

THE GREAT CAT'S-EYE.

*A Romance from a Detective's Case-Book.*



BY DICK DONOVAN,

Author of "The Man from Manchester," "Tracked to Doom," "Caught at Last," "Who Poisoned Hetty Duncan," "A Detective's Triumphs," "In the Grip of the Law," &c., &c.



As everyone knows, the late Lord Middlewick had a perfect craze for collecting rare gems and works of art; and, being a man of unbounded wealth, he was enabled to gratify his tastes to his heart's content. His cabinet of precious stones was considered to be unique in its way, and contained the very rarest specimens of the world's gems, including some truly magnificent diamonds and pearls. His lordship, however, always considered that the collection was imperfect, owing to the absence of a good specimen of the very peculiar stone known generally as the cat's-eye, on account of its close resemblance, both as regards colour and iridescence, to pussy's optic. This gem seems to be peculiar to the island of Ceylon, but it is seldom that a really good specimen is discovered. Through some cause that has never been satisfactorily explained, the cat's-eyes have certain flaws in them, particularly as regards their iridescence, which not only greatly depreciate their value, but cause them to be rejected by collectors. It had long been Lord Middlewick's ambition to say that he was the possessor of the most perfect cat's-eye in the world; but, though he had practically ransacked Europe—in fact, it might be said that he had

ransacked the world itself—he had not succeeded in obtaining what he wished. At last a report went the round of the papers that a cat's-eye had been discovered in Ceylon that was absolutely without a flaw. It was said to be as large as a hen's egg, and of such magnificent colour that it was peerless, and was roughly valued at fifty thousand pounds. It was announced that several offers had been made for it, but undoubtedly it would pass into the possession of Lord Middlewick, whose agent was already on his way to Ceylon, and was instructed to secure the gem at any cost.

Four months passed, when there assembled at Lord Middlewick's splendid mansion in Berkshire a large number of ladies and gentlemen, including many well-known experts, who had been specially invited to have the first view of the now renowned cat's-eye, which had arrived the day previous, in charge of his lordship's representative, Mr. Lionel Ashburton, the son of General Ashburton, who distinguished himself so much during the Indian Mutiny. Mr. Ashburton was well known as an authority on precious stones, and his famous work, "The World's Great Gems," which cost years of research, is still considered the standard book of its kind. Mr. Ashburton had been out to Ceylon to

examine and report on the treasure. That report being favourable, he had purchased it for his lordship.

There was a brilliant gathering in what was called the "Green Tapestry Chamber" of his lordship's house. On the table was placed a small iron box, sealed with seals, and triply secured by means of iron bands and padlocks. All was excitement and eagerness to behold the new acquisition to the collection, which, it was now admitted, would be the most marvellous collection ever got together by one individual. With a great deal of ceremony his lordship proceeded to break the seals, which were all impressed with the stamp of the house of Jeeheboy, Lalam, Goosh & Co. Then the tapes were cut, the padlocks undone, and the lid of the outer box duly opened. In this box was another one, which was also locked and sealed; and this being lifted out and placed on the table, it was opened with no less ceremony in the presence of the assembled company. In this second box was what might be described as the kernel; it was a carved case of sandalwood, secured with ribbon, and also sealed. The seals were broken, the lid opened, and, amidst the most intense excitement, the stone was lifted out and placed on a bed of spotless white wool, laid on a silver salver. But instantly the countenances of all present fell, and there was a general murmur of astonishment and disappointment; for the stone that the people gazed upon appeared to be nothing more than a common, colourless pebble, such as might be picked up on a sea beach. His lordship turned to Mr. Ashburton, and said—

"There is something wrong here, surely. What does this mean?"

"My God!" exclaimed Mr. Ashburton, who had become deadly pale, "the great cat's eye has been stolen!"

It is far more easy to imagine the consternation this exclamation caused than to describe it. Mr. Ashburton was so overcome that he fainted, thereby adding to the confusion which the startling discovery had caused. And Lord Middlewick, apologising to his guests for the unexpected *dénouement*, despatched the following telegram to me—

"Come down here immediately. If necessary, engage a special train."

This was done, and as soon as I reached the mansion, and my presence was announced, his lordship came hurriedly to me, and conducted me to his library. He

was evidently labouring under considerable excitement and distress.

He was a little, middle-aged man, with a most intellectual face, and small, keen grey eyes that had a habit of fixing one, as it were. As he shook me by the hand with that cordiality that was so characteristic of him, he said, with strong emotion manifesting itself in his voice—

"I have sent for you, Donovan, as the only man I know of who is likely to be of service in this extraordinary case. A stone of enormous value—a great cat's-eye, for which I have paid an almost fabulous sum—has been stolen."

He then proceeded to give me all the particulars as I have detailed them at the beginning of my story, and, when he had finished, he asked me what my opinion was.

"It is curious," I remarked thoughtfully.

"Curious!" he echoed excitedly. "It is something more than curious; it's one of the most extraordinary cases I've ever known, and seems to me to admit of but one solution."

"And what is that, my lord?" I asked.

"Well—Ashburton can, if he likes to open his lips, tell us what has become of the stone."

