


JENNIE BAXTER, JOURNALIST.

BY COTTREL HOE.

Illustrated by ADOLF THIEDE.

NUMBER II.—THE DIAMONDS OF THE PRINCESS.

“HAT about the diamonds of the Princess?” asked Miss Baxter, her curiosity piqued by the remark of the editor. “That is rather a long story,” replied Mr. Hardwick, “and before I begin it, I would like to ask you one or two questions. Can you manipulate a typewriter?”

“That depends on what make it is. The ordinary typewriter I understand very thoroughly.”

“Good. Have you any knowledge of shorthand?”

“A workable knowledge; I can write about one hundred words a minute.”

“Admirable! admirable! Your coming to this office was an inspiration. You are just the person I have been looking for.”

“You didn’t seem to think so yesterday, Mr. Hardwick,” said the girl with a sly glance at him.

“Well, many things have happened since yesterday. We are now dealing with to-day, and with the Princess von Steinheimer.”

“She is a German princess, of course?”

“A German princess, but an American woman. She was a Miss Briggs of Chicago; a daughter of Briggs, the railway millionaire, worth somewhere between twenty and twenty-five millions—dollars, of course. A year or two ago she married Prince Konrad von Steinheimer; you may remember having read about it in the papers?”

“Oh, yes; the usual international match—the girl after the title, he after the money.”

“I suppose so; but be that as it may, she was the only daughter of old Briggs, and had spent a good deal of her time in Europe, and during her stay in Europe she had accumulated a vast stock of diamonds, some of them very notable stones. I don’t know what the whole collection is worth, some say a million dollars, while others say double that amount. However that may be, Miss Briggs became the Princess von Steinheimer, and brought to Austria with her a million

dollars in gold and her diamonds, which her father gave her as her dowry; but, of course, being an only child, she will come in for the rest of his money when the old man dies.”

“Is he likely to die soon? I don’t suppose the Prince gave himself away for a mere million.”

“Oh, you forget the diamonds. As to the likelihood of old Briggs’s death, it didn’t strike me as imminent when I had a conversation with him yesterday.”

“Yesterday? Is he here in London, then?”

“Yes; he has come over to disentangle the mystery about the diamonds.”

“And what is the mystery? You take a dreadful long time to tell a story, Mr. Hardwick.”

“The story is important, and it must be told in detail, otherwise you may go on a long journey for nothing. Are you taking down what I say in shorthand? That is right, and if you are wise you will not transcribe your notes so that anyone could read them; they are safer in that form. The von Steinheimer family have two residences, a house in Vienna, and an ancient castle in the Tyrol, situated on the heights above Meran, a most picturesque place, I understand; but very shortly you will know more about it than I do, because the *Bugle* expects you to go there as its special correspondent. Here the diamond robbery took place something like two months ago, and the affair is still as great a mystery as ever. The Princess was to open the season at Meran, which is a fashionable resort, by giving a fancy dress ball in Schloss Steinheimer, to which all the Austrian and foreign notables were invited. It was just before the ball commenced that the diamonds were first missed—in fact, the Princess was about to put them on, she representing some gorgeously decorated character from the Arabian Nights, when the discovery was made that the diamonds were gone. She was naturally very much upset over her loss, and sent at

once for the Prince, her husband, insisting that the police should be notified immediately and detectives called in, as was perfectly natural. Now here comes a strange feature of the affair, and this is that the Prince positively forbade any publicity, and refused his sanction when she demanded that the police should be informed, and yet the Prince knew as well as anybody the very considerable value of the stones."

"What reason did he give for his refusal?" asked Miss Baxter, looking up from her notes.

"I am not quite certain about that; but I think he said it was *infra dig.* for the Steinheimers to call in the police. Anyhow, it was an excuse which did not satisfy the Princess; but as guests were arriving, and it was desirable there should be no commotion to mar the occasion, the Princess temporarily yielded to the wish of her husband, and nothing was said about the robbery. The great ball was the talk of Meran for several days, and no one suspected the private trouble that was going on underneath the public event. During these several days the Princess insisted that the aid of the police should be invoked, and the Prince was equally strenuous that nothing should be said about the matter. Then, quite unexpectedly, the Prince veered completely round, and said he would engage the best detectives in Europe. Strange to say, when he announced this decision to his wife, she had veered round also, and opposed the calling in of the detectives as strenuously as he had done heretofore."

"What reason did she give for her change of front?" asked Miss Jennie.

"She said, I believe, that it was now too late; that the thieves, whoever they were, had had time to make away with their plunder, and there would merely be a fuss and worry for nothing."

"Do you know, I am inclined to agree with her," said the girl.

"Are you? Then tell me what you think of the case as far as you have got."

"What do *you* think?"

"I shan't tell you at this stage, because I know of further particulars which I will give you later on. I merely want your opinion now, so that I may see whether what I have to tell you afterwards modifies it in any way."

"Well, to me the case looks decidedly dark against the Prince."

"That is what Mr. Briggs thinks. He imagines his Highness has the jewels."

"Where did you get all these particulars?"

"From Mr. Briggs, who, of course, got them by letter from his daughter."

"Then we have, as it were, a one-sided statement."

"Oh, quite so; but still you must remember the Princess does not in the least suspect her husband of the theft."

"Well, please go on. What are the further particulars?"

