

Interesting Stories With a Thrill

A Judge Of Men

By Walt Gregg.



WHEN I found out that Elizabeth was the daughter of old Smith, the diamond millionaire, I didn't think that it mattered. Afterward, I found that it did. So I settled to go away before I made a fool of myself. She wasn't the sort of girl to give herself away, and I wasn't the sort of fellow to ask her to. I thought I might as well have a good time as I could. So I met her that I was going till the last night, for fear she might ask questions. Then I mentioned it casually when we were sitting out a dance. She was wearing some pink roses that I had sent her, and she looked—how I thought I should remember. I thought I should remember the vase that the band was playing, too. "By the way, Miss Elizabeth," I said, "I'm going abroad tomorrow." She raised her eyebrows ever so little. "By the way," she mocked, "when are you coming back?" "I'm not coming back," I told her. "Why?" she asked. She spoke as if she only inquired because she was obliged to. I felt a bit sorry. "I gather that my doings don't interest you," I said shortly. She brushed her hair back with one hand and gave me one of her sharp looks. She and her father always made me feel as if they could see through a brick wall. "And I gather that mine interest you," she retorted. She shut her mouth with a snap—just as old Smith does—and fixed me with her eyes, and I knew that we'd got to have it out. So I didn't beat about the bush. "Yes," I owned, "that's it." She looked across the conservatory and moved her lips in and out—it's another trick of her father's. Then she turned to me and flushed a little. "I've never seen her do that before." "You needn't go," she told me. "I caught my breath, and felt as if the world were turning too fast for me." "You don't mean that you—that you care for—a fellow like me, Elizabeth?" I said. She made a funny little sound in her throat. "I mean that," she declared. "I don't suppose I would if I could help it, but I can't." She touched my arm quickly. "I can't!" "When I go," I said, "and it isn't because I don't care a lot, dear girl, but because I do—you'll be able to help it." "You're not going," she said in her positive way—like old man Smith. "I want you!" "Don't tempt a fellow beyond endurance," I begged. "I—I oughtn't to have told you, but—I'm not clever as

you are, dear girl; and I thought you didn't care, and—it's goodby, and—and God bless you, Elizabeth." "I rose; she rose, too, and put her arm through mine, and I lost my senses for a few moments. Then I held her at arm's length. "You're not so sensible as I thought, Elizabeth," I said. "I'm sensible enough to know what I want," she assured me. "I generally get it. You ask father if I don't." I groaned at the mention of her father. "There'll be an awful row if I ask him," I said. "There'll be a worse row if you don't," she declared, with a toss of her head. So I told him, and there was a row. He called me everything under the sun, and refused his consent flatly and finally. When I told Elizabeth she marched me back to him, and informed him that we could do without his consent; and he informed her that, in that case, we could do without his money, for he wouldn't give her a penny. He repeated the statement several times in a very forcible manner. "I've said it," he concluded, banging his fist on the table, "and you've never known me to break my word, Elizabeth." "And I've said that I will marry him," Elizabeth replied, "and you've never known me to break mine." They stared at each other for a full minute. The curious thing was that they looked just alike, though one was a plain old man, and the other a good-looking young girl. "Well," said Elizabeth at last, "we needn't be bad friends about it. Don't give your unbreakable word to do anything else, that you'll be sorry for." The old man grinned at her with a kind of grudging admiration. "No," he agreed. "No. We won't be bad friends, Elizabeth. I've given you your choice between him and my money. It's a fair offer, and neither of us can complain." "It's a fair offer," Elizabeth agreed. "And I shan't complain." "The money's good money," the old man remarked, "and I made it for you. The man's a fool, or a—No, I'll give him his due—he's a fool!" "Ah!" said Elizabeth. "But I'm not, dad! I'll have the good man, too, if you don't mind. Come along, George." "Look here, dear girl," I said, when we were out of the room. "Your father's right. I mustn't let you marry me." Elizabeth faced me squarely. Her obstinate little chin stuck out, just like her father's. "If you don't," she said, "I will go away and never touch his money. That's my unbreakable word. And I'll give you my word, too." "Elizabeth," I interrupted, "don't give your unbreakable word to do any-

thing more that you'll be sorry for. You shan't be sorer than I can help, dear girl. We shall be poor, but—"

