

The Diamond Bracelet

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CHAPTER V—(Continued.)

"I trust not, but I am very unhappy. Who could have done it? How could it have gone? I left the room when you did, but I only lingered on the stairs watching—if I may tell the truth—whether you go out safely, and then I returned to it. Yet, when Lady Sarah came up from dinner it was gone."

"And did no one else go into the room?" he repeated. "I met a lady at the door who asked for you; I sent her upstairs."

"She went in for a minute. It was my sister, Gerard."

"Oh, indeed, was that your sister? Then she counts as we do for nobody in this. It is strange. The bracelet was in the room when I left it—"

"You are sure of it?" interrupted Alice drawing a long breath of suspense.

"I am. When I reached the door I turned round to take a last look at you, and the diamonds of that particular bracelet gleamed at me from its place on the table."

"Oh, Gerard! Is this the truth?" "It is the truth, on my sacred word of honor," he replied, looking at her agitated face and wondering at her words. "Why else should I say it? Good-by, Alice, I can't stay another moment, for here's somebody coming I don't care to meet."

He was off like a shot, but his words and manner, like her sister's, had conveyed their conviction of innocence to the mind of Alice. She stood still, looking after him in her dreamy wonderment, and was jostled by the passers-by. Which of the two was the real delinquent? One of them must have been.

CHAPTER VI.

A little man was striding about his library with impatient steps. He wore a faded dressing gown, handsome once, but remarkably shabby now, and he wrapped it closely around him though the heat of the weather was intense. But Colonel Hope, large as were his coffers, never spent upon himself a superfluous farthing, especially in the way of personal adornment; and Colonel Hope would not have felt too warm, cased in sheepskins, for he had spent the best part of his life in India, and was of a chilly nature.

The Colonel had that afternoon been made acquainted with an unpleasant transaction which had occurred in his house. The household termed it a mystery; he, a scandalous robbery; and he had written forthwith to the nearest chief police station, demanding that an officer might be dispatched back with the messenger to investigate it. So there he was, waiting for his return in impatient expectation, and occasionally halting before the window to look out on the busy London world.

The officer at length came and was introduced. The Colonel's wife, Lady Sarah, joined him then, and they proceeded to give him the outlines of the case. A valuable diamond bracelet, recently presented to Lady Sarah, by her husband, had disappeared in a singular manner. Miss Seaton, the companion to Lady Sarah, had temporary charge of the jewel box, and had brought it down the previous evening, Thursday, this being Friday, to the back of the drawing room, and laid several pairs of bracelets out on the table ready for Lady Sarah, who was going to the opera, to choose which she would wear when she came up from dinner. Lady Sarah chose a pair, and put herself, the rest back into the box, which Miss Seaton then locked and carried to its place upstairs. In the few minutes that the bracelets lay on the table the most valuable one, a diamond, disappeared from it.

"I did not want this to be officially investigated; at least, not so quickly," observed Lady Sarah to the officer. "The Colonel wrote for you quite against my wish."

"And so have let the thief get clear off, and put up with the loss!" cried the Colonel. "Very fine, my lady."

"You see," added her ladyship, explaining to the officer "Miss Seaton is a young lady of good family, not a common companion; a friend of mine, I may say. She is of feeble constitution, and this affair has so completely upset her that I fear she will be laid on a sick bed."

"It won't be my fault if she is," retorted the Colonel. "The loss of a diamond bracelet, worth two or three hundred guineas, is not to be hushed up. They are not to be bought every day, Lady Sarah."

The officer was taken to the room whence the bracelet disappeared. It was a back drawing room, the folding doors between it and the front standing open, and the back window, a large one looking out upon some flat leads—as did all the row of houses. The officer seemed to take in the points of the double room at a glance; the door of communication; its two doors opening to the corridor outside and its windows. He looked at the latches of the two entrance doors, and he leaned from the front windows, and he leaned from the one at the back. He next requested to see Miss Seaton, and Lady Sarah fetched her—a delicate girl with transparent skin and looking almost too weak to walk. She was in a visible tremor, and shook as good before the stranger.

He was a man of pleasant manners

and speech, and he hastened to assure her: "There's nothing to be afraid of, young lady," said he, with a broad smile. "I'm not an ogre; though I do believe some timid folks look upon us as such. Just please to compose yourself and tell me as much as you can recollect of this."

"I put the bracelets out here," began Alice Seaton, laying hold of the table underneath the window, not more to indicate it than to steady herself, for she was almost incapable of standing. "The diamond bracelet, the one lost, I placed here," she added, touching the middle of the table at the back, "and the rest I laid out round, and and before it."