"You impute dishonesty to Ashburton, my lord?" I remarked.

"In plain words—yes."

"I should like to see Mr. Ashburton."

His lordship rang the bell, and a servant appeared.

"Tell Mr. Ashburton to come here," was the order that his lordship gave; and, when the servant had retired to execute the command, I turned to Lord Middlewick, and said—

"I must ask you, my lord, to leave the room during my interview with Mr. Ashburton."

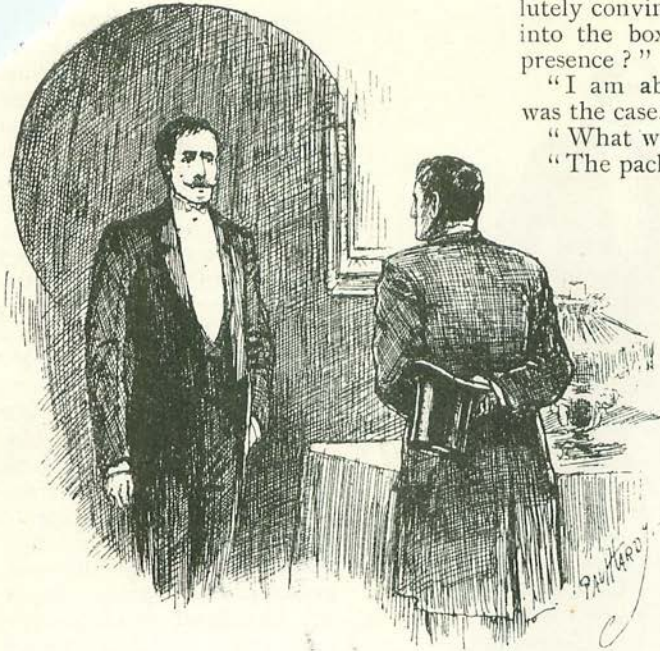
His lordship did not seem very well pleased; but, shrugging his shoulders, he remarked, "Oh, very well, as you like."

A few minutes later, Mr. Ashburton came in. He was a very gentlemanly, quiet-looking man, with a frank, open countenance that immediately impressed me in his favour. He was extraordinarily pale, and looked worried and anxious. He seemed a little surprised at seeing me—a stranger to him—in the room, and said in a somewhat confused way—

"I thought Lord Middlewick was here."

"No, he has retired by my request."

"Indeed; and may I ask what your name is?"



"MY NAME IS DONOVAN."

"Certainly. My name is Donovan—Dick Donovan. I am a professional detective; and have been requested by his lordship to try and recover the stolen cat's-eye. But, now, I want you to answer me a few questions, Mr. Ashburton. Did you see the cat's-eye packed?"

"I did."

"You actually saw it put into the box?"

"Undoubtedly I did."

"Who was present at the time?"

"Mr. Jeeheboy, Mr. Goosh, of the firm of Jeeheboy, Lalam, Goosh & Co., from whom the gem was purchased; and Mr. Samuel Prince, head of the Colombo banking firm, Prince, Halford & Payne."

"Was anyone else present?"

"There were two clerks, natives, whose names I do not know."

"And you have no doubt in your own mind that the real stone was placed in the box?"

"Not the slightest doubt. I am absolutely certain it was."

"You then saw the box sealed?"

"I did."

"Was it ever out of your presence, between the putting in of the stone and the sealing?"

"Not for a single instant."

"Then, unless you were the victim of some strange optical illusion, you are abso-

lutely convinced that the real stone was put into the box, and the box sealed in your presence?"

"I am absolutely convinced that such was the case."

"What was done after that?"

"The package was handed into my care, and I gave a receipt for it."

"And after?"

"I placed it at once in a strong leather trunk, and went on board the P. and O. steamer *Bentinck*, which had just come in."

"And did you embark at once?"

"I did."

"Were there many passengers on board?"

"Yes, a good many."

"How long did the steamer remain in port after you went on board?"

"About four hours."

"And was the leather trunk containing the cat's-eye placed in your cabin?"

"It was."

"And not removed all the voyage?"

"No."

"Was the leather trunk intact when you arrived in London?"

"As far as I know, it was."

"Have you any doubt on the subject?"

"Not the slightest."

"You still have that trunk, I suppose?"

"Certainly I have."

"Could I see it?"

"Oh, yes. Will you see it now?"

"Yes, I should like to do so."

In compliance with my request he led me to his bedroom on the second floor, where in one corner stood a dome-shaped leather trunk of very solid construction. It was secured with two locks in the front, the locks being about a foot apart. I asked to inspect the keys, and Mr. Ashburton at once produced them.

