

face was as great as my own, when I told him who had traveled here. "They couldn't have left the train here, at any rate," he said; and I knew that as well as he did.

But you have guessed the end. During those few minutes we stopped on the line, the two thieves—darkening the lamp even after I had left them, and using their own key—had left the carriage under cover of the darkness, managing their escape in their black dress out into the blackness of the night as cleverly as they had managed their theft and subsequent concealment. But how could they have depended on this unusual delay—this exquisite opportunity given them in the utter darkness, close to the city yet at no station? When I officially made my deposition, and explained the cause of my stoppage, something of the truth seemed to break upon us all; but it wasn't for a good while that it settled into a certainty. Then it got clear to everybody that the old scoundrel had duped us more ingeniously than the younger ones. As the incapable old lady (deaf as a stone, and so blind that she had to peer through her glittering glasses, with eyes always half closed, and so hungry that I had to stop the train for a luncheon basket) he had played upon us the neatest trick of all. Where on earth were the thick iron-gray hair and whiskers by which we were to have identified him? But by the time the police saw the whole thing clearly it was too late to follow up the clue to him.

The cab which had taken the eccentric old lady with her parcels and flowers from Euston was lost in the city, and could not be tracked. A high reward was offered for information, but no one ever won it. My firm belief is that it was no legitimately licensed cab at all, but one belonging to the gang, and part of the finished fraud. I verily believe, too, that sometimes now—though perhaps on the other side of the channel—those three practiced knaves enjoy a hearty laugh over that December journey by the Night Express.

Davis still assures me, with the most cheerful confidence, that he shall yet have the pleasure, some day, of trapping three of the most expert and skilled thieves in Britain. I wish I felt as sure of it.

NICELY SWINDLED.

EUGENE LAWRENCE, a young American of enormous wealth, had a moderate passion for gambling, and an immoderate passion for diamonds. Consequently he lost considerable money at play, and paid out a great deal more in buying up precious stones. But for these two passions of his this story would never have been written.

It was at Paris that Lawrence first met the Count de Rohan, and fell in love with his diamond ring. It was at Madame Duquesne's, and in this wise. Madame was a female gambler of wealth and position. Her villa was just out of Paris, on the Clichy road; and here assembled every evening quite a number of choice spirits, ladies and gentlemen, drawn together by a common love of play. At Madame Duquesne's, indeed, gaming might be said to be carried on in its most moral and respectable, yet in its most reckless, form. Thousands of francs changed hands there every night.

Eugene had driven out to the villa one afternoon with a friend, and, just *your passer la temps*, a game of *ecarte* was proposed. A stranger sat down opposite madame, and on Eugene's right, and was introduced as Count de Rohan. He was a slender, well-dressed man, polished and reserved, yet a gentleman rather in the worldly than the broad sense. There was something in the dark face, the gleaming eyes, and the sneer which, despite the heavy mustache, showed itself perpetually upon the thin lips, that was fascinating while it was repulsive—a something which seemed to mark the man "dangerous." As the cards were dealt, and the count reached forward to take his hand, Eugene's attention was suddenly drawn to the ring which he wore upon the little finger of his left hand,—a diamond of great size, and of wonderful brilliancy and beauty. No man with such a ring could easily pass himself off for a poor man. To one at all versed in the matter of diamonds, the stone was unquestionably genuine, and worth, at the very least, fifty thousand francs.

The young American had, as has been said, a passion for diamonds, and had bought many. Here was a stone finer than any he had ever seen outside the crown jewels. He could not keep his eyes off it. He played so stupidly that madame rallied him repeatedly, and his partner grew at last positively angry; all the while the ring occupied his attention to the exclusion of all else. It fascinated and bewitched him, just as a beautiful woman might have done. It seemed to him that he would have sold his very soul to possess it.