"The further particulars are that the Prince made some quiet investigations among the servants, and he found that there was a man who, although he was a friend of his own, was much more the friend of the Princess, and this man had, on the day the ball was given, the entire freedom of the castle. He is a young officer and nobleman, Lieutenant von Schaumberg, and the Prince knew that this young man was being hard pressed for some debts of honour which he did not appear to be in a position to liquidate. The young man went unexpectedly to Vienna the day after the ball, and on his return settled his obligations. The Princess, from one of her women, got word of her husband's suspicion. She went to the Prince at once, and told him she had come to his own opinion with regard to the lost diamonds. She would under no circumstances have detectives about the place. Then he told her that he had changed his mind, and resolved to engage detectives. So here they were at a deadlock again. She wrote to her father with great indignation about the Prince's unjust suspicions, saying von Schaumberg was a gentleman in every sense of the word. I gather that relations between herself and her husband are somewhat strained, so I imagine there is much more in this matter than the lost diamonds."

"You think, then, that she is shielding the Lieutenant?"

"Candidly, I do."

"And you think he stole the diamonds?"

"Yes, I do."

"I don't agree with you. I think still it was the Prince, and I think besides this that he dexterously managed to throw suspicion on the Lieutenant. Have they called in the detectives yet?"

"No, they are still at a deadlock."

"Well, what am I expected to do?"

"Mr. Briggs cabled to his daughter—he never writes a letter—that he would come over and straighten out the tangle in fifteen minutes. He is certain the Prince stole the diamonds, but he did not tell his daughter so. He told her he was bringing her a present of

a new typewriting machine, and was bringing from Chicago a young woman who could write shorthand and would look after the Princess's correspondence—act as secretary, in fact; for it seems the Princess has a larger correspondence than she can reasonably attend to, and it seems she yearns for a typewriter. The old man tells me she is very careless about her letters, never being able to find anything she wants, and leaving them about a good deal, so he thinks she needs someone to look after her correspondence; and it looks as if her father feared she might leave some compromising



"She secured a porter who spoke French"

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letter about, so he wishes to ward off a divorce case."

"No, I think you are wrong there. The father hasn't the slightest suspicion there could be anything wrong with his daughter. It is probable the Princess has written some libellous statements about her husband, and it is quite likely the Prince is a brute and that young von Schaumberg is a most charming person."

"Well, as I was saying," continued Hardwick, "the old man cables his daughter that he is bringing her a secretary and a typewriter. He engaged a female Pinkerton detective to enter the castle as secretary to

the Princess, and, if possible, to solve the mystery. She is a young woman who, when she left Chicago, was very anti-English, but she became acquainted on the steamer with a young Englishman who was tremendously taken with her, and so at Liverpool she quite calmly broke her engagement with the old man and fulfilled a new engagement she had made with the young man by promptly marrying him. Old Briggs has therefore a new typewriting machine on his hands, and so I was going to propose to you that you take the place of the Chicago Pinkerton person. Briggs has become so disgusted with all these detective women that he gave up the idea of sending a female detective with the machine, and doesn't imagine that whoever is sent will be either a detective or a newspaper woman. I was introduced to him the other day by one of those lucky chances that sometimes put interesting items of news in our way, and he told me the whole story, and asked me to recommend someone who wrote shorthand and understood the typewriter. I am to dine with him this evening, and I shall cordially recommend you. I may say that Briggs has gone to that celebrated London detective, Mr. Cadbury Taylor, and has engaged him to solve the diamond mystery. So you see you will have a clear field. If you can leave for the castle to-morrow night, you may have the pleasure of the company of Mr. Cadbury Taylor. He isn't visiting the castle, but goes straight to Vienna; so, if you work your cards rightly, you can be in his company as far as Munich, and during that time you could find out perhaps what he thinks about the case. I know only this much about his theory, and that is he thinks the right place to begin is in Vienna, where some, at least, of the stones are supposed to have been pawned."

"Oh, this is a delightful case, and I shall enjoy it. Has there been anything published yet about the robbery?"

"Not a word; nobody knows anything about it, except the Prince and Princess, Briggs, myself and yourself, and perhaps one or two of the servants in the castle—oh, yes, and Cadbury Taylor."

Miss Baxter was early at the station before the Continental train left. She walked up and down the platform hoping to see Mr. Cadbury Taylor, with whose face and form she was familiar. She secured a porter who spoke French, and pretended to him that she knew no English.

