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CHAPTER I.

The Theft of the Ruby.

SIR JOHN GARNETT'S jewelry shop on Bond street was unusually crowded one morning in the summer of 1898.

The occasion of this morning's gathering was the fact that the Great Ruby, owned by the Duke of St. Edmunds and intrusted to Sir John Garnett to sell for £50,000, had just been brought to the shop from the bank and was now on exhibition to favored customers.

Sir John Garnett, Knight, and Alderman of the city of London, stood at one end of his shop. A well-knit, smooth-shaven man stepped up to him.

"You sent for me, Sir John," he said, in a quiet, business-like way, presenting a card as he spoke. "I am Police Inspector James Brett, of Scotland Yard."

"Ah, yes," replied Sir John, shaking hands. "You see, the Great Ruby has just been sent here from the mine. You know its value. So may others. It might be well to have a detective here to keep an eye on the jewel."

"Afraid of the Diamond Gang, eh?"

"No," answered the jeweler, relutantly. "There is another thing—far more important to me. It concerns my wife."

"Perhaps you would better employ a private detective for such work, as this, Sir John. Divorces aren't exactly in my line."

"This is not a case of divorce," retorted Sir John stiffly. "Let me explain. I was married some years ago, while I was still a poor man. My wife and I lived in my father's old home in Hampstead. Then came wealth, and we made an Alderman and later a Knight. Now, I am quite content to live on as of old, but my wife wants me to give up the old Hampstead house and move to some more fashionable locality. She refuses to live there and ends about the country, living at swell hotels. At present she is stopping at the Claridge Hotel, in the suburbs, with Lord Mongyghai. His Lordship counts chiefly upon a lot of other people's property when sponge on her for money. This brings me to the point. Awhile ago I was obliged to tell my wife she was spending too much money. I placed her on an allowance—a most liberal one. She exceeded it and asked me for more. I refused. Then her jewelry began to vanish."

"Pawned it to get more money?"

"She vows she didn't. She says it vanishes one piece at a time, from her room at the hotel. Will you look into this mystery, Mr. Brett?"

"Gladly. I'll go to Oatlands Park Hotel to-night. But I fear you'll find little mystery beyond the fact that she steals her own jewelry and pawns it."

Prince Kassim Wadis, of India, entered the shop with Countess Charkoff, a pretty Russian woman, to whom he was devoted. They examined the ruby with care. It had once belonged to the Prince's grandfather, an Indian Rajah.

The Prince turned away to hand back the jewel to Sir John. As he did so the Countess dropped her parasol. A plainly dressed man picked it up.

"Thank you," said the Countess as the stranger handed it to her. Then, in a lower voice, she added: "The ruby is here. Waste no time!"

The man left the shop.

The shop doors were flung open a moment later and a handsome woman of about forty walked in.

"Good morning, Lady Garnett," said the Countess.

"Good morning," replied Lady Garnett. "Ah, John," turning to her husband, "so you're here, are you? I want a talk with you."

"More money, I suppose," grumbled Sir John, as they moved aside.

His words were drowned in a crash of broken glass.

"Some one's thrown a stone through a window across the street," explained Brett. But look at the fight he's making. It's taking every policeman on the beat to hold him. And, in consequence, I suppose Bond street will have to do without police assistance for the next half hour."

As he spoke a messenger boy entered and handed the jeweller a telegram.

The crowd that had filled the shop had drifted out, leaving only Sir John, Lady Garnet and the clerks in sight.

"What's this?" exclaimed Sir John, as he read the despatch aloud. "It's from my bankers—'A check for £2,000, bearing your signature, has been presented. The signature seems doubtful. Shall the bearer. Come at once if you wish to stop payment.' Come, Brett, we must go to the bank at once. Excuse us, Countess. Business is business, you know. Come, Brett."

"Stop! Stop!" cried Lady Garnett. "Let me go with you. I must know the truth."

"Stay, Countess," said Brett, as he followed the Garnetts out of the shop. "Keep the place open. Show the Great Ruby to any one who may come in."

"But Sir John ordered me not to show it to any one in his absence, my lady, and"—

"Show it to the Count," ordered her ladyship sharply. "I will be responsible."

The Count's eyes lit up for an instant at sight of the jewel. Then his face became once more an impassive mask.