Other guests dropped in after a while, and dinner was served. Eugene man-

aged to place himself beside the count, and upon his left. The wonderful diamond was gazing power over him every moment. For a ring's sake, he was polite to a fault to a man whom he would otherwise have treated with haughty indifference. The stranger, reserved though he was, thawed perceptibly under this persistent attention. As the evening advanced, the two became apparently good friends; and when, at an unusually early hour, the company broke up, Eugene's friend having already departed, he offered the count a seat in his carriage, and they drove back to town together.

"Where shall I leave you?" Eugene asked, when they were at last fairly within the city limits. "Or," he continued, "if you are not too tired, what do you say to a cigar and bottle of hook, *chez moi*?"

The count readily accepted Lawrence's invitation, and they drove to the latter's rooms at the Hotel d'——. And there, when both were warmed to still greater intimacy and freedom, the American ventured to speak of what just then lay nearest his heart.

"You have a beautiful diamond there," he said, at last, as De Rhoan put forth his hand to take the glass which his host had just refilled again.

The count seemed to freeze up at once at mention of the ring. "Yes," was all he answered, and spoke of something else. Presently, however, Eugene, not to be defeated by a mere change of manner, broached the subject again.

"I beg your pardon," he said, pleasantly, "but we Americans are a privileged people, you know. I am passionately fond of diamonds. Would you please let me look at yours?"

The count hesitated a moment, then, with evident reluctance, drew the ring from his finger, and gravely placed it on the table. It was a Golconda stone, very peculiarly set, being held in the fangs of a golden snake, which was made to coil several times around the finger. Eugene indulged in the most rapturous expressions of admiration and envy as he examined it more closely; and the count's features finally relaxed a little and he smiled frankly, saying:

"It is for you to pardon me, my friend. Perhaps I was rude not to show you the ring at once, since it seems to give you so much pleasure; but—it has been in my family a long while, and there are many painful associations connected with it. I do not like to have it noticed; it is rarely, indeed, that I wear it."

But Eugene was hardly listening to this. He was turning the stone back and forth in his hand, and admiring it.

"Excuse me once more," he said, again. "I know I am impertinent, but—may I ask at how much you value this stone?"

"I am told it is worth sixty thousand francs. I would not sell it for a hundred thousand."

Eugene grew reckless. "I will give you a hundred thousand for it!" he said boldly, looking the other straight in the face.

In spite of himself, there came into the count's dark eyes a gleam of satisfaction at these words. But he was his cool self again on the instant.

"Monsieur Lawrence," he said, with a pained, half injured air, "you have no right to tempt me thus. I am poorer than you think. I have more than one debt of honor that troubles me; and, unless I win money this week, I must raise it upon the ring. But, believe me, I would almost as soon part with my life. Only for my honor's sake would I think of such a thing."

"At least," Eugene cried, now full of hope that the coveted stone might yet become his, "promise me that you will come to me first. I will give you more than anybody else."

"I promise," replied the other, briefly; and then he again changed the subject.

Two days later Lawrence met the count again. He had done nothing but think of that marvelous stone ever since his first sight of it, and he could not forbear speaking of it at once.

"Count," he said, abruptly, "you must let me have that ring. I believe I am going crazy over it."

The count stood still, considering a moment. Then he took the young man gently by the arm, and walked along with him.

"I could not think of parting with it for less than one hundred thousand francs; and it really is not worth—"

"I will gladly give that much!" interrupted the other, eagerly.

"Do you fully understand," the count persisted, "that the stone is worth little more than half that sum?"

"Yes, yes! I understand, perfectly."

"Well, sir,—here, take the ring. I do not hesitate to trust you with it. Wear it for two days—take it to the best jewellers in town, and make sure that it is genuine. If, at the end of that time, you still desire to possess it, then—"

Here the count's voice dropped, and his

face became gloomy. "Then I will let you have it—though I believe my ancestors will turn over in their graves."