"I desire," she said, "to get into a first-

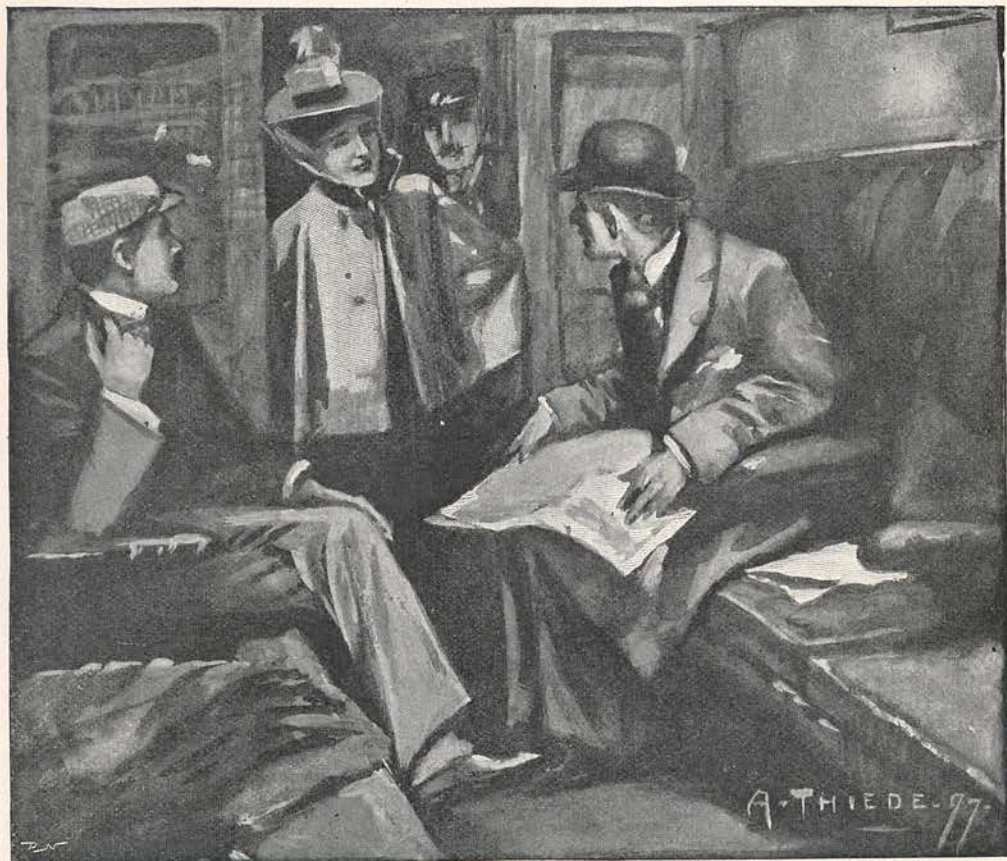
class compartment with a gentleman whom I shall point out to you. I shall give you five shillings, so you must let me have your whole attention. My luggage has been labelled and registered, therefore you will not need to bother about it, but keep your eye on me and follow me into whatever carriage I enter, bringing with you the handbag and this heavy package."

The heavy package was a typewriter in its case. Shortly before the train left there

Taylor, "is not the most inspiring place in London for the spending of a spare half hour; besides, I had some facts to get together, which are now complete, and I'm quite ready to go, if the train is."

"I have secured a smoking compartment here where we shall be alone."

"That's right, Smith," said Cadbury Taylor. "You are always so thoughtful," and the two men entered the compartment together.



"I beg your pardon, this is a smoking compartment."

sauntered into the station the tall, thin, well-known form of the celebrated detective. He had on a light ulster that reached almost to his heels, and his keen, alert face was entirely without beard or moustache. As he came up the platform, a short, stout man accosted him.

"I was afraid you were going to be late," said the detective's friend, "but I see you are just in time as usual."

"A railway station," said Mr. Cadbury

Just as the guards were shouting, "Take your seats, please," Miss Baxter made a bolt for the compartment in which the detective and his friend sat together in opposite corners.

"I beg your pardon," said Smith, "this is a smoking compartment."

The lady replied to him volubly in French, and next instant the porter heaved the typewriter and handbag on the seat beside her. Smith seemed to resent the

intrusion, and appeared about to blame the porter, but the man answered rapidly as he banged the door, "The lady doesn't speak any English," and the next moment the train moved out of the station.

"There was no need," said the detective, "my dear Smith, to depend upon the porter for the information that the lady could not speak English. She is the secretary to a very rich employer in Chicago, and came from that city to New York, where she sailed on the *Servia* alone, coming to England to transact some special business, of which I could here give you full particulars, if it were worth while. She came from Liverpool to London over the Great Western Railway, and is now on her way to Paris. All this, of course, is obvious to the most casual observer, and so, my dear Smith, we may discuss our case with as much security as though we were entirely alone."

"But, good heavens, Cadbury!" cried Smith in amazement, "how can you tell all that?"

"My dear fellow," said the detective wearily, "no one travels with a typewriting machine unless that person is a typewriter. The girl, if you will notice, is now engaged in filling the leaves of her book with shorthand, therefore that proves the fact of her occupation. That she is secretary to a rich man is seen by the fact that she crossed in the *Servia* first cabin, as you may see by glancing at the label on the case; that she came alone, which is to say her employer was not with her, is proven by the fact that the typewriter is marked 'Not wanted,' so it was put down into the hold. If a Chicago business man had been travelling with his secretary, the typewriter case would have been marked instead, 'Cabin, wanted.' The typewriter case is evidently new, and is stamped with the name and address of its sellers in Chicago. That she came by the *Servia* is plainly shown by the steamship label. That she came by the Great Western is also shown by the fact that 'Chester' appears on still another label. That she has special business in England we may well believe, otherwise she would have crossed on the French line direct from New York to Havre. So you see, my dear boy, these are all matters of observation, and quite patent to anyone who cares to use his eyes."

"Yes, it all seems very simple now that you have explained it," growled Smith.

"I should be a much more mysterious person than I am," remarked the detective complacently, "if I did not explain so much.

This explanation habit is becoming a vice with me, and I fear I must abandon it."

"I hope for my sake you won't," said Smith more good-naturedly, "for if left to myself I never could find out how you arrive at your wonderful conclusions. Do you expect the Austrian diamond mystery to prove difficult?"