He pulled out a pocketbook, stuffed with notes, and began to open it.

He did not see the sandbag was flung open and two men rushed in.

One was a policeman. The other was in plain clothes.

"Collards up, Black Joe!" cried the plain-clothes man, covering the Count with a revolver. "You're caught red-handed this time. Slip the bracelets on him. He pulled to the constable.

"Blame nothing! He's 'Black Joe,' the forger! Jewel thief in the business. What's he been doing?"

"Trying to buy the Great Ruby, sir," answered Brett, holding up the jewel. "Great!" cried the detective. "Caught in the act. If we'd come five minutes later we'd have been a free ride for him. We have a cab at the door. Hustle the thief into it, constable. As for you, turning on Pennoyer, look up that ruby or you may be robbed again. Short! I'll take it to the station with me. Short that way. I'll be needed in evidence anyhow. Follow in a cab at once, both of you, to the Vine Street Police Station. Your testimony will be needed."

As he spoke he followed the thief and the constable into a waiting cab and drove off.

A moment later Sir John and Brett came back.

"The telegram," cried Sir John, "calling me to the bank was a forgery. The bank people never sent it. It was a hoax."

"Or a trick to draw you from the shop," suggested Brett.

"That's what it was," chimed in Lady Garnett. "A thief—a Russian Count—has been here to steal the Ruby."

And she recounted the adventure to her listeners.

"But where's the Ruby?" asked Brett.

"Oh, safe enough. The police took it around to the station as evidence. We are going there at once."

"And when you get there you'll find nothing!" growled Brett.

"What do you mean?"

"Simply this, Sir John. The Great Ruby has been stolen by the Diamond Gang."

* * * * * * *

Prince Kassim Wadis and the Countess were strolling through the corridor of the Oatlands Park Hotel on the afternoon of the day following the ruby's theft.

Coming down the corridor toward them was a young man in a golf suit.

One would scarcely recognize in the jaunty, well-knit figure and tanned face the white-haired Russian Count who had tried to buy the ruby the preceding day. The man was Morris Longman, a world-famed diamond thief.

"Ah, Col. Colville," exclaimed the Countess as he neared them, "what a surprise to see you here. You Americans turn up at such unexpected places."

"I just ran down here on my wheel from London," answered the man with a nasal American accent, "to meet an old friend and her daughters. But they aren't here. So this box of chocolates that I brought them from Paris must go begging."

He looked keenly at the Countess as he spoke.

"Chocolates!" she cried. "I dote on them."

"Will you do me the honor to accept these at second hand then?" he asked.

"Thanks so much. Prince Kassim, may I present Col. Colville, of America? The Colonel and I knew each other in the old days."

"And doubtless would like to talk over old times," ended the Prince. "I shall hope to see you at dinner, Countess."

As Kassim moved away the Countess turned eagerly to the man at her side.

"The ruby!" she whispered. "Is it here?"

"Yes; in the chocolate box—safe!"

"Ah!"

"We must trust it to your care, Mirza. The police may nab us. Guard it carefully till it is safe to take it across to Paris."

Lady Garnett had just returned to Oatlands Park Hotel. There she was greeted rapturously by the clique who flattered her and whose bills she paid.

"Thank goodness she's come back," growled the manager to his cashier, Louis Jaqui, as Lady Garnett passed through the office. "She's the best-paying customer we've got, just as that Mrs. [illegible] and her daughter are the worst."

"But Miss Brenda Elsmere is such a sweet, kind young lady," objected Louisa. "She is so good to me always. Besides she and Capt. Dalrymple are so dead in love with each other, and her cruel mother's trying to force her to marry that rich fool, Sir George Hartopp, and"—

"I wish she's do it. Then maybe my bill would be paid. She!"—

The entrance of a new guest checked the manager's plaint.

"This is Manager Cornish?" said the newcomer. "Get my telegram?" "I'm Mr. Brett."

"Oh, yes. Scotland Yard's detective. About Lady Garnett's jewelry. Yes? Sir. What can I do for you?"

"My first step will be to search the guests' rooms while they're at dinner tonight."

They had barely disappeared when a woman glided from behind a half-open door at the other end of the office.

It was the Countess, who had just left Longman.

"A detective—to search the rooms!" she gasped. "Lucky I overheard! But what shall I do with the ruby?"

