

# ACQUIRING EXPERIENCE

A Father Puts His Son's Shrewdness to the Test

By THOMAS R. DEAN

"My son," said Nathan Mayer, a jeweler, "I am getting old and have decided to give up my business to you. I shall leave enough capital with you to enable you to carry the same amount of stock I have always carried. Before turning over the management, however, I desire that you prove yourself fitted to assume it."

"Why, father, have I not been in your employ four years? Am I not considered an excellent judge of gems? What need I of proving myself fitted to manage the business?"

"I admit, Isaac, that as a judge of gems, especially diamonds, you are a better man than I, who have been in the business more than forty years. It is not having passed on you spurious stones that I fear, but the many tricks that are perpetrated by swindlers on jewelers. I have endeavored to sharpen your wits by explaining to you the different methods that have been attempted upon me, but my reputation for shrewdness has been such that few attempts have been made to get property from me without paying for it in good money. I shall go away on a trip, and during my absence you shall have charge of the business. Since you are a young man, the swindlers will consider you one to be attacked with a fair chance for success. If on my return you have withstood their efforts and have kept the business up to its present prosperous condition I will turn it over to you."

"Never fear, father, I will increase the sales and will not get swindled either. How long will you be absent?"

"Six months. I think that long enough for the test."

Nathan Mayer gave his son, Isaac, power of attorney to manage the business, to sign his name to checks and to use his capital; then the old man went abroad for change, rest and recreation. Isaac was only twenty-two years old, but was considered one of the smartest young men in the jewelry trade. He was very anxious to show his father on his return that he had not only done a larger business than the concern had ever done before, but had made no losses. Five months of his trial passed, and so far he had made good both his promises. There had been but few attempts to get gems from him without payment, and these had seemed so palpable he wondered that any one could have taken him for such a fool as to be deceived by them.

Two weeks before his father was to return, in securing his profits since the old man's departure, Isaac Mayer noticed that they were \$4,200 more than those of the previous six months. He had hoped for an excess of \$5,000. He determined to strain every nerve to make-up the remaining \$800.

A few days later a gentleman who, from his appearance might have been an English marquis, stepped into his store and asked to be shown some bracelets. The stranger's daughter was with him. She examined the jewels with her father, and it was evident that any purchase he might make would be for her. She wished a bracelet set with a ruby between two large diamonds, worth \$6,000, but her father was unwilling to spend so much money for her in this way. Mayer heard her appeals and the reply of her father, who told her that if certain securities he had ordered sold in London in case the market price on the Stock Exchange should rise to a certain figure had been realized upon it would have given him a profit three times the cost of the bracelet and he would gladly buy it for her. Instead he purchased one she fancied, set with a sapphire, worth \$150. Drawing a check book from his pocket he wrote a check for the amount, saying that he would send some one, in whose knowledge of gems he had confidence, to look at the setting, and if he pronounced the sapphire genuine Mayer was to send the bracelet to his hotel. The seller would have ample time to discover if the check was good.

The next day a man came into the store, looked at the bracelet, pronounced it genuine, the check was found to be good, and the bracelet was sent to the customer's hotel.

A few days later the stranger's daughter entered the Mayer store, evidently in very high spirits, and told Isaac to send the bracelet she had coveted to her father at his hotel. "The shares have been sold," she exclaimed, bubbling with excitement. "Papa got a cablegram from London this morning."

The girl was very pretty and very charming in her frankness. She couldn't wait till the bracelet had been sent home, but must have a look at it. When it was being shown her she manifested a great deal of trepidation lest the purchase should be delayed pending the sending of funds from London. Another thing that troubled her was that her father had once bought a jewel and an inferior article had been substituted on delivery. She feared there would be a lot of red tape about that. Isaac assured her that all would go satisfactorily if she would be patient, and she departed apparently somewhat comforted.

