

HER FATHER'S THEFT

The famous Crampton diamond threw back the light from its many facets, and strange, brilliant colors shot from its depths. It was the finest stone I had ever seen in my life.

I was particularly pleased with my design for the setting. No other hand had touched it, and I felt that the frame, so to speak, was worthy of the picture.

The ring, now that it was finished, was fit even to adorn the hand of Gwendolen Forrest, the beauty and heiress of the season. But I did not envy young Mr. Crampton his fiancée; in my own mind I had a girl as good and as pretty as any in the land.

I was about to take the ring to Mr. Nugent when Nell herself ran in. She was my employer's daughter, and his private house was upstairs over the large showroom in Clifford street. It was against all custom for Nell to come down to my workshop, for her father disapproved our engagement. But to-day she had not been able to resist the temptation of having a peep at the Crampton diamond.

Just as she slipped it on her finger and was dancing about, twisting her hand that the marvelous stone might catch the light, the door opened and Mr. Nugent entered. I prepared to defend Nell from a harsh reprimand, but none came. Her father appeared oddly pre-occupied, merely took the ring from her, examined it earnestly and, snapping the lid of the case upon it, placed it in his pocket and walked away.

Next day I was sitting at work when I saw a hansom drive up and Mr. Crampton jumped out. He came hastily into the show room, which adjoined the one where I was sitting, and where Mr. Nugent was.

"Scoundrel!" I heard him say, and could scarcely believe my ears. "You thought to fool me easily by a false stone, but I am as good a judge of jewels as you are. You are a thief, sir! What have you done with the diamond I entrusted to you?"

Mr. Nugent answered in a lower tone. What he said could not have made any great impression upon Mr. Crampton, however, for he impatiently interrupted, and at last an ominous threat concerning the "police" reached my ears.

I sat still. I understood well that Mr. Crampton had deliberately accused my employer of trying to palm off upon him an imitation diamond, yet I knew that I had set the true stone and delivered it to Mr. Nugent only yesterday.

My employer himself was a skilled workman, though not a good designer, and in the time that had elapsed between my handing him the ring and his transferring it to the owner he could have removed the stone and replaced it by another. But for such a bold trick to succeed the imitation must be magnificently made, and the original diamond must have been carefully measured.

As I thus speculated on the astounding accusation, Mr. Nugent himself opened the door of the workshop. He looked keenly at me, as if wondering if it would be safe to trust me.

"Did you hear anything of what passed in the next room?" he questioned.

I admitted that I had. "Of course, I shall be triumphantly acquitted," he announced, clearing his throat huskily as he spoke. "Still, Mr. Crampton can make things disagreeable. And, look here, Wade, I have always been as friendly to you as I might, but I can trust you. You'll be an important witness. Do what you can for me, for the girl's sake."

The words sounded strange, but I was not given time to answer, for at that moment Mr. Crampton returned with two Scotland Yard men. My employer was given into custody and taken to the police station to be charged, the detectives remaining to search the premises.

Late in the evening they came to me in the workshop, and, holding out the ring that I had made for Mr. Crampton, one of them said:

"This is your work, we understand. Is that the stone you set?"

I glanced at it, but I only replied: "I don't call myself an expert in precious stones, and all I can say is that this one precisely resembles in size, shape and appearance the one given me to set."

While this statement was superficially true, that one glance had been enough to me that I was not looking at the Crampton diamond.

The detectives left, saying that I would have to tell all I knew in the witness box, and then, just as I was about to lock up the place for the night, Nell came in. It was the first time she had let me see her since her father had been taken away.

The face which I had thought the sweetest on earth was marble white, and there were dark shadows under her lashes.

"There's something I must say to you," she panted; "something I've been wild to say all day long. It should be too late, but I dared not let any one suspect. A month ago father confided to me that he had lost a great deal of money, and he showed me how to open a secret drawer in his Chippendale bureau. If ever anything happens to me," he said, "don't lose a moment, but look into this drawer; throw away everything that you will find in the left-hand partition and keep what may be in the right."

Together we ransacked the old bureau, and at length Nell touched the spring which opened the secret drawer. I drew in my breath sharply, for the light of the candle which I held struck out a gleam from a pile of exquisitely made false stones which lay in a partition on the left hand, while

on the right was the Crampton diamond.

Involuntarily I betrayed the dreadful nature of the discovery by an exclamation, for, left to herself, Nell would not have understood. But she was quick to comprehend, and, realizing the worst, she swayed, staggering backward.