Eugene, overjoyed, received the ring, and hastily taking leave of the count, went with his prize at once to the best judge of diamonds in Paris. The stone was pronounced genuine, without a doubt, and one of the finest in the world, worth at least sixty-five thousand francs. The young man was delighted, and went home to gloat over it by himself. Alas! his joy was short-lived. De Rhoan came in the next day with a downcast look.

"Monsieur Lawrence," he said, dejectedly, "I am come to disappoint you. I know I promised to sell you the stone; but I throw myself upon your mercy. It is more to me than I thought—I cannot part with it. I beg you to give me back my ring. I will raise the money some other way."

There were actually tears in the dark eyes as the foreigner uttered these words and Eugene felt that it would be ungenerous to urge him farther. Of course he could not do otherwise than restore the ring, though he did so with a reluctance scarcely less than that which the count himself might have felt at parting with it. It was only the next Saturday that he was called to London, and then home at once to America.

Eugene Lawrence had been home from Europe nearly a year now, and yet all that time he had never forgotten Count de Rhoan's diamond. He thought of it often—thought of it always, too, with a sigh of regret, as one sometimes thinks of a beautiful woman whom he has failed to win. Probably he wanted it all the more because he had been unable to get it. It is human nature, after all, to value a thing most when it belongs to somebody else. But it seems that he had not yet seen the last of the Golconda stone.

By what could not but strike him as a remarkable fatality, Eugene, being in Boston one afternoon in August, intending to return to New York by rail, at the last moment met a friend who was going on the same night by the Fall-River steamer, and who persuaded him to go that way.

Just at dusk, as the vast steamer was making its way down the east passage, before reaching Newport, as the two were sitting together on the after-deck, Eugene found his cigar had gone out, and was obliged to appeal to a stranger beside him for a light. This stranger, he had before noticed, was a stout, jolly-looking individual, in a gray business suit. He had been sitting there smoking a long while, with his feet on the rail. He took his own cigar from his mouth, and politely knocked the ashes from it before handing it to Lawrence. As he did so, the light of the cabin lamps fell full upon his hand; and there, right before our heroes eyes, flashing and scintillating with a brilliancy that could not be mistaken, was his old sweetheart, the Golconda stone. He recognized it on the instant, positively, and beyond a doubt. If he could have been mistaken by the stone, there was the gold snake in whose fangs it rested, familiar to him as though he himself had worn it all his life. So astonished was he, and delighted, too, at this unexpected event, that his hand trembled violently as he mechanically took the offered cigar and lit his own with it. And presently when the stout stranger moved away, he followed and addressed him.

It did not seem to Eugene at all necessary to beat about the bush with this person, whom he took to be some vulgar American, made rich by the sale of butter or lard or some other oily commodity; a representative of the later aristocracy.

"Sir," he said, placing his hand on the stout man's shoulder, "may I inquire where you got that ring?"

The stranger looked around, surprised, and apparently startled.

"That ring!" he exclaimed, in a voice of alarm. "Why? Wasn't it his'n?"

"Wasn't it whose?"

"Why, the man I bought it of—the count."

"So De Rhoan sold it, after all, did he?" Eugene said, in a lower tone, half to himself and half to the stout man.

"Yes," responded the other, opening his eyes. "How the deuce did you know? Acquainted with the count?"

"How much did you give him for it?" demanded Lawrence, not heeding the question.

"Wal, you see he was hard up. Been playin' high, I guess. He let me have it for fifty thousand francs; that's nigh onto ten thousand dollars, I reckon."

"I will give you twice that amount for it—a hundred thousand francs!"

"Whew! You will? My friend, it's yours, by gracious! Got the money with you?"

The present owner of the stone was not so slow at driving a bargain as the count had been.

"I will get it for you to-morrow

morning," Eugene answered. "Where shall I meet you?"

"To-morrow morning?" said the stout man deliberately. "Afraid I can't see you then. I s'pose you mean business?"

"I do." And Eugene smiled, in spite of himself, at the other's simplicity.

"Wal, I tell you what. You come around to the office of the A—House at half-past eight to-morrow night. Bring the money with you, and the ring is yours."