"It was worth more than any of the others, I believe," interrupted the official.

"Much more," growled the Colonel. The officer nodded to himself, and Alice resumed:

"I left the bracelets and went and sat down at one of the front windows—"

"With the intervening doors open, I presume."

"Wide open, as they are now," said Alice, "and the other two doors shut. Lady Sarah came up from dinner almost directly, and then the bracelet was not there."

"Indeed! You are quite certain of that."

"I am quite certain," interposed Lady Sarah, "I looked for that bracelet, and, not seeing it, I supposed Miss Seaton had not laid it out. I put on the pair I wished to wear and placed the others in the box and saw Miss Seaton lock it."

"Then you did not miss the bracelet at that time?" questioned the officer.

"I did not miss it in one sense, because I did not know it had been put out," returned her ladyship. "I saw it was not there."

"But did you not miss it?" he asked. "I only reached the table as Lady Sarah was closing the lid of the box," she answered. "Lady Frances Chenevix had detained me in the front room."

"My sister," explained Lady Sarah. "She is on a visit to me, and had come with me up from dinner."

"You say you went and sat in the front room," resumed the officer to Alice, in a quicker tone than he had used previously. "Will you show where?"

Alice did not stir; she only turned her head towards the front room, and pointed to a chair a little drawn away from the window.

"In that chair," she said. "It stood as it stands now."

The officer looked baffled.

"You must have had the back room full in view from thence; both the door and the window."

"Quite so," replied Alice. "If you will sit down in it, you will perceive that I had an uninterrupted view, and faced the doors of both rooms."

"I perceive so from here. And you saw no one enter?"

"No one did enter. It was impossible they could do so without my observing it. Had either of the doors been only quietly unlatched, I must have seen."

"And yet the bracelet vanished!" interposed Colonel Hope. "They must have been confounded deep whoever did it; but thieves are said to possess slight of hand."

"They are clever enough for it, some of them," observed the officer.

"Rascally villains. I should like to know how they accomplished this."

"So should I," significantly returned the officer. "At present it appears to me incomprehensible."

There was a pause. The officer seemed to muse; and Alice, happening to look up, saw his eyes stealthily studying her face. It did not tend to reassure her.

Your servants are trustworthy; they have lived with you some time?" resumed the officer, not apparently attaching much importance to what the answer might be.

"Were they all escaped convicts, I don't see that it would throw light on this," retorted Colonel Hope. "If they came into the room to steal the bracelet, Miss Seaton must have seen them."

"From the time you put out the bracelets to that of the ladies coming up from dinner, how long was it?" inquired the officer of Alice.

"I scarcely know," panted she, for, what with his close looks and his close questions, she was growing less able to answer. "I did not take particular notice of the lapse of time; I was not well yesterday evening."

"Was it half an hour?"

"Yes—I dare say—nearly so."

"Miss Seaton," he continued, in a brisk tone, "will you have any objections to take an oath before a magistrate—in private, you know—that no person whatever, except yourself, entered either of these rooms during that period?"

CHAPTER VII.

Had she been requested to go before a magistrate and testify that she, herself, was the guilty person, it could scarcely have affected her more. Her cheeks grew white, her lips parted, and her eyes assumed a beseeching look of terror. Lady Hope hastily pushed a chair behind her, and drew her down upon it.

"Really, Alice, you are very foolish to allow yourself to be excited about nothing," she remonstrated; "you would have fallen on the floor in another minute. What harm is there in

taking an oath—and in a private room? You are not a Chartist, or a Mormon—or whatever the people call themselves, who profess to object to oaths, on principle."

The officer's eyes were still keenly fixed on Alice Seaton's, and she cowered visibly beneath his gaze.

"Will you assure me, on your sacred word, that no person did enter the room?" he repeated, in a low, firm tone, which somehow carried her to the terrible belief that he believed that she was trifling with him.

She looked at him, gasped, and looked again; and then she raised her handkerchief in her hand and wiped her damp and ashy face.

"I think some one did come in," whispered the officer in her ear; "try and recollect." And Alice fell back in hysterics.

Lady Sarah led her from the room, herself speedily returning to it.

"You see how weak and nervous Miss Seaton is," was her remark to the officer, but glancing at her husband. "She has been an invalid for years, and is not strong like other people. I felt sure we should have a scene of some kind; that is why I wished the investigation not to be gone into hurriedly."