"My poor father!" she moaned as I held her. "He is ruined forever—and I, too! The daughter of a convicted thief is no fit wife for an honest man!"

"My darling! You are a wife for a king, and as for your father, I swear to you that I will save him yet."

"You? You cannot!"

"I tell you that I can and will." For even as I spoke an idea flashed into my head which startled me by its audacity. In a moment I had thought out every detail.

I made up the stones, Crampton diamond and all, into a packet, carefully closing the secret drawer and contriving to get away without being seen, went straight to my brother's house in Kent, managing to avoid the service of a subpoena. Thus I was not present at the police court proceedings, which would have meant ruin for my plan.

Mr. Nugent was committed for trial, and meanwhile I stayed in the country, working each night in my locked room with the tools I had brought with me until the gray dawn filtered under my closed shutters.

When I saw my old employer in the dock at the trial I was shocked at the ghastly change which had come over him.

The evidence at first went steadily against him. It was proved that he had lost money heavily on the stock exchange. Mr. Crampton swore that the stone in the ring delivered to him by Mr. Nugent's own hand was not his diamond. One expert testified that not only was the stone he now saw not a genuine jewel at all, but a marvelous imitation. Another was not so positive. He looked at the gem through his glass, turning it this way and that, declaring that in all his experience he had never seen a false stone so cleverly executed as this. Indeed, he was not prepared to swear that it was false.

This was the first ray of doubt which had been thrown by the evidence upon Mr. Nugent's guilt, and then I went into the box. I was cool now, for the game I had determined on had cost me many a qualm of conscience. But I had no intention of cheating Mr. Crampton, swearing falsely, or tarnishing my personal honor.

The preliminary question of the prosecuting counsel brought out the fact that I had designed the ring's setting and done all the work upon it.

"What sort of stone was it you employed gave you to set?" was the next question.

"An extremely valuable white diamond," I replied.

"Do you consider it possible that stone might have been taken out and an imitation one substituted?"

"Certainly! But I could tell whether the ring had been tampered with since it left my hands."

"Take this, then examine it, and inform the court if that is the stone you set."

The ring was handed to me and a hush fell upon the court. The kind of hush which denotes that a vital point in a case has been reached.

I put my hand in my waistcoat pocket for my jeweler's glass, and the sharpest eye could not have seen that I also drew forth a new ring, made in the secret hours of the night—an exact counterpart of the other, save that it contained the real Crampton diamond.

I pretended to examine the imitation with great care, while all eyes were fixed upon me. At length I returned the glass to my pocket, and with it the ring with the false stone. I could hear my own heart beating; but, handing to the court usher the new ring, I said firmly, in reply to the snappish "Well?" of the prosecuting counsel:

"I swear unhesitatingly that the setting of this ring has not been tampered with, and that this is the genuine diamond which was given me to set."

A rustle went round the court; the doubting expert pricked up his ears; the prosecuting counsel, with Mr. Crampton and the treasury solicitor, were whispering over the ring.

"Your Honor," said the counsel, "I ask permission to recall the expert."

I stepped out of the box and the expert stepped in. The new ring was put into his hand, a friendly ray of sunshine lighting up the jewel.

"This is remarkable," he said at last. "It is the first time I have ever made a mistake. This stone is genuine. I cannot doubt it."

And so the prisoner was free. But when the verdict of "Not guilty" was pronounced a faint groan echoed it, and a dead man was taken from the dock. A spasm of the heart had proved fatal.

Six months later Nell and I were married. On our honeymoon we were walking in a lane near Iffracombe, when we came face to face with Mr. Crampton, who was staying with his bride in a neighboring house.

"Ah, Mr. Wade!" he exclaimed, "I haven't seen you since that mysterious case of mine. Do you know, I have always since thought of you—as a very—clever man?"

"Thank you," I said quietly. "Will you allow me to present you to my wife—the only daughter of the late Mr. Nugent?"

THE ONLY ONE OF THE KIND.

Such Rare Prizes Are Always Taken, and None to Spare.

The woman entered the ticket office.

"I want a ticket to Piltsburg on the Limited," she said.

The clerk looked doubtful.

"Don't you want to know how much it costs?" he asked.

"I've seen your advertised rate," she said.

"But, of course, you expect to get a discount of some sort?"

"No."

"Well, surely you want to know how much you'd save by going on another train?"

