The Ruby

"She Paid the Price"

By CLARISSA MACKIE

On the night of Edith Palmer's birthday ball her husband came home early and sought his wife in her own rooms His handsome face was aglow with love and admiration as he took the lovely form in his arms and kissed her eager, red lips,

"Darling, you are more beautiful every time I see you," he murmured.

"And you grow more blind," she chided him playfully. "I have been waiting for you to come and tell me what jewels I shall wear tonight." She turned to the dressing table and threw back the lid of a jewel box and removed the trays. Diamonds, sapphires and emeralds blazed in the light,

"Wear your rubles, Edith," said Dick Palmer, with a mysterious smile.

"Rubles? Don't tease, Dick. Those are the only stones I really want and do not possess. Shall it be diamonds?"

"Rubies tonight," insisted Dick, and from an inner pocket of his coat he drew forth a flat leather case and placed it in her hands.

"Dick Palmer, you darting!" cried Edith, and she showered kisses upon him before she opened the box. When she finally threw back the lid she was awed by the beauty of the stones her husband had selected for her birthday

On a bed of white velvet was colled a magnificent necklace of flawless rubies, perfect in color and each stone the size of a very large pea.

Dick lifted the necklace and clasped It around his wife's neck; then he stood back to admire the rich red circle of fire against the whiteness of her skin.

"You dear, extravagant boy!" murmured Edith as she turned to the mirror to feast her eyes on the jewel. "I suppose you paid an enormous price for it."

"I paid a pretty stiff price, but I guess it's worth it. I didn't buy it in Buffam's. It isn't a brand new necklace; neither is it reconstructed from an old one. It's a genuine antique said to have belonged to an Asiatic ruler." "Where did you find ft, Dick?"

"In Lenquith's on Fourth avenue. I've had it a month now, and Buffam has been cleaning it up for me. Well, I must run away and dress." Dick kissed his wife again and left the

Edith stood long before the mirror watching the liquid flame of the ruby necklace as she slowly turned her neck. At last she unclasped it and replaced it within its case.

"I'll not wear it down to dinner. It will be a surprise for all of them when the ball begins," she said to herself and looked around for a place in which to secret the case. The large jewel box would just fit into the tiny steel safe sunk in the wall near the chimney. Before the inconspicuous door there was hung a heavily framed square painting, which could be moved aside only by pressing a knob on the other side of the room.

Now Edith selected a diamond brace let-a dazzling serpent with ruby eyes -and slipped it on her arm. Then she closed and locked the large jewel box, pressed the knob that moved aside the square picture and placed the box in the little safe. There was room after all for the new jewel case containing the ruby necklace, and after another glimpse of the beautiful jewel Edith tucked that in the safe, closed the steel clad door, replaced the picture and went down to dinner just as the gong

The rooms were bowers of loveliness. A separate color scheme had been selected for each one, and the whole harmonized in one glorious arrangement of flowers and palms.

There were several people staying at the Palmers', and most of them were gathered in the drawing room when Edith entered-the Maxfields, husband and wife; Eugenia Card, an old school friend of Edith's, and Dick's father. Henry Palmer. The fifth guest, Mme. Geulot had not yet joined them,

Just as the last strokes of the hall clock died away there was a rustle of silk that hesitated outside the door, and then Mme. Geulot came swiftly in, her bright coloring enhanced by two vivid crimson poinsettias at her breast. Her rich blue-black hair was colled in a soft knot at the back of her shapely head, and above her low, thoughtful brow was placed a coronet of diamonds. Mme. Geulot was a very beautiful woman.

"A thousand pardons, cherie," she cried penitently. "That so stupid Marie of mine has made what you call a muddle of my tollet." She threw out her hands with a graceful gesture of despair, and her long dark eyes darted from one smiling face to another.

Mrs. Palmer shook her charming head and looked at the vision in amber satin and diamonds. "Dear Mme, Geulot," she said sweetly, "if you want to part with Marie I shall be delighted to relieve you of your stupid treasure!"

"No, no?" And they all laughed at madame's dismay.

In spite of the forthcoming ball the dinner was as perfect as it always had been since Pierre Caron had ruled in the Palmer kitchen. When the meal was concluded Edith went upstairs to complete her toilet, leaving her guests price.

scattered about the flower decked GRAHAME-WHITE PLANS

As she went up the stairway to the next floor two faces peered at her from a curtained alcove-two dark faces with cunning eyes-but so contrasting were their conditions in life that had you coupled their names the world would have laughed at you.