"Difficult? Oh, dear no! To tell the truth, I have solved it already, but in order to give the American a run for his money—and surely he ought not to object to that, because he is a millionaire who has made his pile by giving other people runs for their money, being a railway man—I am now on my way to Vienna. If I solved the problem off-hand for him in London, he would have no more appreciation of my talent than you had a moment ago when I explained why I knew this French girl came from Chicago."

"You mustn't mind that, Cadbury," said Smith contritely. "I confess I was irritated for a moment because it all seemed so simple."

"My dear fellow, everything in this world is simple except one thing, and that is to find any problem that is difficult."

"Then who stole the diamonds? The lieutenant?"

The detective smiled and gazed upwards for a few tantalising moments at the roof of the carriage.

"Here we have," he said at last, "an impecunious prince who marries an American heiress, as so many of them do. The girl begins life in Austria on one million dollars, say two hundred thousand pounds, and a case of diamonds said to be worth another two hundred thousand at least—probably more. Not much danger of running through that very speedily, is there, Smith?"

"No, I should think not."

"So the average man would think," continued the detective. "However, I have long since got out of the habit of thinking; therefore I make sure. The first problem I set to myself is this: How much money have the Prince and Princess spent since they were married? I find that the repairs on the Schloss Steinheimer, situated in the Tyrol, cost something like forty thousand pounds. It is a huge place, and the Steinheimers have not had an heiress in the family for many centuries. The Prince owed a good deal of money when he was married, and it took something like sixty thousand pounds to settle those debts; rather expensive as Continental princes go, but if one must have luxuries, one cannot save money. Not to weary you with details,

I found that the two hundred thousand pounds was exhausted something more than two months ago; in fact, just before the alleged robbery. The Prince is, of course, without money, otherwise he would not have married a Chicago heiress, and the Princess being without money, what does she naturally do?"

"Pawns her own diamonds!" cried Smith enthusiastically.

The detective smiled.

"I thought it much more probable she would apply to her father for money. I asked him if this was the case, giving him the date, roughly speaking, when such a letter had been sent. The old man opened his eyes at this, and told me he had received such a letter. 'But you did not send the money?' I ventured. 'No,' he said, 'I did not. The fact is, money is very tight in Chicago just now, and so I cabled her to run on her debts for a while.' This exactly bore out the conclusion at which I had already arrived. So now, having failed to get money from her father, the lady turns to her diamonds, the only security she possesses. The chances are that she did so before her father's cable message came, and that was the reason she so confidently wished information to be given to the police. She expected to have money to redeem her jewels, and being a bright woman, she knew the traditional stupidity of the official police, and so thought there was no danger of her little ruse being discovered. But when the cable message came saying no money would be sent her, a different complexion was put upon the whole affair, for she did not know but if the police were given plenty of time they might stumble on the diamonds."

"But, my dear Cadbury, why should she not have taken the diamonds openly and raised money on them?"

"My dear fellow, there are a dozen reasons, any one of which will suffice where a woman is in the case. In the first place, she might fear to offend the family pride of the von Steinheimers; in the second place, we cannot tell what her relations with her husband were. She may not have wished him to know that she was short of money. But that she has stolen her own diamonds there is not the slightest question in my mind. All that is necessary for me to do now is to find out how many persons there are in Vienna who would lend large sums of money on valuable jewels. The second is to find with which one of those the Princess pawned her diamonds."

"But, my dear Cadbury, the lady is in Meran, and Vienna is some hundreds of miles away. How could a lady in the Tyrol pawn diamonds in Vienna without her absence being commented on, or do you think she had an agent to do it for her?"

Again the detective smiled indulgently.

"No, she had no agent. The diamonds never left Vienna. You see, the ball had been announced, and immediate money was urgently needed. She pawned the diamonds before she left the capital of Austria, and the chances are she did not intend anyone to know they were missing; but on the eve of the ball her husband insisted that she should wear her diamonds, and therefore, being a quick-witted woman, she announced they had been stolen. After having made such a statement, she, of course, had to stick to it; and now, failing to get the money from America, she is exceedingly anxious that no real detective shall be employed in investigation."

At Dover Miss Baxter, having notes of this interesting conversation in shorthand, witnessed the detective bid good-bye to his friend Smith, who returned to London by a later train. After that she saw no more of Mr. Cadbury Taylor, and reached the Schloss Steinheimer at Meran without further adventure.

Miss Baxter found life at the Schloss much different from what she had expected. The Princess was a young and charming lady, very handsome, but in a state of constant depression. Once or twice Miss Baxter came upon her with apparent traces of weeping on her face. The Prince was not an old man, as she expected, but young and of a manly, stalwart appearance. He evidently possessed a fiendish temper, and moped about the castle with a constant frown upon his brow.

The correspondence of the Princess was in the utmost disorder. There were hundreds upon hundreds of letters, many of which she could not tell whether they had been answered or not, and Miss Baxter set to work tabulating and arranging them. Meanwhile the young newspaper woman kept her eyes open. She wandered about the castle unmolested, poked into odd corners, talked with the servants and, in fact, with everyone, but never did she come upon a clue which promised to lead to a solution of the diamond difficulty. Once she penetrated into a turret room, and came unexpectedly upon the Prince, who was sitting on the window-ledge, looking absently

out on the broad and smiling valley that lay for miles below the castle. He sprang to his feet and looked so fiercely at the intruder that the girl's heart failed her, and she had not even the presence of mind to turn and run.