"Don't you think there are good grounds for an investigation, sir?" testily asked Colonel Hope of the officer.

"I must confess I do think so," was the reply.

"Of course, you hear, my lady. The difficulty is, how can we obtain the first clue to the mystery?"

"I do not suppose there will be an insurmountable difficulty," observed the officer. "I believe I have obtained one."

"You are a clever fellow, then," cried the Colonel. "If you have obtained it here, what is it?"

"Will Lady Sarah allow me to mention it—whatever it may be—without taking offense?" continued the officer, looking at her ladyship.

She bowed her head, wondering much.

"What's the good of standing upon ceremony?" peevishly put in Colonel Hope. "Her ladyship will be as glad as we shall be to get back her bracelet; more glad, one would think. A clue to the thief! Who can it have been?"

The detective smiled. When men are as high in the police force as he, they have learned to give every word its due significance. "I did not say a clue to the thief, Colonel; I said a clue to the mystery."

"Where's the difference?" "Pardon me, it is indisputably perceptible. That the bracelet is gone, is a palpable fact; but by whose hands it went, is as yet a mystery."

"What do you suspect?"

"I suspect," returned the officer, lowering his voice, "that Miss Seaton knows how it went."

There was a silence of surprise; on Lady Sarah's part, of indignation.

"Is it possible that you suspect her?" uttered Colonel Hope.

"No," said the officer. "I do not suspect herself; she appears not to be a suspicious person in any way; but I believe she knows who the delinquent is, and that fear, or some other motive, keeps her silent. Is she on familiar terms with any of the servants?"

"But you cannot know what you are saying!" interrupted Lady Sarah. "Familiar with the servants! Miss Seaton is a gentlewoman, and has always moved in a high society. Her family is little inferior to mine, and better—better than the Colonel's," concluded her ladyship, determined to speak out. (To be continued.)

WOMAN WHO RIDES HORSEBACK.

St. Louis for some time past has been greatly exercised regarding a fair equestrienne who has appeared daily on the fashionable drives around Lafayette park riding her steed bareback and astride. Her identity was known to few and the majority marveled greatly at her skill in managing her spirited steed and at her temerity in setting at defiance the accepted customs of her sex. With her blonde hair dressed pompadour, and her blue eyes flashing with exhilaration, clad in a clinging wrapper, wearing neither hat nor gloves, she goes forth daily for an equestrian stunt that astonishes the avenue. The identity of the fair horsewoman has finally become known to the public at large. She is Miss Jessie Goodpasture and belongs to an excellent family. She knows a good horse when she sees one, but she never refuses a ride on any animal that is offered, no matter how sorry a plug he may be. She prefers a horse with much spirit and plenty of speed, and she does not object at all to one that tries to throw her. "I have never been thrown," she says, "and I don't fear being thrown. I guess I can stay on any horse that comes along. I never rode a bucking broncho, though. I have heard of Miss Beattie Mulhall of Oklahoma and the way she rides horses and ropes cattle. Well, I suppose she is a pretty good rider, but I can ride a little myself. When Buffalo Bill was here two years ago I rode in his parade. I also rode in his show with the general turnout of riders. But I like riding astride better than on a side-saddle." Miss Jessie went from Springfield, Ill., to St. Louis eight years ago. She has never owned a horse, but depends upon acquaintances for her mounts. Whenever a boy rides past the alley in the rear of her home she craves the privilege of riding his horse. Then the neighbors witness a daring exhibition. "I don't know why I am so fond of riding," she said. "I guess I was just born that way. I'd rather ride than do anything else on earth. I just must ride."—Chicago Chronicle.

Christian science is said to be popular among art students in the Latin quarter of Paris.

Pictorial Humor

HE KNEW.



Edna (after he has proposed)—Ah! what is more delightful than a kiss?
Tom—Two.

PRACTICAL MISS GOLIGHTLY.

E. Singer in the Indianapolis Sun.—"As I sit here and gaze into the fire," said Cholly Staylayte, dreamily, "I cannot help but wax imaginative and poetic. It seems to me that burning chunk is old King Cole, and that those red flames are his dancers—now darting up, now leaping down and around in order to amuse their king. It seems to me that the crackle of the embers is the music by old King Cole's fiddlers three, and—"

"Yes," interrupted Miss Golightly, yawning wearily and looking at the clock, "but in that case the old king, and not papa, ought to pay the fiddlers."

And, after a long while, it dawned upon Cholly that a ton of coal was almost as valuable as two Irish potatoes, and he took his leave.

ONLY JUST HER HUSBAND.