"No; the limited suits me."

"Or perhaps you'd like to have me explain why excursion tickets are not good on that train?"

"No."

"Don't you want to know if the rate is likely to go down 50 cents if you wait over until tomorrow?"

"No."

"Or why it's higher than it was last summer?"

"No."

"Or if you can stop over for two weeks somewhere to visit your Aunt Samantha?"

"No."

The clerk leaned over the counter.

"Pardon me, madam," he said, "but are you married?"

"Yes."

"It's too bad," he sighed, "but I might have known such a prize would not be unclaimed. I haven't seen another like you in all the time I've been here."

Tom Reed's Title of "Czar."

Speaker Thomas B. Reed had for the first time, amid continuous uproar, enforced his new rules upon the House, and that body was in open revolt.

Many members of his own party rebelled at the imperious dictatorship of the Speaker.

The Speaker's imperious domination over the popular body of Congress was generally declared to be contrary to a republican form of government—decidedly Russian in character.

As this dispatch was clearly the news feature of the night, I myself, as managing editor, undertook the continuation of the big head. As a top line, I wrote:

REED, THE RUSSIAN.

The compositor did not follow the marks indicating the size of display type, but used a larger font. Consequently, the words overran the column, and the proof came back thus:

REED, THE RUSS.

A new catch-line had to be invented immediately, because the page was "made up" and waiting. After several attempts a happy thought suggested a single word that has become a part of American political history. I directed the foreman to set in the largest possible type and place over the article the words:

CZAR REED.

The title was an instantaneous hit. It was caught up throughout the country—its use not confined to democratic papers at first—Julius Chambers in The Reader.

WITH ELIZA'S HELP.

The local train, which had been speeding out of town at the rate of twelve miles an hour, came suddenly to a standstill with a violent recoil at a level crossing in a country lane, and Reynolds, shaken out of his reverie, opened the window, quite prepared for an accident.

But as the view from the window revealed only an impassive stretch of green he settled back to consider a more important question.

She was a friend and neighbor of the Potters. There was a fairish chance that she might be seen at their house, since an invitation to see her at her own home had not been forthcoming.

That ten minutes' tiff at the seaside at Easter where they met had not in the least detracted from her charm, though it had entirely demolished his welcome, and he would do much to be near her for a week—for that he could endure the Potters.

A moment later the little guard came up to him.

"I beg pardon, mister," he said, lowering his voice to a whisper, "but you have a bag there which looks as if it might have a musical instrument in it."

"Why, yes," the young fellow answered in astonishment. "My banjo."

"A banjo! That's lucky! What tunes can you play? Can you play, 'Rule Britannia'?"

"Great Scott! Why, yes, I think so. But what in the name of patience—"

"Then you're the man we want. This way, sir, please, and as quick as you can, if you don't mind we can't move the train an inch till she bears 'Rule Britannia'."

Reynolds caught up his banjo case and hurried after the official, wondering, as he went, which of them had gone insane, and whether the attack would prove to be a permanent softening of the brain or merely a temporary aberration.

A number of passengers had left the train. They were gathering en masse around the portion of the level crossing which intersected the lane.

For a moment the young man stared about him with ever increasing little for his own mental condition. Little by little a light broke in upon his brain.

A few yards only of line lay between the engine and the level crossing. Squarely in the middle of the track at the crossing stood the obstruction in full view. It was a small, antiquated pony phaeton, drawn by—or, rather, attached to—a round white mare.

The animal was neither standing, the usual and approved attitude of her kind, nor prostrate, as will sometimes happen by accident. She was sitting upon her glossy haunches, a calm, almost blasé expression in her brown-green eyes.

The carriage was occupied by two women. One of them, a stout, elderly, maiden-aunt-looking person, was engaged in making voluble explanations to a delighted crowd. The other, a girl in white, who leaned back among the cushions and laughed, in evident enjoyment of the situation.

At the sight of the girl Reynolds drew back, with a little cry of astonishment, under his breath. Then he ran forward, lifting his hat.

"Why, Miss Perry! I'm tremendously sorry to find you—ahem—delayed in this way. What is the trouble? Can I be of any assistance?"

The pleasure which exuded from the young man's face was not reflected in that of the girl's.

"How do you do, Mr. Reynolds?" she said. "I do no idea you were in this part of the country. No, so far as I am concerned you can be of no assistance, I think. If the train people want to try any experiment, of course, they are welcome to do it for the sake of getting the train in motion. Aunt Milly," she added, turning to her companion, "you have heard me speak of Mr. Reynolds? My aunt, Miss Blithe—Mr. Reynolds."