"What do you want?" he said to her shortly, for he spoke English perfectly. "You are the young woman from Chicago, I suppose?"

"No," answered Miss Baxter, forgetting for the moment the rôle she was playing; "I am from London."

"Well, it doesn't matter; you are the



"How dare you lay your hand on me?"

young woman who is arranging my wife's correspondence?"

"Yes."

The Prince strode rapidly forward and grasped her by the wrist, his brow dark with a forbidding frown. He spoke in a hoarse whisper:

"Listen, my good girl! Do you want to get more money from me than you will get from the Princess in ten years' service? Hearken, then, to what I tell you. If there are any letters from—from—men, will you bring them to me?"

Miss Baxter was thoroughly frightened, but she said to the Prince sharply:—

"If you do not let go my wrist, I'll scream. How dare you lay your hand on me?"

The Prince released her wrist and stepped back.

"Forgive me," he said; "I'm a very miserable man. Forget what I have said."

"How can I forget it?" cried the girl, gathering courage as she saw him quail before her blazing eyes. "What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to bring to me any letters written by—by—"

"Written by von Schaumberg," cried the girl, noticing his hesitation and filling in the blank.

A red wave of anger surged up in the Prince's face.

"Yes," he cried; "bring me a letter to her from von Schaumberg, and I'll pay you what you ask."

The girl laughed.

"Prince," she said, "you will excuse me if I call you a fool. There are no letters from von Schaumberg, and I have gone through nearly the whole of the correspondence."

"What, then, suggested the name von Schaumberg to you? Where did you ever hear it before?"

"I heard that you suspected him of stealing the diamonds."

"And so he did, the cowardly thief. If it were not for mixing the Princess's name with such carrion as he, I would ——"

But the Prince in his rage stamped up and down the room without saying what he would do. Miss Baxter quickly brought him to a standstill.

"It is contrary to my duty to the Princess," she began, hesitatingly, when he stopped and turned fiercely upon her.

"What is contrary to your duty?"

"There are letters, tied very daintily with a blue ribbon, and they are from a man. The Princess did not allow me to read them, but locked them away in a secret drawer in her dressing-room, but she is so careless with her keys and about everything else, that I am sure I can get them for you, if you want them."

"Yes, yes, I want them," said the Prince, "and will pay you handsomely for them."

"Very well," replied Miss Baxter, "you shall have them. If you will wait here ten minutes, I shall return with them."

"But," hesitated the Prince, "say nothing to the Princess."

"Oh, no, I shall not need to; the keys are sure to be on her dressing-table."

Miss Baxter ran down to the room of the Princess, and had little difficulty in obtaining the keys. She opened the secret drawer into which she had seen the Princess place the packet of letters, and taking them out, she drew another sheet of paper along with them, which she read with wide-opening eyes, then with her pretty lips she blew a long astonished whistle. Taking both the packet of letters and the sheet of paper with her, she ran swiftly up the stair and along the corridor to the room where the Prince was impatiently awaiting her.

"Give them to me," he snapped, rudely snatching the packet from her hand. She still clung to the separate piece of paper and said nothing. The Prince stood by the window and undid the packet with trembling hands. He examined one and then another of the letters, turning at last towards the girl with renewed anger in his face.

"You are trifling with me, my girl," he said.

"No, I am not," she said stoutly.

"These are my own letters, written by me to my wife before we were married!"

"Of course they are. What others did you expect? These are the only letters, as far as I have learned, that any man has written to her, and the only letters she cares for of all the thousands she has ever received. Why, you foolish, blind man, I had not been in this castle a day before I saw how matters were. The Princess is breaking her poor heart because you are unkind to her, and she cares for nobody on earth but you, great stupid that you are."

"Is it true? Will you swear it's true?" cried the Prince, dropping the packet and going hastily toward the girl. Miss Jennie stood with her back to the wall, and putting her hands behind her, she said:

"No, no; you are not going to touch me again. Of course it's true, and if you had the sense of a six-year-old child, you would have seen it long ago; and she paid sixty thousand pounds of your gambling debts."

"What are you talking about? The Princess has never given me a penny of her money; I don't need it. Goodness knows, I have money enough of my own."

"Well, Cadbury Taylor said that you—Oh, I'll warrant you, it is like all the rest of his statements, pure moonshine."

"Of whom are you speaking? And why did my wife protect that wretch whom she knows has stolen her diamonds?"

"You mean von Schaumberg?"

"Yes."

"I believe the Princess does think he stole them, and the reason the Princess protects him is to prevent you from challenging him, for she fears that he, being a military man, will kill you, although I fancy she would be well rid of you."

"But he took the diamonds—there was nobody else."

"He did nothing of the kind. Read that!"



"You are trifling with me."

The Prince, bewildered, took the sheet that she handed to him and read it, a wrinkle of bewilderment corrugating his brow.

"I don't understand what this has to do with the case," he said at last. "It seems to be an order on the bank at Vienna for the diamonds, written by the Princess herself."

"Of course it is. Well, if the diamonds had been delivered, that paper would now be in the possession of the bank instead of in your hands."

"Perhaps she mislaid this order and wrote another."

"Perhaps. Still it might be worth while finding out."

"Take this, then, to the Princess and ask her."

"It is not likely she would remember. The better plan is to telegraph at once to the Vienna bank, asking them to send the diamonds to Meran by special messenger. No one there knows that the diamonds are missing."