She eyed the chocolate box in despair.

"Hello, Countess!" exclaimed a hearty voice. "Here's a nice joke on me!"

Lady Garnet came in carrying a little steel safe.

"See what John has sent me to keep my jewelry in," she laughed. "It's burglarproof, bombproof and a lot of other things and opens with a password. He's [illegible] I shan't lose any more jewels, I suppose."

As she spoke she was working on the combination. The word spelled out, the safe door swung open.

"Nice sort of thing to lug around, isn't it?" she grumbled.

"It's secure, anyway," answered the Countess. "By the way, what a place that would be to hide my precious chocolates from that greedy chambermaid!"

Suiting the action to the word, she tossed the candy box into the open safe and slammed the door shut.

"Don't look so surprised, dear," she cried gaily, in response to Lady Garnett's air of bewilderment. "It's just one of my jokes. You'll guard my treasure, won't you?"

"The detective won't look there for the Ruby anyway," soliloquized the Countess.

* * * * * * *

Dinner was over and the Oatlands Park Hotel guests were gathered in the lounging room.

Prince Kassim was speaking to the Countess and several others of an official letter he had just received from the English government.

"They complain I'm spending too much money," he was saying, "and they are going to send me back home to govern my own native state. After bringing me up and educating me like an English gentleman, they complain because I spend money like one. And now I'm to run home in disgrace."

"I'm so sorry," murmured the Countess.

"India will be heaven, Mirza, if you'll go there with me," whispered the Prince, as the others moved away.

A different sort of love scene was at the other end of the room, where Brenda Elsmere sat with Capt. Dalrymple. The girl had for the moment eluded her mother's watchful eye and Lord George Hartopp's silly attentions and Dalrymple had taken advantage of the fact.

"Brenda," he was saying, "do you see that Japanese cabinet. Go to it the first thing in the morning. You will find there a message from me."

"Here comes Mrs. Elsmere. Good night. You won't forget to look in the Japanese cabinet?"

The room gradually thinned out.

Dalrymple, before leaving it, went over to the Japanese cabinet and laid in it a note and a rose.

"If your answer is 'Yes' wear this to-morrow," the note read.

Brett lowered the lights and sat down in an easy chair.

The hours rolled slowly by. Brett was tired. His head began to nod. At last he fell sound asleep.

A light glimmered along the balcony and a white-robbed figure appeared at the head of the stairs.

Lady Garnett, clad in a nightgown, her hair down her back, picked her way carefully down the steps. In one hand she held a diamond bracelet; in the other the Countess's chocolate box.

Her eyes were fixed and staring. Her lips moved vaguely.

Down into the room she came.

"The river is deep," she murmured, brokenly. "It will guard its secret well."

She tossed the chocolate box into a chair.

"The river will guard its secret," she repeated.

She wandered across to the Japanes cabinet, and opened it.

"This place is safe," she whispered. "Its doors are iron and double locked. No thief can burst them. What is this?"

She took out the red rose and tossed it on the floor. "More dead men's hair," she murmured. "It has no place here. The Great Ruby will be safe in this strong box."

She laid the diamond bracelet on Dalrymple's note, closed the cabinet door softly and started back toward her room, feeling her way.

One of her outstretched hands fell on Brett's face. He awoke with a start.

"Poor John!" she said softly. "Poor dear old husband! He's sound asleep. Good night, dear one."

Stooping over, she kissed the astounded Brett on the lips.

"Good night!" she repeated, and crept slowly back to her room.

"Lady Garnett!" gasped Brett, in wide-eyed amazement. "Great Heaven! She is walking in her sleep!"

(To Be Continued.)

THE SOMNAMBULIST.

"LADY GARNETT!" GASPED BRETT. "SHE IS WALKING IN HER SLEEP!"

(From a photograph of scene in Act II. of "The Great Ruby," at the Fourteenth Street Theatre. Miss Rose Coghlan as Lady Garnett, Mr. John T. Sullivan as Detective James Brett.)

BOSTONIANS VERY TIRED.

Too Weary to Defend $684 Suit in Court.

Because the Bostonians opera company had just returned from a professional trip to California and were not in physical condition to appear in court, A. H. Hummel obtained an adjournment until Thursday of the trial of the suit of Thomas & Wyle against Barnabee & McDonald.