The same afternoon Isaac took the

bracelet himself to the stranger's hotel. He found the gentleman somewhat indisposed, which was given as a reason for not going to his store instead of requiring him to come to his hotel. The man who had pronounced on the sapphire was telephoned for and was some time coming. Meanwhile Isaac was entertained by the young lady very agreeably. He took occasion to pump her about her father's antecedents, his home and affairs in England and other matters in order to satisfy himself that his customer was a gentleman from whom he had nothing to fear. She ingeniously told him many things that gave him confidence.

When the expert came in he examined the bracelet with great care, using a microscope for the purpose, and when he had done so said to the Englishman:

"These stones are genuine and worth the price asked for them. But one thing I wish distinctly understood—I am approving them, and them alone. If in this transaction you come into possession of similar stones of less value don't blame me. That is your lookout and not mine."

At this the young lady looked troubled and her father seemed puzzled.

"I was caught that way once," he said, "and will never be so imposed upon again. Let me see." And he appeared to be thinking of some plan by which he might feel sure he would get the article he paid for. "The trouble is two-sided," he went on presently. "I don't ask Mr. Mayer to trust me any more than I am willing to trust him. It is a purely business transaction. If I had the price of the bracelet right here in gold coin and could exchange the bracelet for the gold we would both be satisfied. Unfortunately I must wait for funds to be cabled from London, which will require several days. I fear we shall have to go over this inspection again when my funds arrive."

"I shall not be here to make it for you," said the expert. "I am leaving town tomorrow to be gone for some time."

The girl looked ruefully at Isaac as if to say, "I told you so—I shall never get my bracelet."

"I can suggest a way out of the matter," continued the expert. "Seal the bracelet in this box in which it came to you with your seal. Let Mr. Mayer take it back to his store and keep it till you are ready to pay for it. Then break the seal yourself and you may be sure you have the gems I have pronounced upon."

"That's a good idea," said the Englishman. "I will not claim the bracelet till my check for it is pronounced good. Would that satisfy you, Mr. Mayer?"

"Perfectly," said the jeweler, secretly hoping that the funds would arrive and the sale be effected before his father's return. There was \$900 profit in it, and Isaac needed the amount to make up the \$5,000 excess he desired to show during the old man's absence.

Meanwhile the box containing the bracelet had been passing from one to the other of those present. At Isaac Mayer's assent the Englishman took it from his daughter. Mayer, who was keeping an eye on it, glanced at it as it passed from father to daughter and though they were at some distance from him, saw the lid go on the box containing the bracelet. Wax was produced and the box sealed with a ring the purchaser wore on his little finger. Then it was handed to Mayer, who, very happy over the sale, withdrew.

Several days passed, and nothing more was heard of the Englishman or his daughter. Isaac sent a clerk to the hotel to ask after them. He came back with the information that they had left town the day the sale was made. Isaac made a jump for the safe in which he had placed the bracelet, broke the seal, took off the cover, and there nestled inside was the bracelet he had sold for \$150. He had been victimized to the amount of \$5,850.

In less than a week Nathan Mayer arrived from abroad and instead of finding a hearty welcome from his son was received with a inglorious countenance.

"What's the matter, Isaac?" he asked quickly. "Anything gone wrong?"

Isaac told the story of how he had been victimized with a hanging head.

"Well, my boy," said the old man, "you've learned what I have long known—that it takes a lot of experience in the jewelry business to keep out of the toils of sharpers. You'll make it up some day. Don't worry about it now. I've just got home and have invited some friends I met abroad to dine with us. Don't put a damper on the dinner by mourning over your loss."

This did not comfort Isaac, but he managed to get into dinner dress to help entertain his father's friends. What was his astonishment when he went from his room down to the drawing room to see the Englishman and his daughter who had swindled him. On a table lay the bracelet they had made away with.

"This is my friend, Mr. Ackerman of London," said Nathan Mayer. "Miss Ackerman—You've met before, eh? Well, you must forgive your old father for playing a trick on you. I laid the plan myself. We talked it over in London, and they, coming over ahead of me, carried it out beautifully."

Miss Ackerman advanced, smiling, put out her hand to Isaac and grasped his warmly.

"Forgive me," she said.

"If I had to be swindled," he replied, "I would prefer to be swindled by so charming a young lady. I must compliment you on your ability as a deceiver."