"I will do so at once," cried the Prince,

Would you therefore send her Grace my regrets?"

"I will do so at once."

At that moment there came a messenger from the Prince asking Miss Baxter to meet him in the library. The girl glanced up at the Princess.

"Have I your permission to go?" she said.

The Princess looked at her steadily for a moment, just the faintest suspicion of a frown on her fair brow.

"I do not suppose you need my permission." Her Highness spoke with slow deliberation. "My husband condescends to take considerable interest in you. Passing along the corridor this morning, I heard your voices in most animated conversation."

"Had you sufficient interest in our discussion to stop and listen to what we said, Princess von Steinheimer?"

"Ah, now you are becoming insolent, and I must ask you to consider your engagement with me at an end."

"Surely you will not dismiss me in that heartless way, Princess. I think I am entitled to a month's notice, or is it only a week's?"

"I will pay you a year's salary, or two years' if that will content you. I have no wish to deal harshly with you, but I desire you to leave at once," said the Princess, who

had little sense of humour, and thus thought the girl was in earnest when she asked for notice.

Miss Baxter laughed merrily, and replied when she was able to control her mirth, "I do hate to leave the castle just when things were becoming interesting. Still I don't suppose I shall really need to go away in spite of your dismissal, for the Prince this morning offered me ten times the amount of money you are paying."



"Have I your permission to go?"

with more animation in his voice than Miss Baxter had previously noticed. His Highness was becoming interested in the game.

After luncheon the Princess came to Miss Baxter, who was seated at her desk, and handed her a letter.

"There is an invitation from the Duchess of Chiselhurst for a grand ball she is shortly to give. It is to be a very swell affair, but I don't care enough for such things to go all the way to England to enjoy them.

"Did he?"

"Be assured he did; if you don't believe me, ask him. I told him he was a fool, but, alas, we live in a cynical age, and few men believe all they hear, so I fear my expression of opinion made little impression on him."

"I shall not keep you longer from his Highness," said the Princess with freezing dignity.

"Thank you so much. I am just dying to meet him, for I know he has something most interesting to tell me. Don't you think yourself, Princess, that a man acts rather like a fool when he is deeply in love?"

To this there was no reply, and the Princess left the room.

Miss Jennie jumped to her feet and almost ran to the library. She found the Prince walking up and down the long room with a telegraph message in his hand.

"You are a most wonderful young woman," he said; "read that."

"I have been told so by more observing men than you, Prince von Steinheimer," said the girl, taking the telegram. It was from the manager of the Bank in Vienna, and it ran: "Special messenger leaves with package by the Meran express to-night."

"Just as I thought," said Miss Jennie; "the diamonds never left the bank. I suppose those idiots of servants which the Princess has round her didn't know what they took away from Vienna and what they left. Then, when the diamonds were missing, they completely lost their heads—not that anyone in the castle has much wits to spare. I never saw such an incompetent lot."

The Prince laughed.

"You think, perhaps, I have not wits enough to see that my wife cares for me, is that it? Is that why you gave me my own letters?"

"Oh, you are well mated! The Princess now does me the honour of being jealous of me. Think of that! As if it were possible that I should take any interest in you, for I have seen real men in my time."

The Prince regarded her with his most severe expression.

"Are you not flattering yourself somewhat, young lady?"

"Oh, dear no! I take it as the reverse of flattering to be supposed that I have any liking for such a ninny as you are. Flattering indeed! And she has haughtily dismissed me, if you please."

"The Princess has? What have you been saying to her?"

"Oh, I made the most innocent remark, and it was the truth too, which shows that honesty is not always the best policy. I merely told her that you had offered me ten times the amount of money she is paying me. You needn't jump as if somebody had shot off a gun at your ear. You know you did make such an offer."

"You confounded little mischief-maker," cried the Prince in anger. "Did you tell her what it was for?"

"No. She did not ask."

"I will thank you to apply the cleverness you seem to possess to the undoing of the harm you have so lightheartedly caused."

"How can I? I am ordered to leave to-night, when I did so wish to stay and see the diamond *dénouement*."

"You are not going to-night. I shall speak to the Princess about it if that should be necessary. Your mention of the diamonds reminds me that my respected father-in-law, Mr. Briggs, informs me that a celebrated detective, whom it seems he has engaged—Cadbury Taylor, I think the name is—will be here to-morrow to explain the diamond mystery, so you see you have a competitor."

"Oh, is Cadbury coming? That is too jolly for anything. I simply must stay and hear his explanation, for he is a very famous detective, and the conclusions he has arrived at must be most interesting."

"I think some explanations are due to me as well. My worthy father-in-law seems to have commissioned this person without thinking it necessary to consult me in the least; in fact, he goes about the castle looking so black at me when he meets me that I sometimes doubt whether this is my own house or not."

"And is it?"

"Is it what?"

"Is it your own house? I was told it was mortgaged up to the tallest turret. Still you can't blame Mr. Briggs for being anxious about the diamonds; they belong to his daughter."

"They belong to my wife."

"True. That complicates matters a bit, and gives both Chicago and Vienna a right to look black. And now, your Highness, I must take my leave of you, and if the diamonds come safely in the morning, remember I intend to claim salvage on them. Meanwhile I am going to write a nice little story about them."