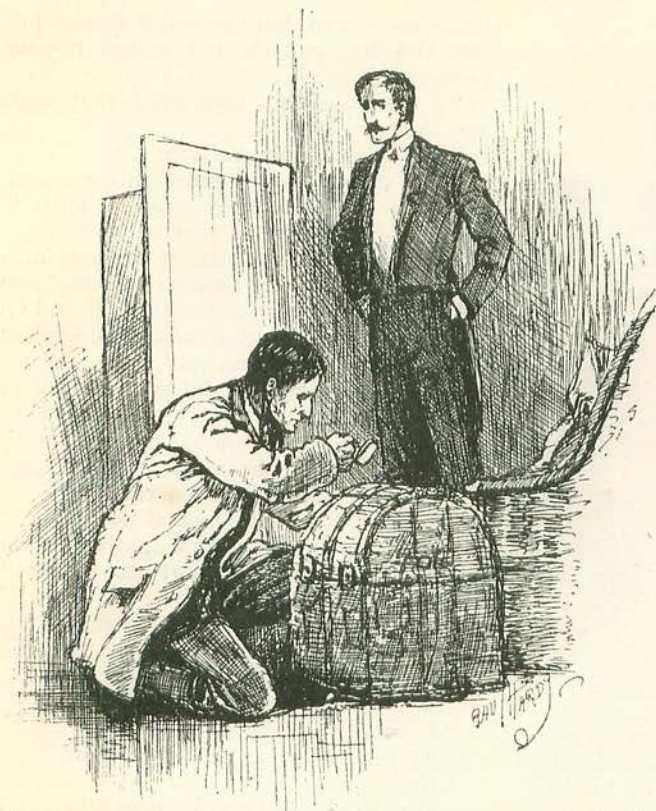
"I see you have two keys?" I remarked.

"Yes."

"Will one key open both locks?"

"No; each lock is of a totally different construction."

I noted that the keys were quite different to ordinary keys. They were made in the shape of a shield, and had an unusual number of wards. I next proceeded to examine the trunk with the aid of a powerful glass, and I was enabled to determine



"I PROCEEDED TO EXAMINE THE TRUNK WITH THE AID OF A POWERFUL GLASS."

that the brasswork of one lock at least had been considerably filed.

"Now, answer me this, Mr. Ashburton," I remarked. "Have you the faintest idea when and where that lock could have been tampered with?"

"I have not," he exclaimed with strong emphasis. "On my soul, I have not," he added, with a fervency that I felt sure could not have been assumed.

I returned to Lord Middlewick, who exclaimed impatiently—

"Well, what's the result now, Donovan?"

"Do you give me *carte blanche* to act as I like in this matter?"

"I do," he answered.

"Good; then I shall proceed to Colombo at once."

His lordship seemed to think that such a step was unnecessary; but I told him that it was my custom always to begin at the fountain-head in such cases. And in this particular one it was of the highest importance to endeavour, by every possible means, to determine whether the robbery had been effected in transit, or before the box containing the stone was removed from

Colombo. As he came to the whole matter from my point of view, he offered no further argument against the course I proposed, and within two days from that time I was travelling express to Brindisi, to catch the outward-bound P. and O. steamer for the East.

No news had reached Colombo of the loss of the stone when I arrived there, and I had kept my mission a secret from everyone. My first step was to seek an interview with Mr. Jeeheboy, a sedate, dignified Indian gentleman, who received me with the most business-like courtesy; and I at once began to study him, but saw nothing in his manner or style that suggested in the slightest degree the likelihood of his being a party to the theft. After a few preliminary remarks, I said—

"You have recently sold a very fine specimen of a cat's-eye to Lord Middlewick, I understand?"

"I have," he answered; "and I believe it to be one of

the finest stones of its kind the world has ever produced."

"You saw it packed, and delivered into the safe keeping of his lordship's agent, did you not?"

"Undoubtedly I did," he exclaimed, as his countenance lighted up with a look of anxious interest.

"You have no manner of doubt in your own mind that the stone was in the box when the box was secured and sealed by you?"

The question caused Mr. Jeeheboy to start visibly, and, though it could not be said that his dusky face grew pale, there were indications in it that clearly betrayed how agitated he was. His dark eyes peered into mine, and for some moments he remained silent, as though somewhat at a loss how to answer me. But at last he said—

"Sir, your question alarms me, for it seems to suggest that something is wrong. I will answer you, however, to the point at once. I am as certain that the cat's-eye was in the box when I set my seal upon it as I am that I am a living man, and talking to you!"

"Did you seal the box yourself?"

"Yes. In the presence of one of my partners and two of my clerks, and of Mr. Prince, head of the banking firm of Prince, Halford & Payne, in whose hands the gem had been placed for safety. But, I beseech you, tell me, has the stone not reached its destination?"

"It has not," I answered. "The stone has been stolen."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Jeeheboy, perfectly aghast. Then he added quickly, "If that is true, the gentleman — Mr. Ashburton — who took it away must have stolen it."

"Why do you think so?" I asked, wishing to know whether his opinion was merely the suspicion begotten by circumstances.

"Who else could have done it?" he exclaimed, with the air of a man who felt sure that he was right.