"You mean as an actress," said Mr. Mayer, she

# AN IDEAL PERSONAGE

He Became Unpleasant on Acquaintance

By SAMUEL E. BRANT

I grew up under the influence of tales of western life. The desperado of the plains was to me a fascinating person, and the wickedest he was the more I admired him. It is a curious psychological fact that wickedness is attractive because it is wicked. I question if young persons who enter upon a life of crime do not often do so solely for this motive.

As I grew older I began to lay plans for getting out to the wild west, not to make a desperado of myself, but to gratify my curiosity as to what the life out there really was, and after finishing my education I concluded to go to one of the territories, look about me, and if I found a place to suit me, settle and grow up with the country. I selected Arizona, which has since furnished the scene of many novels and plays of western life.

I brought up in Coconino county at a small town from which I proposed to make an observation tour through the surrounding country. I found the region much as it has been depicted in theatricals, barring the stage effects. I got into a little play of my own, and it came very near being a tragedy.

I was riding through the country one day when I met a man on horseback, of whom I asked the way. He was a quiet looking, quiet spoken young fellow and cheerfully gave me the directions I asked for. We were about to part when I noticed him looking at me critically. He seemed to be taking note of my height, weight, the color of my hair and eyes and the shape of my face.

"You look like me," he said.

"Do I?"

"Except the clothes."

"I haven't got an Arizona outfit yet! If I stay here I'll probably adopt the costume of the country."

"I reckon we'll swap."

"Swap what?"

"Well, we'll trade hats first."

There was something in that cold gray eye of his as he spoke the last words that rendered any enforcement of them unnecessary. Though they were a command, he did not even put his hand to his pistol. He carried also a pair of revolvers in holsters slung across his saddlebow, either of which he could have grasped and used long before I could have got my own revolver out of its case, cocked it and brought it to bear upon him. I understood that I was to change hats with him, and taking off mine, handed it to him. Then I took off my coat and gave him that and such other articles of clothing as he demanded. Lastly, he called for my belt and pistol and gave me all his extensive armament in return. The exchange having been finished, he rode on.

"Never in my life have I felt so comfortable. I had submitted to his will without resistance, and now I was riding away armed to the teeth, while he possessed one small pistol that I had brought from the east and considered a plaything in Arizona without making any attempt to regain my own. Was it my being unused to the ways of the region I was in, or the domination of a superior will, or a feeling that my man could kill me as quick with my tiny revolver as with all the various weapons he had transferred to me? I don't know myself, but I suspect was deterred from putting up a fight by all these reasons.

I rode on as mild mannered a man as the one I had met, but with weapons innumerable. What the fellow wanted with my clothes, why he had given me his arms, was to me an insoluble mystery. But it didn't require a long time to find out. After a while I met several men riding on the road together. They were chatting and paid no attention to me, till I came very near them. Then one of them looked at me and started. We made the usual salute of strangers meeting in a new country, and I thought no more of the encounter. But I had not gone fifty feet before I heard a sharp command from behind:

"Hands up!"

I put my hands above my head and waited. The men who had passed me returned and relieved me of my armament.

"Dead easy, wasn't it?" said one of them to the others.

"You bet. I never thought he'd be taken without blood spilling."

"My friends," said I, "will you kindly inform me what all this means?"

"And will you kindly inform us what you mean by being thus taken unawares?"

"I wonder if you don't think I'm some one else?"

"We don't think you're any one. We know you're Jimmy the Kid, one of the most notorious desperadoes in Arizona, and we'll see that you don't do any more murders. What do you say, boys? Shall we string him up right here or take him in and let the sheriff do the job?"

I told them of the man I had met and how he had forced me to change clothes and arms with him. The story affected one of the three, but the other two laughed at it. Nevertheless since one of them doubted my identity the other two gave in and consented to turn me over to the sheriff.