In the morning the diamonds arrived per

special messenger, who first took a formal receipt for them, and then most obsequiously took his departure. By the same train came Mr. Cadbury Taylor, as modest as ever, but giving some indication in his bearing of the importance of the discovery his wonderful system had aided him in making. He blandly evaded the curiosity of Mr. Briggs, and said it would perhaps be better to reveal the secret in the presence of the Prince and Princess, as his investigations had led him to conclusions that might be unpleasant for one of them to hear, yet were not to be divulged in their absence.

"Just what I suspected," muttered Mr. Briggs, who had long been convinced that the Prince had stolen the stones.

The important gathering took place in the library, the Prince, with the diamonds in his coat pocket, seated at the head of the long table, while the Princess sat at the foot, as far from her husband as she could conveniently get without attracting notice. Miss Baxter stood near a window reading an important letter from London which had reached her that morning. The tall, thin detective and the portly Mr. Briggs came in together, the London man bowing gravely to the Prince and Princess. Mr. Briggs took a seat at the side of the table, but the detective remained standing, looking questioningly at Miss Baxter, but evidently not recognising her as the lady who had come in upon him and his friend when they had entered the train.

"I beg the pardon of your Highness, but what I have to say had better be said with as few hearers as possible. I should be much obliged if this young person would read her correspondence in another room."

"The young woman," said the Prince coldly, "is secretary to her Highness, and is entirely in her confidence."

The Princess said nothing, but sat with her eyes upon the table, apparently taking no note of what was going on. Rich colour came into her face, and, as the keen detective cast a swift glance at her, he saw before him a woman conscious of her guilt, fearing exposure, yet not knowing how to avoid it.

"If your Highness will excuse my persistence," began Mr. Taylor blandly.

"But I will not," interrupted the Prince gruffly. "Go on with your story without so much circumlocution."

The detective, apparently unruffled by the discourtesy he met, bowed profoundly towards the Prince, cleared his throat, and began.

"May I ask your Highness," he said, addressing himself to the Princess, "how much money you possessed just before you left Vienna?"

The lady looked up at him in surprise, but did not answer.

"In Heaven's name, what has that to do with the loss of the diamonds?" rapped out the Prince, his hot temper getting once more the better of him.

Cadbury Taylor spread out his hands and shrugged his shoulders in protest at the interruption. He spoke with deference, but nevertheless with a touch of reproach in his tone.

"I am accustomed to be listened to with patience, and am generally allowed to tell my story my own way, your Highness."

"What I complain of is that you are not telling any story at all, but are asking instead a very impertinent question."

"Questions which seem to you irrelevant may be to a trained mind most——"

"Bosh! Trained donkeys! Do you know where the diamonds are?"

"Yes, I do," answered Cadbury Taylor, still imperturbable, in spite of the provocation he was receiving.

"Well, where are they?"

"They are in the vaults of your Bank in Vienna."

"I don't believe it. Who stole them then?"

"They were put there by her Highness the Princess von Steinheimer, doubtless in security for money——"

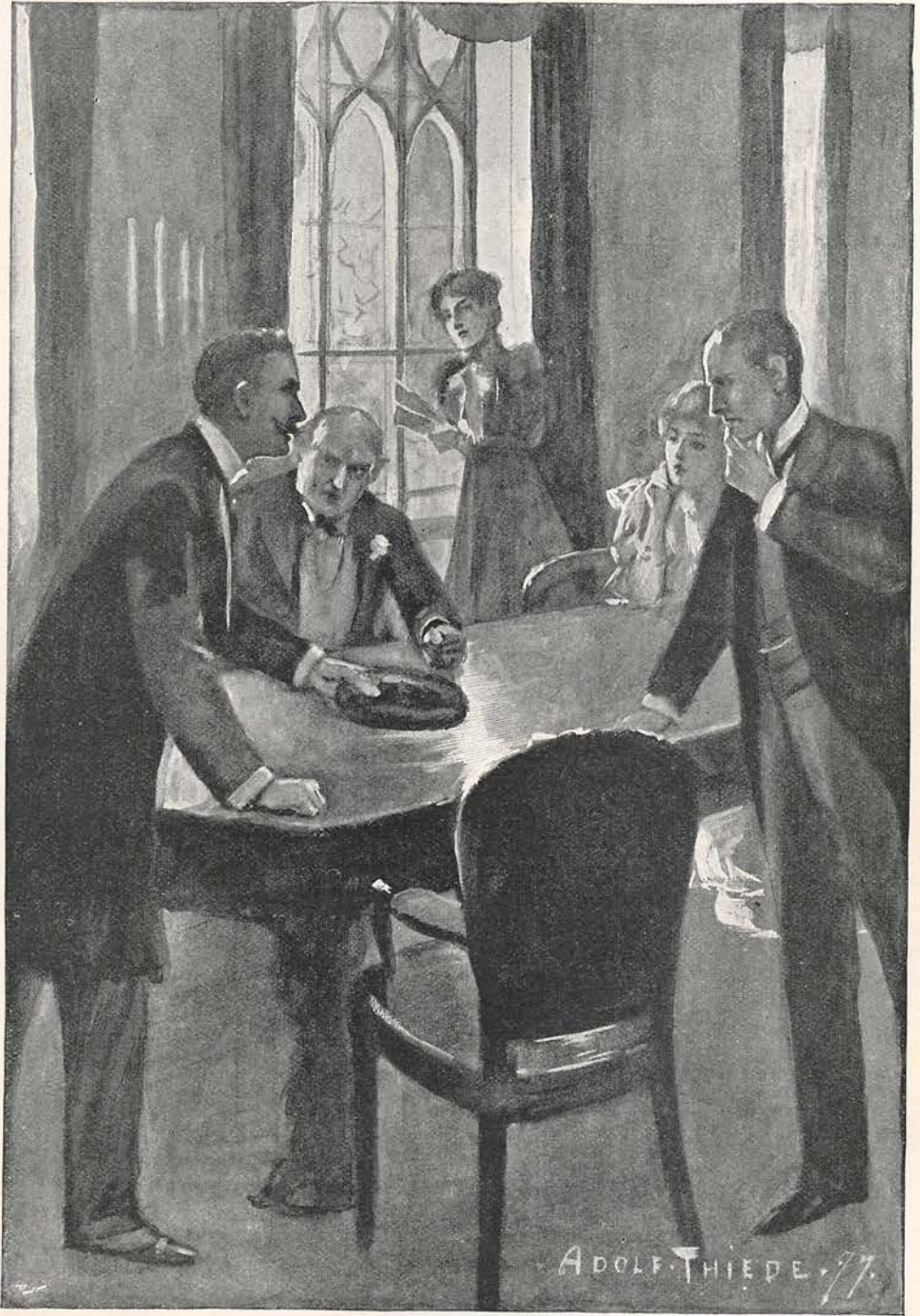
"What!" roared the Prince, springing to his feet, his stentorian voice ringing to the ceiling. "Do you mean to insinuate, you villain, that my wife stole her own diamonds?"