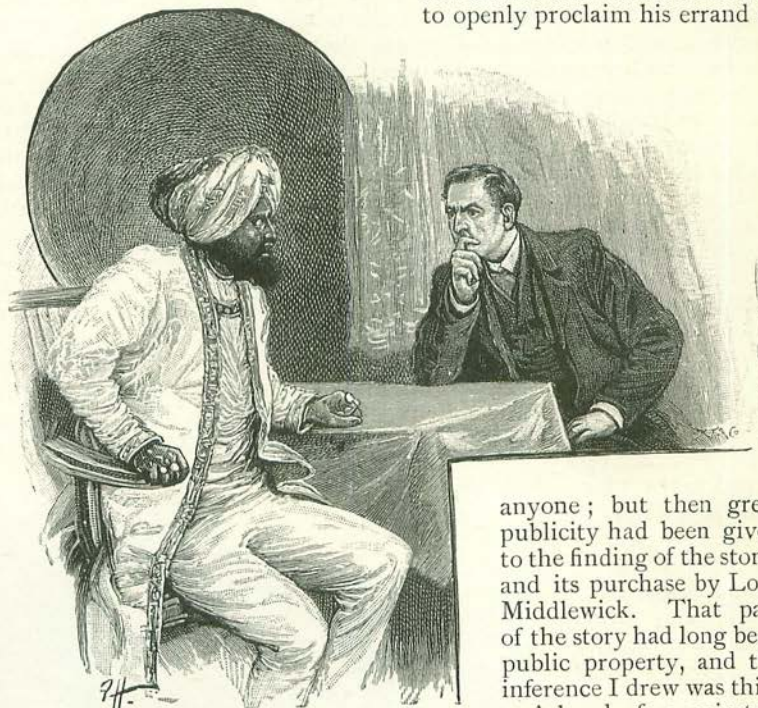
"Ah, that is the problem. Later on I may be able to give you an answer. At present I cannot do so. In the meantime I should like to see your partner, your clerks, and Mr. Prince."

Goosh and the clerks I saw at once, as they were on the premises; and they confirmed, in the most emphatic manner, the statement of the head of the firm—that the stone was safely in the box when the box was sealed.

Having finished my business so far with the firm of Jeeheboy, Lalam, Goosh & Co., I waited on Mr. Prince at his residence, a very handsome bungalow on the outskirts of the town. He was no less surprised than everyone else had been when he heard that the cat's-eye had been stolen; and, if possible, he was even more emphatic than Jeeheboy and Goosh were in stating that the gem was in the box when the box was sealed up.

I now felt perfectly satisfied in my own mind that the great cat's-eye had duly left the island in the care of Mr. Ashburton, and that it had been purloined between that time and the date of the arrival of the box in London. By whom I had yet to learn; but it was clear that the thief must have had a knowledge that the gem was on board. How did he get that knowledge?

Mr. Ashburton was not the man to openly proclaim his errand to



"IMPOSSIBLE!" EXCLAIMED MR. JEEHEBOY.

anyone; but then great publicity had been given to the finding of the stone, and its purchase by Lord Middlewick. That part of the story had long been public property, and the inference I drew was this:—A band of conspirators had leagued themselves

together to steal the precious gem. I say "a band of conspirators," because I was quite sure that no person single-handed could have carried out the robbery. And I was no less sure that one or more of the conspirators must have been well acquainted with the way in which the box was sealed up, and, more than that, they must have been provided with the means for closely imitating the seal of Mr. Jeeheboy's firm. The line of argument I pursued suggested at once that a system of espionage had been instituted, and Mr. Ashburton had been closely watched.

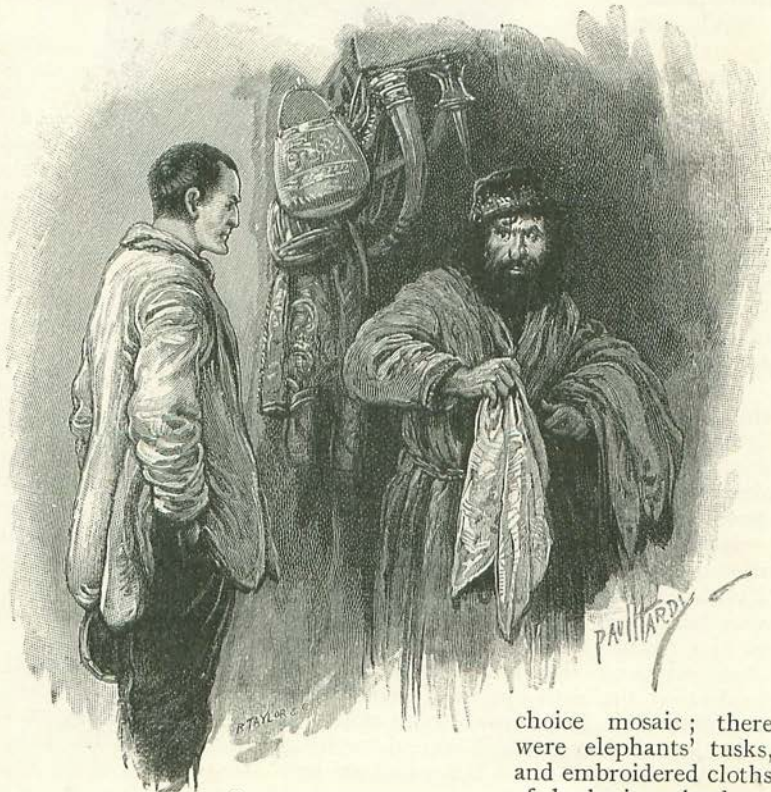
This process of ratiocination determined me to make the most searching inquiries as to the strangers who were staying in Colombo at the time Mr. Ashburton was there; and these inquiries brought forth the following suggestive facts—