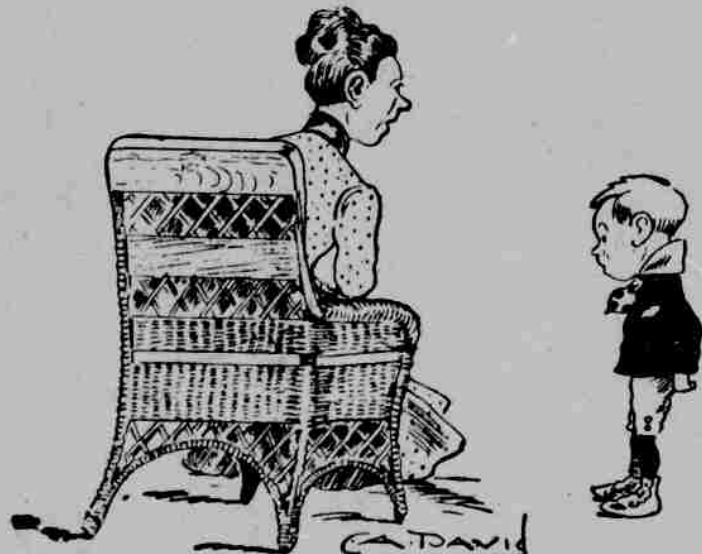
Mistress—Mary, you had a man in the kitchen last evening. Was he a relative of yours or a friend?

Maid—Neither, marm; he was only just my husband.

Teacher—"And why should we endeavor to rise by our own efforts?"

Johnny Wise—"Cause there's no tellin' when the alarm clock will go wrong."

A FOSER.



Mrs. Jones—Neah took a pair of every living animal into the ark so that they wouldn't have been drowned.
Bobbie—Did he take in fish?
Mrs. Jones—Yes.
Bobbie—Would they have been drowned, mamma?

ECONOMY.

Mrs. Chugwater—What do you buy such cheap shirts for? They are the most expensive in the end. They're all worn out after you have had them washed half a dozen times.

Mr. Chugwater—Then they only cost me 50 cents for washing, and that's a big saving. You go on with your fruit canning. You can't teach me anything about buying shirts.

IN THE PAPER.

Ida—"They say Belle is the picture of health these days."

May—"Yes, some remedy company is using her picture in their testimonials."

Forge—"Your raglan is out of style. You should have the new 'Kitchener Yoke.'"

Fenton—"Not I! I am a Boer sympathizer."

CONSIDERATE.

"Why is that picture turned toward the wall?"

"Oh, that is a haying scene, and we have to hide it whenever Uncle Thomas visits us, because he is a hay fever sufferer."

VERY GOOD FORM.

Rodrick—"I wonder why old Three-score took his bookkeeper along when he went to select a young wife?"

Van Albert—"Oh, I guess he wanted some one who was good at figures."

AN ALTERNATIVE.



Mrs. Hayseed—I see they've stopped the roof gardens in New York for the winter.
Mr. Hayseed—I reckon they'll have to rely on their hot-beds fer late vegetables, then.

ALWAYS READY.

"You're not the man that answers the questions, are you?" inquired the stranger.

"Yes, sir," said the man in the chair. "I suppose you've been asked a good many times before, but I'd like to know the exact pronunciation—"

"Ro-ze-v't," interrupted the man in the chair, turning again to his work.

"Thanks."

THE ACTUAL COST.

"How do you like my new hat?" asked the first woman of the other at the matinee. "The total cost was only \$20."

"Pardon me, madam," chimed in the disgusted man behind, "but you should include the price of my seat, which makes the total \$21.50."

"How do you know he loves you?" said Miss Cayenne.

"He writes me such beautiful letters."

"Humph! That isn't love. That's literature."



Johnny (pointing to a centipede)—Mamma, look at that thousand-leg!
Mrs. Nowrick—My dear child, don't say such vulgar words. You mean a thousand-limb.

THE ONLY TIME.

"What a great boon hairpins are to women," observed Pennington.

"And to men," hastened Meekwood. "How so?"

"Why, when a woman fills her mouth with hairpins a man has a chance to get in a few words."

ISN'T SAFE.

"Chesney lives in Brooklyn, but belongs to a New York club. When he happens to meet some of the old boys he stays all night."

"Why is that?"

"He's afraid to cross the bridge with a load."

THE NEW FAD.

Stubb—"Since my wife has taken up bowling she is always after me for money to play the game."

Penn—"More pin money, eh?"