"If your Highness would allow me to proceed in my own——"

"Enough of this fooling. There are the diamonds," cried the Prince, jerking the box from his pocket and flinging it on the table.

"There!" shouted old man Briggs, bringing his clenched fist down on the oak. "What did I tell you? I knew it all along. The Prince stole the diamonds, and in his excitement yanks them out of his pocket and proves it. I said so from the first."

"Oh, father, father!" moaned the Princess, speaking for the first time. "How can you say such a thing? My husband couldn't do a mean action if he tried. The idea of him stealing the diamonds! Not if they were worth a thousand millions, and detection impossible."



“‘There are the diamonds,’ cried the Prince.”

The Prince, who had been glaring at Mr. Briggs, and who seemed on the point of giving that red-faced gentleman a bit of his mind, turned a softened gaze upon his wife, who rested her arms on the table and buried her face in them.

"Come, come," cried Miss Jennie Baxter, stepping energetically forward; "I imagine everybody has had enough of this. Clear out, Mr. Briggs, and take Mr. Taylor with you; I am sure he has not had any breakfast yet, and he certainly looks hungry. If you hire detectives, Mr. Briggs, you must take care of them. Out you go. The dining-room is ever so much more inviting just now than the library; and if you don't see what you want, ring for it."

She drove the two speechless men out before her, and, closing the door, said to the Prince, who was still standing bewildered at having his hand forced in this manner:

"There! Two fools from four leaves two. Now, my dears—I'm not going to Highness either of you—you are simply two lone people who like each other immensely, yet who are drifting apart through foolish misunderstandings that a few words would put right if either of you had sense enough to speak them, which you haven't, and that's why I'm here to speak them for you. Now, madame, I am ready to swear that the Prince has never said anything to me that did not show his deep love for you, and if you had overheard us you would not need me to tell you so. He thinks that you have a fancy for that idiot von Schaumberg—not that I ever saw the poor man; but he is bound to be an idiot, or the Prince wouldn't be jealous of him. As nobody has stolen the diamonds after all this fuss, so no one has stolen the affection of either of you from the other. I can see by the way you look at each other that I won't need to apologise for leaving you alone together while I run upstairs to pack."

"Oh, but you are not going to leave us?" cried the Princess.

"I should be delighted to stay; but there

is no rest for the wicked, and I must get back to London."

With that the girl ran to her room and there re-read the letter she had received—

"DEAR MISS BAXTER (it ran).—We are in a very considerable dilemma here, so I write to ask you to return to London without delay, going back to the Tyrol later on to finish the investigation of the diamond mystery. The Duchess of Chisellhurst is giving a great ball on the 29th. It is to be a very swagger affair, with notables from every part of Europe, and they seem determined that no one connected with a newspaper shall be admitted. We have set at work every influence to obtain an invitation for a reporter, but without success, the reply invariably given being that an official account will be sent to the press. Now I want you to set your ingenuity at work, and gain admittance if possible, for I am determined to have an account of this ball written in such a way that everyone who reads it will know that the writer was present. If you can manage this, I can hardly tell you how grateful the proprietor and myself will be.—Yours very truly,
"RADNOR HARDWICK."

Miss Jennie Baxter sat for some moments musing, with the letter in her hand. She coned over in her mind the names of those who might be able to assist her in this task, but she dismissed them one by one, well knowing that if Mr. Hardwick and the proprietor of the *Bugle* had petitioned all their influential friends without avail, she could not hope to succeed with the help of the very few important personages she was acquainted with. She wondered if the Princess could get her an invitation; then suddenly her eyes lit up, and she sprang eagerly to her feet.

"What a fortunate thing it is," she cried aloud, "that I did not send on the refusal of the Princess to the Duchess of Chisellhurst. I had forgotten all about it till this moment."