Two or three weeks before Mr. Ashburton's arrival the Rev. Arthur Jobson and his wife landed from an outward-bound steamer that was going to Calcutta. The Rev. Arthur Jobson was an invalid in, apparently, shattered health; and he had suffered so much at sea that he vowed he would go no further, as he wished to be buried on shore, for he had a sentimental dread of being thrown into the deep. His wife was represented to be a most charming woman, and much sympathy was shown for her and her husband, who was a comparatively young man. She was visited by most of the European residents, and the devotion she displayed for her husband called forth the admiration of everyone.

It was quite thought when he first came on shore that the Rev. Arthur Jobson would not live many weeks, but the climate of Ceylon exerted such a beneficial effect upon him that he began to improve, and when the *Bentinck* arrived he announced his resolve to give up all idea of going on to Calcutta, which originally had been his destination, and to return home in that vessel. It was understood that his wife was somewhat opposed to the plan, but he was firm in his resolve, and so passages were secured in the *Bentinck*, and when she sailed on her homeward voyage the Rev. Arthur Jobson and his wife were cabin passengers in her. I learnt that "Jobson" and his wife went on shore at Aden, whence with some difficulty I traced them to Marseilles.

I now asked myself why he had gone to Marseilles. He must have had some special reason for doing so. What was that reason? Seeking for it, I lighted upon what seemed to me the most feasible one,

namely, to open up negotiations for the sale of the gem. I was aware that in Marseilles was a firm of Jews, who traded under the style of Moses Cohen & Sons. These enterprising gentlemen were said to be the largest dealers in precious stones and *bric-à-brac* in Europe, and a little bird had whispered to me that they were not too particular with whom they did business. They would buy gems and jewels from anyone, and ask no questions, so long as they thought they could make money, and avoid complications with the legal authorities. To Messrs. Moses Cohen & Sons I resolved to go, and, by means of a stratagem, endeavour to worm from them the information I wanted, should it so happen that my surmise was correct. And so one morning I entered their shop, which was situated near the docks. It was a dingy, ramshackle, tumble-down sort of place, filled up with as strange an assortment of things as could have been found in any part of Europe. There were stuffed crocodiles and precious vases, gold tankards and Indian clubs, rings and jewels, shells and beads, rare rugs, filigree work, specimens of



"I ENTERED THE SHOP."

choice mosaic; there were elephants' tusks, and embroidered cloths of barbaric splendour,

head-dresses, shoes, and sandals from every clime under the sun—in short, it was the most heterogeneous and the oddest collection of things I had ever beheld under one roof, while the combination of scents and smells that assailed the nostrils defies even a suggestive description.

I had cropped my hair short *à la Française*, donned a blue blouse, a much-worn pair of trousers, and sabots. Ostensibly I was a French ouvrier, but from a certain assumed sullen expression, and a furtiveness of look, I might have aroused suspicion that I was not averse to any little enterprise, however illegitimate. Indeed, I had purposely endeavoured to suggest that I was by no means unfamiliar with the French hulks of Brest.

As I entered the emporium of curios I was confronted by a strange-looking little man, who eyed me with a pair of eyes that were as keen as hawk's, and of a purple blackness of hue. His face was of the most pronounced Jewish type, and his nose singularly suggestive of the beak of a bird of prey. He wore a Persian cap of embroidered velvet, and was otherwise attired in a very much frayed and faded Eastern robe, loosely held together at the waist by a silken cord ornamented with gold thread, while his feet were thrust into a pair of Turkish slippers. In age he was probably about thirty, though he really looked older, while his general expression was that of cupidity and cunning. He was engaged in examining a bundle of silk handkerchiefs from some Eastern bazaar, and, as I entered, he snarled out, as he fixed his eyes upon me—

"What do you want?"

He spoke in French, of course, and I answered him in French.

"I want to see the head of the firm," I said.

"I'm the head at present," he growled again. "What is your business?"

"Trade," I mumbled.

"What have you got to trade?" he demanded in the same growling sort of way.

"Nothing," I answered sharply, "if you treat me like a dog."

"Where do you come from?" he asked with a sort of savage eagerness.

"Paris," was my curt answer.

"So. And what are you?"

"Something more than I seem," I muttered.

"And what have you got to trade?" he asked, growing more eager.

"Gems and jewels," I replied, fixing my eyes upon him, and I saw his grow brighter, if that were possible, while in their dark depths the *auri sacra fames* manifested itself as I had never to my knowledge seen it do in such a way in any other eyes. The light that gleamed from those dark orbs was the light that comes into the miser's eyes at the sight of a heap of gold.

"Where did you get them?" he fairly gasped out, suppressing his excitement as well as he could, though it was too manifest to be altogether concealed.

