dealer to whom he applied that the 'Egyptian gem' had been recut."

"The thief might be a patient man, and all things come to him who waits," replied Mr. Thaurat.

"True," said Mr. Mitchell. "But mark my words, the 'Egyptian gem' will not be sold by the person who has it now."

"Especially if that person is yourself," said Mr. Randolph.

"Just so," answered Mr. Mitchell. The conversation now drifted to other things, and shortly after, the dinner being over, the three men separated.

As Mr. Barnes was about to leave the main dining room one of the servants handed him a note. Supposing it to be from Mr. Randolph, he opened it at once and was surprised and chagrined to read:

When Mr. Barnes next plays the eavesdropper, he should be careful to observe whether a mirror reflects both sides of a portiere which he might suppose would conceal him.

"The devil take it!" muttered Mr. Barnes. "I wonder at what point he discovered my presence. Was that last part about his having warned all the dealers—thrown in gratuitously for my benefit and to lead me to suppose that some one else stole the stone? If so, why does he now let me know that he saw me?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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The gifts to colleges, churches, libraries and public charities in this country last year amounted to \$28,943,549, against \$19,967,116 in 1894. This is one of the items that always manage to elude the professional socialist.

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