Col. Beecher, representing the plaintiffs, wanted to go on with the trial, but Mr. Hummel said that his comic-opera clients, Barnabee & McDonald, were travel-worn and weary, and might flop off to sleep in the middle of their testimony if forced to take the witness stand to-day.

Barnabee & McDonald are proprietors of the costumes, and as such are being sued for a set printer's bill for eighty colored lithographs of Robin Hood and his merry crew. The debt was contracted about four years ago.

The defense is that the lithographs were used by another company to which the rights to "Robin Hood" had been sold, and not by the Bostonians.

STRAUSS'S BAND COMING.

Rudolph Aronson Has Secured It and Its Composer-Conductor for an American Concert Tour.

Rudolph Aronson, who has just returned from Europe, announces that he has secured Eduard Strauss and his Imperial Orchestra of fifty musicians for an American concert tour next season. The first of the one hundred concerts agreed upon will be given in New York on Oct. 1, when the composer will present a new waltz, "Welcome to America," on which he is now at work.

Mr. Aronson has also arranged to bring Siegfried Wagner to the United States in June to begin tasting for the American rights to Puccini's "La Tosca" and has secured the American rights to the "Buffet Automatique," which he will introduce here.

William Carl's Free Organ Recitals

William C. Carl will begin a series of Spring organ recitals to-morrow afternoon at 4 o'clock in the "Old First" Presbyterian Church, Fifth avenue and Twelfth street, with the assistance of Eugene Weiner, flutist, Bernard Sinsheimer, violinist and Earl Eulick, the boy soprano. No tickets are required.

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VON SCHUCH SAYS GOOD-BY.

Conducts "Lohengrin" on Saturday and Last Night's Concert.

The brief visit of Von Schuch, the Dresden conductor, is at an end. His last appearance was at the Opera-House concert last night, when the orchestra, which had been increased to one hundred musicians for the occasion, followed his beat through the "Beautiful Blue Danube" waltz, the "Tannhauser" overture and the "Tristan und Isolde" prelude and liebestod. In the latter Nordica took part. The waltz went with spirit, but without much originality. As for the overture, which was given by request, it was not accentuated as much as on the night of the conductor's first appearance, some ten days ago, but it was a performance of such intensity that it will not soon be forgotten. A beautiful reading of the "Tristan und Isolde" excerpt reached an overpowering climax that had the fault of its virtue: The orchestra fairly drowned Nordica in spite of her most strenuous efforts. Mr. Paur has never erred more grievously in this respect.

On Saturday night Von Schuch conducted "Lohengrin," his only opportunity here to carry through an opera. He was eminently successful. His authority was such that no apology was necessary for lack of rehearsal, and his reading was most sympathetic. There was a snap to the performance that was refreshing. Whatever the real reason, which the future may disclose, for the hurried visit of this distinguished musician at the end of a long and slowly dying season, the impression he has made is a strongly favorable one. He will be remembered.

Encores were made for Gadski on Saturday night, and Susan Strong carried her part of "Elsa." Van Dyck was a striking picture as the Knight of the Holy Grail, and Schumann-Heink as Ortrud, Bertram as Telramund, Edouard de Reszke as the King, and Muhlmann as the Herald, repeated the performances with which opera-goers are familiar.

There was a very good house at last night's popular concert, and Nordica, Plancon, Scott and Miss Carrie Bridewell, who sang, were warmly received. Of course Plancon had to sing "The Palms" on such a day.

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*6.00 P.M. ....Western Express....	*8.45 P.M.
*6.25 P.M. ....Northern Express....	*7.30 A.M.
*7.20 P.M. ....Adirondack & Montreal Ex.	*8.40 A.M.
*8.00 P.M. ....Pan-American Express....	*7.27 A.M.
*8.30 P.M. ....Buffalo & S. W. Special..	*7.30 A.M.
*9.30 P.M. ....Pacific Express....	*6.30 A.M.
†12.10 A.M. ....Midnight Express....	*7.00 A.M.

*Daily. †Daily, except Sunday. ‡Daily, except Monday. ||Saturdays only. §Daily, except Saturdays and Sundays.

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9.12 A. M. and 5.15 P. M. Daily, except Sundays, to Pittsfield; Sundays only at 9.20 A. M.

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