"I will be there," Lawrence said, briefly, and the conversation ended.

An hour before the appointed time found Eugene impatiently pacing the floor at the A—House. It seemed to him that that hour never would pass, and he constantly tortured himself with the fear that the stranger would repent himself of his bargain, and fail to appear. At half-past eight precisely, however, the man he waited for entered, looking provokingly cool and unconcerned.

"You kind of looked as if you was set on havin' that ring when you spoke up last night."

Then he drew it from his finger, and placed it in Eugene's hand, receiving the money in return. The diamond sparkling in the gauntlet, brilliant and beautiful as of old. Eugene stood fondling it and feasting his eyes on it, while the stranger stepped one side to count the notes. Then the latter came back, the two shook hands with expressions of mutual good-will, and separated.

Lawrence went straight to his room, but could hardly sleep, so excited was he at obtaining the stone at last. It was not until he came once more to look at it by daylight, that he fancied, somehow or other, that it was less brilliant than it used to be, and less clear. The more he looked at it the more he became convinced of this. What could it mean? A horrible suspicion seized him. He went off directly after breakfast, and asked an experienced jeweller his opinion of the stone. The man looked at it carefully a long while, and then handed it back.

"It is the best imitation I ever saw," he said.

Eugene stared at him angrily. "Do you mean to tell me that it is paste?" he gasped at last.

"Most certainly; though if I were not an expert, I should not dream of it. If it were genuine, it would be worth eight or ten thousand dollars. As it is so good an imitation, and set in gold, it may be worth fifty or sixty dollars. Where did you get it?"

But Eugene did not stop to tell the jeweller where he got it. He went to the police, and put them on the track of a stout, jolly-looking personage in a gray business suit. They never found him, though, and the twenty thousand dollars was a dead loss, never to be made good.

Our hero often wondered if the count was a party to the fraud. The facts were probably as follows: De Rhoan was a real count, and also a real rascal. The whole thing had been a cleverly contrived and cunningly executed plot, so devised as to save the count's reputation, and yet enable him to profit by Eugene's passion for diamonds. He had purposely thrown himself in Eugene's way,—his reluctance to part with the stone, and his final departure from his agreement, were mere pretence; and the stout man was no doubt a tool of his, sent to America for the express purpose of tempting Lawrence with the Golconda stone a second time, and changing it for the paste one at the last moment. The fraud would have been perpetrated at an earlier period but for Eugene's sudden departure from Paris.

The young American, as he finally saw through the whole plot, could not help admitting to himself that it was extremely well done; and, he did not feel very much ashamed that he had allowed himself to be so imposed upon. Not one man in a thousand, probably, could have helped himself under the same circumstances. The thing he regretted most, after all, was that he was as far as ever from possessing the Golconda Stone.

Domesticated Seals.

A man living at Montreal obtained two young seals, and after feeding them about a year they became very tame, and would go into the house and stay an hour or two by the fire, and then go out and take a swim in the St. Lawrence returning again to the house and striking their flippers against it to gain entrance. Finally he decided to send them off, and gave them to a steamboat pilot to carry 40 or 50 miles down the river, which was done, but the next morning the seals made their appearance again as usual.

Sitting for a photograph is the easiest thing in the world, but the chill that crawls down a fellow's back just at the critical moment, and the thought that his back hair is sticking up like quills on a porcupine, is what makes him laugh, and makes the photographer pray that there will be no fans in the world to come.

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ASSIGNEE'S NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that John A. Nesbit, of Madison township, Perry county, Pa., executed a deed of voluntary assignment in trust for the benefit of creditors of all his estate real and personal and mixed, to the undersigned, on the 24th day of March, A. D. 1880.

All persons knowing themselves indebted to the said assignor will make payment and those having accounts will present them for settlement to

ANDREW ADAIR, Assignee.

March 29, 1880. Chas. H. Smiley, ATTY.