"Well, sir, that's my business," I replied; "but I had a hint given me by one who is as staunch as steel that your firm would do a trade. I'd like to see your father, though."

"You can't."

"Why not?"

"Because he is not here. I tell you I'm the head at present, and I can do business as well as he can."

I affected not to notice this remark, but asked—

"When will your father be back?"

"I don't know."

"Can you give me no idea?"

"No."

"Then I'll come again," I said, and I made a movement as if about to go.

"Stay!" he cried. "If you want a good market, it is here; and I'll deal fairly with you, if you have stuff that is worth attention."

"Oh, of that there is no doubt. But I'll come again when your father is in."

This reiteration irritated him, and he said in the snarling way I had already noticed—

"You are a fool, and if you won't trade with me, you shan't trade with my father."

"Well, that may be so," I said with indifference, "but I'll try him, anyway."

"Then you'll have to wait a pretty long time."

"Why?"

"Because he's not in the country."

"Where is he?"

"He's in Morocco," came the unguarded answer; and, though it certainly might have been my fancy, I believe I detected in his face evidence of a feeling on his part that he had been foolish in speaking so hurriedly.

"Oh, he's in Morocco, is he!" I exclaimed.

"Well, that's unfortunate for me." Then after some moments of reflection, I asked, "Are you to be trusted?"





"I'LL THINK OVER THE MATTER."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, will you treat a fellow squarely, and not give him away."

"Certainly," he answered, "and secrecy and despatch is our motto."

"Well, I'll think over the matter," I replied, "and come and see you again."

His anger and irritability made themselves manifest. But, without waiting for him to continue the argument, I left the place with an instinctive feeling that I had again struck the trail; for it instantly occurred to me that old Moses Cohen had gone to Morocco in company with Jobson, who had changed his name to Rowland, and if I could establish that fact there could be but one deduction, namely, that they had gone to try and sell the great cat's-eye. I directed my attention now to tracing Rowland, and I found that he and his wife went to Lyons, then doubled back to Marseilles again, and took passage in the French steamer *La Pelouse* for Algiers, and in that steamer old Cohen also sailed.

The scent was getting hot now, and my surmises were becoming hard facts. In going to Lyons, Rowland had been actuated, no doubt, by the belief that he was making it more difficult for him to be traced; and when he and his wife came back to Marseilles, they had again changed their name, and were then known as Mr. and Mrs. St. John Clair, and in that name they were entered on the passenger list of *La Pelouse*. That they were the people I wanted there

was not the slightest doubt, for the description I received of them tallied exactly with the Rev. Arthur Jobson and his wife, who had been in Colombo.

Perhaps I need scarcely say that as soon as I could possibly get a steamer I was speeding to Algiers after them, and, arrived there, I ascertained they had proceeded to Mogador. This was the place, then, where they hoped to find a market, and to Mogador I resolved to go. But I saw the necessity for taking counsel with the French authorities in Algiers, and I appealed to Colonel Jules Marcet, who was in charge of the garrison. This gentleman promised to aid me in every possible way,

and he furnished me with an escort of ten Arab soldiers in charge of two French officers, and an interpreter, and, as I could tolerate no delay, we set off at once.

On reaching Mogador, I learnt that "an old Jew trader," speaking Arabic perfectly, had recently arrived in company with a white man and his wife, and the Jew had brought with him a most wonderful gem, which he was anxious to sell to the Sultan, who was then at his summer palace about twenty miles inland. Accordingly the Jew and the white man and his wife had gone out to him. It was now necessary to take such steps as would render it tolerably certain that I should recover the long missing gem. To do this some subterfuge would have to be resorted to, for the Sultan was a wily monarch, and, had he been so disposed, he might have sent the stone to some safe place of keeping in the heart of his country, and have defied anyone to obtain possession of it. I therefore, with the approval of the officers of my escort, had a message conveyed to him to say that I had come from England to see him on a very urgent matter indeed, and I humbly craved that he would grant me an audience, as my business was of such a nature that his interests might suffer if he refused to see me.

After waiting a few days his barbaric Majesty's answer came, and it was to the effect that the interview I solicited would be granted, and on the morrow an escort

from the palace would arrive to conduct me and my attendants to his presence.

When the next day dawned—it was a day of splendour and heat—fifty picturesque horsemen, each man clad in the ample white garments peculiar to the country, and mounted on a superb Arab steed, clattered into the town, and by command of His Majesty they had brought a spare horse for my use. After some delay we left the strange and quaint town of Mogador and struck inland. I had adopted the dress of the country, even to the ample folds of linen around the head and the peaked embroidered shoes of red Morocco leather. I also carried a native gun, and in my belt two of the large and formidable knives peculiar to the country. But, as a matter of self-protection, I had far more faith in the two heavy six-chambered revolvers, each barrel loaded, which I carried concealed beneath my dress, but easily get-at-able.

As we approached the palace a body of the Sultan's troops lined the road and saluted as we passed; and, entering a great gateway of exquisite Moorish architecture, I found myself in a quadrangle, in the centre of which was a clump of date-palms; and a fountain gurgled and plashed, impressing one with a most refreshing and delightful sense of coolness. Beneath the shade of the trees a group of men reclined, and a little further off a number of closely veiled women were squatted on the ground; and, though the eyes were the only part of their features exposed, I could not fail to observe, by the expression in the eyes, that they were regarding me with a keen and curious interest.