After dismissing her maid Edith locked the door of her room and hastened to open the wall safe, where her jewwere secreted. She started back with a little cry of dismay, for the box containing the ruby necklace had disappeared.

She recovered herself almost instant-"Of course Dick had taken it out to show his father, but how did he know it was there? He guessed it. as I did not wear it at dinner," she said as she closed the safe, picked up her gloves and fan and went down to the drawing room, outwardly composed, Her brain was a chaos of doubt and perplexity. She dreaded to ask ber husband about the necklace. She was afraid to hear his answer.

Dick met her at the door of the Irawing room. "Where is the neck-

lace?" he asked quickly.

She paled to the lips. "Then you did not take it from the safe?" she gasped. "No, of course not. I didn't know it

was there." "Then it has been stolen!" And she related the circumstances.

He frowned. "Where is Jeanne?" "She was in my room when I returned to it after dinner. I dismissed her then."

"It happened at dinner," he said convincingly. "Til ring up a detective. He can come as a guest. Don't mention the matter to any one."

"No." said Edith, and went to receive the first arrivals. In spite of the loss of the ruby neck-

lace the birthday ball was a distinct success. No one would have surmised from the sweet composure of the hostess that she had suffered a great loss. Many complimented her on the loveliness of her appearance, and others added that she needed no jewels to enhance her beauty.

Dick Palmer introduced a slim, dark haired man in correct evening attire as the detective, Mr. Bleck, and in a few crisp questions he drew from Edith all the facts surrounding the theft of the ruby necklace.

"Block suggests a guest in the bouse," said Dick Inter to his wife as

they stood alone together.
"Impossible!" said Edith. "The Maxfields are above suspicion. Eugenia could buy forty ruby necklaces. Your father-absurd! It must have been one of the extra servants." "Jeanne?" asked her husband quietly.

"Oh, Jeanne is too much of a coward to attempt anything big like that. She might purloin a collar-in fact, she has a passion for collars and handkerchiefs, but not jewels."

"You have not mentioned our other guest, Edith," said Dick quietly,

She made a gesutre of dismay and searched the room with her eyes. "Mme. Geulot! Oh, Dick! I know you have warned me against my intimacy with her, when my acquaintance with her is so slight. But her letters from Paris were genuine, and she is so delightful! I wonder where she is. I have not seen her since dinner."

"I will search for her," said Dick quietly and was gone. When he made his reappearance the

last of the guests were taking departure, and when they were alone he placed his arm around his wife's slender form.

"Dear," he said, "be prepared for an tective Bleek found the jewel case on the person of our cook, Pierre Caron. who has confessed that the robbery was one of many that he and his wife Celeste Geulot-noue other, my dearhad planned. It seems she saw you trying on the necklace after I had left you, watched you hide it away and when you had left the room slipped in, secured the rubles, concealed them in her room and went down late to dinner.

"After dinner Pierre, her husband, went to her and demanded the neck-She refused to give it to him lace. then, and he took the empty case and went below, furious at her. She is now in her room or has escaped with the necklace. Will you go to her room and see if she is there? I want to avoid the servants knowing of the affair if possible."

Edith went to the door of Mme. Genlot's room and tapped lightly. There was no response to her summons or to louder knocking. Then Bleek set his shoulder to the door, and the lock gave way. He peered inside and then sprang within. The Palmers followed.

gravely apprehensive. Mme. Geulot was there. She was sitting before a cheval glass in all the regal splendor of her amber satin ball gown. About her throat was clasped the ruby necklace.

She was dead. Bleek stepped forward and unclasped the necklace and examined it closely. "That's the way with many of these Asiatic baubles," he said thoughtfully. "I happen to have heard of this one before. There is a large reward out for it. There is a legend that if it is honestly bought or sold or presented as a gift it is quite harmless.

He pointed to the throat of the dead woman, where a heavy black mark encircled the whiteness of her neck.

If it is stolen the wearer pays the

price, as Mme. Geulot has done, poor

"It grew tighter and finally strangled her," he explained as they went away and closed the door behind them.

"That's an Asiatic trick, too," he said. But Edith and her husband were not listening. Edith was weeping bitterly. She was grieving for the friend who had proved false and who had paid the

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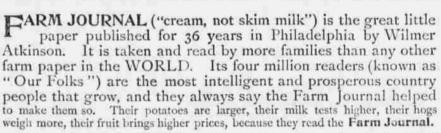
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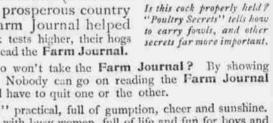
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to give me new impiration for life," writes G. E. Halderman.

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