Miss Milly grasped his hand with a warmth which was in striking contrast to the chilly demeanor of her niece.

"So glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Reynolds, though I must say the circumstances are not those I would generally like to meet people under. Such an embarrassing position! I wouldn't have had it happen for the world. I never thought of Eliza behaving this way on a railway, or I should have been afraid to drive her. You see, Eliza has not sat down for years now, and we thought she'd quite forgotten it. She is an old circus horse, as you may imagine, though I'd no idea of that when I bought her. It isn't Eliza's fault, really. She thinks she's doing perfectly right you know. They taught her to sit down at the circus, and not get up till she heard the 'Rule Britannia!' and she never will get up until she hears it."

"Lady," cried the guard, elbowing up, "we are ten minutes late now."

"Ten minutes late? How sorry I am! It is most unfortunate in every way that Eliza should relapse just now, when she has not sat down in years. It's just like her, remembering about sitting down this morning when I am on my way to the station to take the train to London to see my old friend Amelia Lewes, intending to let my niece drive the phaeton. But now I shall be afraid to let Barbara return alone, and Amelia leaves London for Liverpool at 1, and I would give the world to see her, as I may never see her again for years."

"I am only going around the curve to the station," Reynolds suggested, "I am en route for the Potters. It would give me great pleasure to see your niece safely home."

"There is no need in the world of any one accompanying me!" said the young lady with great decision. "Eliza would not hurt a fly. I really prefer driving alone."

"That is like you, Barbara. You are always so brave," cried Miss Milly. "But remember, love, that I am older and more nervous, and since Mr. Reynolds so kindly offers, I accept for you, Barbara, and I insist on you availing yourself of his kindness."

"You are perfectly right, Miss Blithe. It would not be safe, to say the least, for Miss Perry to attempt to return home alone. And, far from inconveniencing me, it would be a great pleasure," urged the young man.

He seated himself on a fallen tree trunk, and slipped the cover from his banjo, keeping his eye fixed on a portion of the landscape where it was impossible for them to encounter the eyes of Miss Milly's niece.

A moment later a particularly vivacious "Rule Britannia," entered the somnolent country atmosphere. Something in the exultant strains of the melody caused Miss Barbara to gather pretty brows.

Eliza, however, was unforgoingly pleased. At the first notes her ears twitched, assuming an upright attitude, suggestive of earnest attention. At "Britons, never, never," she turned her head and regarded the player with what appeared to be unqualified approval. Slowly gathering her forces together, she rose in a dignified manner at the first chorus and drew the phaeton from the line.

The spectators cheered. The guard shouted a warning, a general scramble for seats ensued, and Miss Milly had just time enough to enounce the howl of the phaeton, while she took the vacant place in the train.

When the last carriage had rounded the curve and became lost to view, with Miss Milly's handkerchief fluttering like a white moth from one of the rear windows, Miss Perry gathered the reins.

"Do you mean," she said addressing the empty air directly in front of the phaeton, "that you will continue to force yourself upon me the entire distance home?"

"I promised Miss Blithe to take you home in safety, and, of course, I mean to fulfill my promise."

"But my aunt is gone now with a perfectly easy mind. A child of two could drive Eliza, and I really prefer going alone."

"I couldn't reconcile it with my conscience. You might meet with some accident, and then how could I face Miss Blithe? One never knows what will happen, especially in driving excursive horses."

"If you are determined to be so horrid, the best thing I can do is to get home as soon as possible," remarked the young lady.

For some moments they drove on in silence. When the voice came again from the left hand of the phaeton it had undergone a change. It was positively humble.

"Please don't be so hard on me," it pleaded. "The temptation was really too much—a whole ride with you, when I'd been trying for weeks to see you and couldn't."

As the whip hand side had nothing apparently to add, the left hand resumed.

"You don't know how sorry I was about that affair at the seaside, and how I suffered after I cooled down. I admit it was all my fault, and I wrote to you begging you to forgive me. But you sent the letter back unopened. Isn't there something I can do to win back your good opinion? I'd do anything you say, no matter what."

"You might get out of the carriage and allow me to go on alone. I should really appreciate that," said the whip hand with instant readiness.