After being conducted through many winding passages we found ourselves at last in a spacious and magnificent chamber, the walls of which were panelled with gold mosaic. The floor was polished marble, and the vaulted ceiling was coloured blue and studded with stars of gold. Seated cross-legged on a raised dais, and attired in a most wonderful robe of gold and silk, was the Sultan, and surrounding him was an army of attendants; while two gigantic black fellows stood behind him fanning him with ponderous jewelled fans. The whole atmosphere was heavy with the odour of a strange perfume that was thrown up by a tiny fountain in the marble floor.

As I approached His Majesty with the most profound obeisance, I could not repress a start of pleasurable surprise as I observed

that, held by a little network of gold thread, a cat's-eye of unsurpassed splendour was glittering on his breast, and I felt that at last I gazed on the stolen gem. Through my interpreter I thus addressed the Sultan, adopting the florid and fulsome style peculiar to the country—

"Oh, most potent and mighty ruler of this great and wondrous land of beauty and light, whose power even kings and other great ones of the earth acknowledge, deign, I humbly crave, to give hearing to thy humble servant who lies in the dust at your feet."

"Speak; we will listen," answered the Sultan.

"This is my story, then, O Mightiness. I come in search of a stolen gem, which is like unto that which glitters on your breast."

The Sultan started, and his dark face flamed up with anger, as he answered—

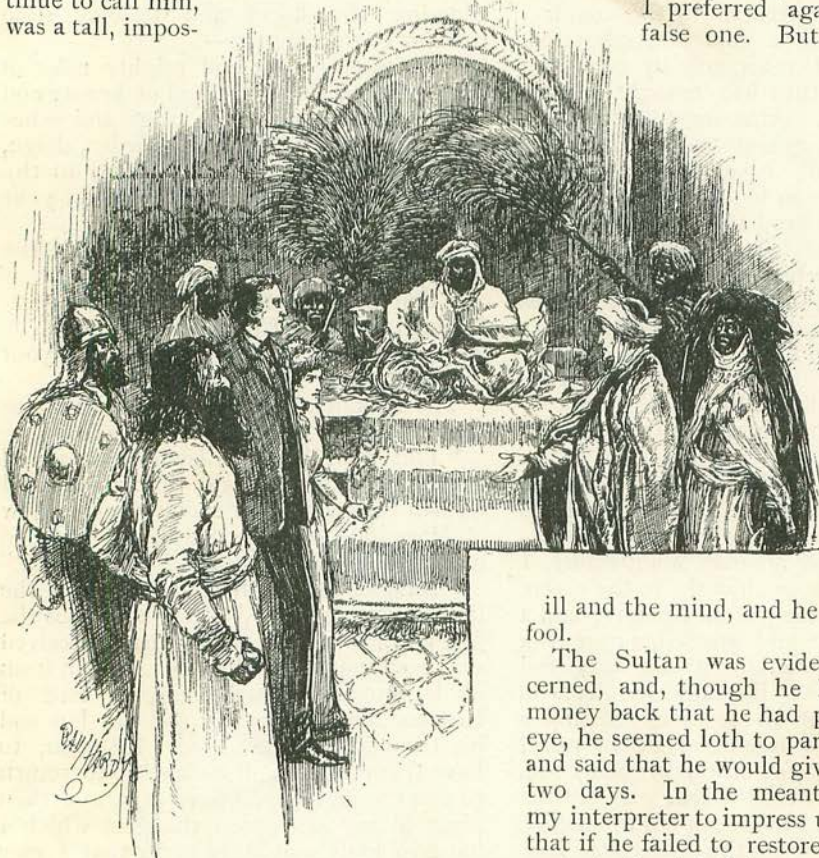
"This gem have I lawfully acquired within the last few days from a man and woman from your own country, and a Jew of Marseilles, who has frequently supplied me with some of the treasures of the earth."

"Naught but truth could fall from the lips of your Majesty," I replied; "but the Jew and my country people have deceived you, and that stone has been stolen from its legitimate owner, a mighty lord of England, and I crave you, ere this Jew and his companions leave your kingdom, to have them seized, and compelled to return to you the money you have paid, and then place in my possession the gem which I have so long sought, in order that I may restore it to its sorrowing owner."

By His Majesty's commands I gave a detailed account of the history of the stone, and satisfied him that I was lawfully empowered to take charge of the gem, and also to convey the man and woman back to England, so that they might receive the measure of punishment due for the crime they had committed.