What an hour I was obliged to fall in a small town built on the bank of a stream. The sheriff told me I was mistaken for—was full of tricks and was doubtless now engaged in playing one of them. He would call the vigilance committee together and have me tried and hanged as soon as it could be reached. Meanwhile he thought I'd be safe in the stone jail back of his house. If I tried to escape he would save the committee the trouble. I heard him say this indeed, he intended that I should.

He soon left the place, and I gave myself over to thoughts of no pleasant character. If I made no effort to get out and away when the committee arrived I had every chance of being hanged. And yet I was appalled by his threat, but not so much so as to prevent my looking about for a loophole.

The jail was an old stone smoke-house, with a door made of iron bars. It was getting dusk when I saw a girl somewhere between fifteen and seventeen years old come out of the back door of the jailer's house and take up an armful of firewood. I called to her. She dropped the wood and came to the door of the jail.

"What'd ye want?" she asked.

"Have you any feeling?" I asked.

Instead of replying she stood looking at me, silent, and I went on. I told her my story as I have told it here and asked her if she could and would find a way to aid me to escape, assuring her that if she did not I would be surely hanged by mistake. I saw sympathy welling up in her eyes and had hope.

"I can't. Pop's gone to get the committee, and now she's gone over to Aunt Sarah's. Pop he's got the key of this door with him."

"How long will they be gone?"

"Maw she told me to get supper and have it ready at 8 o'clock. Reckon she and pop'll be home by then."

"Is there any one else in the house?"

"No."

There was a good hour in which to act. I asked the girl if there was a crowbar in the house. She didn't remember any such implement, but she suggested that I should go to the door of the jail was in the wood house. I asked her to get it for me. She started to do so, and it occurred to me that she would suffer by allowing it, and I called her back to ask her what they would do with her if they knew she had helped me to escape. She said she didn't know, but she wasn't afraid of her pop, though everybody else was. He wouldn't hurt her. Then she went on and brought me the bar.

I worked half an hour with it, prying and bending the bars of the gate near the lock, and at last succeeded in loosening the bolt from the catch. There was also a chain as an auxiliary, but with a thick bar six feet long I got a big leverage on it and broke it. Then I was free. The next question was what I should do to get away from the locality. Of course I would be followed.

"Got any horses here?" I asked the girl.

"Yes."

"A horse won't do. I would have to keep on open ground, where I would be seen and his hoofs would leave tracks."

"There's a boat. You might drop down the creek. Pop keeps a bloodhound in the barn to track folks with; he can't sit the scent if you go by water."

"The very thing. No; that won't do either. The boat would be missed. But I'll take to the creek. How can I get out of here and do it without leaving tracks or scent?"

"I can carry you."

I looked at her. She was of good size and seemed strong. "If you can you will probably save my life," I said.

She turned her back to me, I got my arms around her neck, lifted my feet from the ground, and taking hold of my legs, she staggered with me to the creek, a distance of several hundred feet. There she set me down in the water.

"Goodby!" I said.

"Goodby!"

I drew her to me and kissed her.

"How would you like to go east to a school and grow up a lady?" I asked her.

Her face lighted up. "Can I go now with you?"

"No, but if I get out of this alive and the mistake is rectified, I will write your father a proposition to do something for you to reward you for what you have done for me."

I held her hand and felt it turn in mine, indicating the emotion she felt, but did not put in words. I was some time in releasing it, then waded down the creek, turning before coming to a bend to look back and throw her a kiss. Her eyes were fixed on me when I disappeared.

I learned afterward that the jailer was completely baffled at the direction I had taken, since there was no indication of it whatever. I got back to where I was known, and my recent jailer was notified that he had held the wrong person. "Jimmy the Kid," as the real desperado was called, was never captured, but he was shot when not suspecting an enemy was near.

My brief experience in the west with my previously admired desperado served to satisfy me, and I left by the first train for the east. The girl who I am almost sure saved me from a nasty execution is now at school in New England, and she should see the change in her from the wild thing she was when she brought me the bar that pruned me out of jail to what she is today. My friends wit me, saying that I am educating a girl to make my wife, but I don't care for their innuendoes, for I am paying her for my very existence. I only wish there was more that I could do in the same direction, for the price seems infinitely small.

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