Whatever the left hand intended to say in reply was left unsaid, for at this point the phaeton stopped suddenly. Eliza was sitting down again. Reynolds fell back upon the seat and howled. The situation soon proved too much for his companion also. They laughed together until Eliza cocked her ears in astonishment.

"Good old Eliza!" cried the young man when he had partially recovered. "She knows a thing or two. She won't budge a step until I play 'Rule Britannia,' and I will never play a note of it until you invite me to accompany you the rest of the way."

"You won't take a mean advantage like that surely?"

"Won't I, though?"

"But that is most unfair."

"All is fair in war and—"

"Please play," she interrupted, quickly.

"Not a note. Are you going to invite me?"

"I am not. I shall start Eliza without you."

The attempt to set Eliza in motion by alternate kindness and discipline was a failure.

At the end of fifteen minutes Miss Barbara returned to her seat, exhausted.

"I suppose I must accede to your demands," she said, "or I shall be here permanently."

"Do you invite me of your own free will to accompany you home?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Cordially?"

"You never said it must be cordial."

"It must certainly be cordial."

"Well, cordially, then."

"I am entirely at your service," he answered, opening the banjo case.

Five minutes afterward a rotund white mare jogged easily along a charming country lane drawing a phaeton which contained a man who laughed and a girl who protested, albeit not wrathfully, that something or other was a mean advantage and detestably unfair.—London Answers.

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Why an American in Europe Decorated Himself.

"I was traveling abroad," said the returned tourist, "and I noticed that in the railway carriages, at the stations, in the hotels and everywhere, certain travelers were paid every consideration, although they spent no more money than I did. The railway guard sprang to open the door for them, the hotel people gave them the best they had and every one seemed anxious to do them honor. At one of the big hotels I noticed a number of these men who had got the best of me at all times for several days back, and I consulted the waiter.

"Why is it," I asked, "that this man and that man and the other man are shown so much courtesy and attention?"

"Ah," said the waiter, "they have been decorated. One has the Legion of Honor, the other the Golden Eagle and that one the Order of the Star. All gentlemen having decorations are given the utmost consideration."

"I saw the point, and bethought me of an old inauguration badge I had with me, which I had worn as chairman of some committee. I dug it out of my trunk and pinned it on my coat. It was about ten inches long and three broad and as gaudy and tinsel as a dozen orders all in one. No one knew what it meant, but it was a decoration, and as such carried me all over Europe in as fine style as if it were an emblem of the noblest order of the Old World."—Washington Post.

Putting on a Bold Front.

The great publisher was very busy. "But just listen to one chapter in my new novel," pleaded the struggling author. "Beautiful Helene heard a step on the piazza. Thinking it was Jack, she rushed down! When she found it was the callow Reggy Rich, with a box of candy, she tossed the sweets out in the street and closed the door. Then—" "Hold on!" interrupted the impatient publisher. "If you think a girl is going to throw candy in the street these days you don't know enough about human nature to be an author."—Chicago News.

Cause Enough.

"My wife came near fainting last night?"

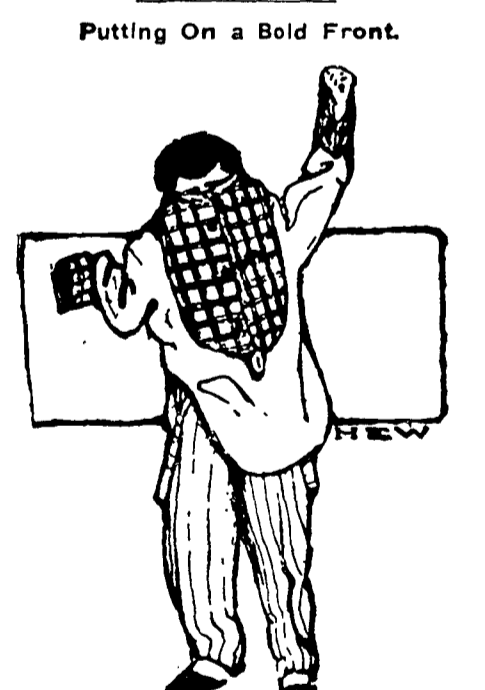
"Indeed. What was the matter—fright?"

"No, nausea. The room was close and warm, and she found herself suddenly very sick and dizzy; but she managed to get to a window and threw up a sash."

"Threw up a sash? Heavens! What had she been eating?"—Kansas City Journal.



explain why excursion tickets are not good on that train?"



First Bad Break.