The Sultan was fiercely angry at being so deceived, and issued orders at once that a band of his picked soldiers should ride with all possible speed to Oran and bring back the man and woman and the Jew; and pending their arrival I was to be detained. For eight days I remained practically a prisoner in the palace, but at last one morning the beating of drums and the shouting of the people announced that the soldiers had returned, and soon I was informed that they had brought the Jew

and the "Jobsons" with them. In the afternoon I was conducted once more to the presence of the Sultan, and confronted with Cohen and his companions. "Jobson," as I had better continue to call him, was a tall, impos-



"IN THE PRESENCE OF THE SULTAN."

ing-looking man, with quite a patrician cast of face; but his utterly dejected and scared expression showed that he felt the game was up. His wife was a little woman of considerable beauty, with a strong face and a mass of golden hair. She immediately struck me as a woman of an iron will and dogged determination, and I at once concluded that her husband was as potter's clay in her hands.

Cohen was no less striking: he was even a picturesque figure; of very swarthy complexion, and long dark hair falling in greasy ringlets about his neck and shoulders.

With singular adroitness the Sultan subjected him to a most severe cross-examination; and though the Jew with desperate effort tried to justify himself, he had to confess that he had undertaken the commission

without duly inquiring how Jobson and his wife had obtained possession of the gem. On his part Jobson did all he could to create an impression that he was a greatly injured man, and that the charge I preferred against him was a false one. But it was very clear

that the Sultan did not believe him. And at last, under the impulse of a great fear, he blurted out that the gem had been stolen, but that he was only the agent for others. Whereupon his wife assailed him with a volley of abuse, which corroborated my impression that she was possessed of the

ill and the mind, and he was a poor weak fool.

The Sultan was evidently much concerned, and, though he had got all the money back that he had paid for the cat's-eye, he seemed loth to part with the stone, and said that he would give his decision in two days. In the meantime, I instructed my interpreter to impress upon His Majesty that if he failed to restore the stolen property to the rightful owner, he would most certainly give offence to both England and France. Whether this empty threat had any effect or not, I don't know; but at the end of the second day he sent word that he would deliver up the gem to me in the presence of his Prime Minister of State and the two French officers, and that I should be free to take Jobson with me out of the country, but that, unless the woman of her own will chose to accompany me, she should not be compelled to go.

The arrangement for delivering up the stone was duly carried out with considerable ceremony, but Mrs. Jobson, after abusing her husband for what she termed his "pitiable weakness and cowardice," said she would remain where she was, let the consequences be what they might.

Having got possession of the stone, I was anxious to leave without a moment's

delay, and I requested His Majesty to furnish me with an escort of his most trusted soldiers. He gave me twelve men, and, though night was closing in, I determined to set off immediately, for I had an impression that an attempt might be made to rob me of my precious charge. All night long I travelled without halt, and was truly thankful to ride into Mogador as the day was breaking. I had brought Jobson with me; he seemed utterly broken down and dejected, and he was evidently in fear of his life.

After a brief rest the journey was resumed. The Sultan's soldiers were ordered not to go further than Mogador, and I continued on my way with my original escort, and reached Algiers without adventure. It was then decided that Jobson would have to be detained by the French, pending the formalities of extradition; and, as a steamer was on the point of sailing, I took passage in her. For, while the precious gem remained in my possession, I was restless and sleepless with anxiety for its safety. It may well be imagined with what joy I found myself in London after my most exciting and adventurous journey. And I immediately telegraphed to Mr. Ashburton, telling him that I had recovered the stone.

Then, ascertaining that Lord Middlewick was at his mansion in Berkshire, I went down by the first train I could get. As I entered the room, he rose, and shook my hand, saying—

"Well, Donovan, it's a long time since I heard anything about you, and I suppose there is no chance now of my ever seeing the lost gem?"

"My lord, I have been following it about the world," I answered.

He smiled a little ironically as he remarked—

"And, like a will-o'-the-wisp, it has led you a useless dance, I presume?"

"Not exactly," I said, smiling in turn,

and producing from my pocket a little packet of tissue paper, I unrolled it; and, as I laid the stone before him, I said: "Here is the lost cat's-eye, my lord, so that you see my journeying has not been useless altogether."

For some moments he could not speak, so great was his mingled surprise and emotion. Then he seized my hand again and wrung it, and exclaimed—

"Well, Donovan, you are the most wonderful fellow I have ever known; and I almost believe you are gifted with powers of necromancy."

"There is nothing wonderful in the feat I have performed," I answered, with—as I hope—becoming modesty. "Endowed with an ability for logical reasoning, I have been able to use such slight clues as I could obtain. The result is, you are now in possession of the gem; and perhaps I need scarcely remind you that Mr. Ashburton's honour is unstained."

"Depend upon it, Donovan," said his lordship, quickly, "that I shall endeavour to make the most ample reparation to Mr. Ashburton for the unjust suspicion I have cast upon him."

It remains for me to say that, after some delay, Jobson was brought over from France, and duly put upon his trial for stealing the gem. His real name was proved to be William Hinton. He was the son of a much-respected clergyman, but had led a wild and restless life, and had married a clever adventuress, who, there was no reason to doubt, had led him astray. Two other men had been mixed up in the robbery, and had really found the money for Hinton's expenses; but they managed to get out of the country, and thus avoided justice. On his own confession, Hinton was convicted and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. What became of his wife I never knew, but it is exceedingly doubtful whether she would ever be allowed to leave the Sultan of Morocco's dominions alive.