"Indeed we shan't!" she declared. "We're going to have that money. It's mine, really, and he'd rather I had it, and I like money." "He'll never give it to you," I warned her. "Of course not. I shall have to get it out of him in a square business deal—a deal in diamonds." "Diamonds!" I laughed. "You're pretty clever, Elizabeth, but you aren't clever enough to get the better of your father in that line. There isn't much that he doesn't know about diamonds." "Exactly!" She nodded. "That's our chance. He thinks there isn't anything that he doesn't know about them. So if we can find out one little thing that he doesn't know about them, I've been thinking—Wasn't Prof. Knowles your teacher? The man who tried to manufacture diamonds?" "He did it," I explained, "but they were only tiny little scraps of things. They weren't worth as much as it cost to make them." "But they would be if he could make bigger ones." "He says it's impossible, because—I'm hanged if I remember the reason. I don't think I ever understood the business really; but he was positive about it, and he's always right." "What a horrible man! You must introduce me to him." "He doesn't care about women," I objected. "He'll make a fuss if I propose to him." Elizabeth laughed at me. "Nothing to the fuss I shall make if you don't!" she said. So I called on old Knowles the next day, and he was very pleased to see me. I don't know why he liked me, because he said I was the worst pupil he ever had; but he did. He grumbled at first, and muttered about "chattering women," and "waste of time," but when I told him that Elizabeth was going to marry me, he said he should be interested to see her. He had a theory about the attraction she ought to be very clever! She is, of course. They made friends directly, and talked and talked about diamonds until I was sick of it, and went out to smoke a cigarette. "When I came back they had gone from the study to the laboratory, and were inspecting the diamond making machine. Elizabeth was quite excited, and he was chuckling. "Miss Smith has made a very curious suggestion to me, George," he said; "a very curious suggestion. She thinks we could increase the size of the diamonds; and upon my word, I believe we could!" He rubbed his hands furiously. "It can flood the world with them, and ruin every diamond merchant!" he declared. "What's the good of that?" I protest-

ed. "It won't make us any better off to ruin other people." "True," the professor agreed. "True! But if diamond merchants in general, and Mr. Smith in particular, wish to avoid ruin, they must make certain other people better off—you two young people, in fact. Now do you understand?" "Ye-es," I said; "but I don't know if it's quite—quite the straight thing, you know." "Nonsense!" Elizabeth cried. "The professor and I have a perfect right to make diamonds if we please. If father chooses to buy us off, it's his affair; and his money is mine by right, and I warned him. I'll speak to him about it, professor." She spoke to old Smith about it that evening, when I was there. He snapped his fingers at her and laughed. "I don't care that for your diamonds," he told her. "Go and make them, and don't talk nonsense. If you could do it you could make more out of them than I could pay, as you ought to know." "I do know," she told him coolly, "and if it rested with me, I would do it; but the professor has scruples about ruining the diamond trade, and only wants to make enough to give George and me a state, since you won't. Well, I've given you the first offer, though you don't deserve it. Since you won't take it, I'll go to Hulder. He'll make us an offer." Hulder was the old man's great rival, and he hated him like poison, as Elizabeth knew. He tried to put her off going to him, but she wouldn't be put off, and finally he agreed to witness the experiments. He came to the professor's laboratory one afternoon and brought a couple of his experts. They were very supercilious at first, but they changed their tone when the professor set his apparatus to work and produced some tiny little diamonds, like pins' heads. "They're diamonds right enough," one of them owned; "but they're no use for anything but setting in cheap rings. We wouldn't give you five shillings apiece, and it costs more than that to produce them, I take it!" "They won't interfere with my business," the old man added. "I don't deal in toy jewelry! They're very interesting, professor, but there's no money in them." "But suppose he can make them bigger?" Elizabeth asked. "I'll tell you when I've seen him make them," the old man answered coolly. "You shall!" said Elizabeth; and she helped the professor connect up some fresh apparatus and retorts. They looked the same as those he had shown me years before, that didn't make real diamonds, but crystals that seemed like them for a few minutes and then melted away. They were so cold that they burnt you—at least, that's how it felt—and you had to hold

them in a special sort of wadding. We sat and watched the apparatus for a quarter of an hour. The professor kept turning taps and things, and Elizabeth helped him. She had learned more about it in a couple of days than I had learned in a couple of years, and she looked very scientific in a big apron thing with a lot of pockets filled with rods and tweezers and chemicals. Presently they squeezed out a glassy lump about as big as a pigeon's egg; and Elizabeth wrapped it in woolly stuff, and held it while it cooled—or uncooled. "It's a rose diamond in the rough," she stated. "Until it evaporates," the second expert suggested. "It won't evaporate," Elizabeth predicted. After a few minutes she peeped into the wool, and touched the thing with a gloved finger. Then she touched it with her bare hand, and said it was all right. "Now you can inspect it," she offered, and handed it to her father, and he handed it to the experts. They waved it about in the air and looked at it. Then they examined it carefully through lenses and with a microscope. Then they tested it with chemicals and grunted. Then they trimmed it up with a little wheel and some paste stuff. At last they put it down and nodded at each other, and muttered to old Smith. "Well," he pronounced, "it's a rose diamond. It may be worth £100, or it may not. It depends on how it cuts. It's not big enough to matter to me." "I can make larger ones," the professor declared, rubbing his hands. "Much larger ones! And any quantity of them. Thousands and thousands!" "Then," said old Smith, "you can corner the market in rose diamonds. Make a few and you'll do very well. Make too many and you'll ruin the market. It doesn't matter to me. I deal in brilliants." "I can make brilliants," said the professor, with a chuckle. "Make them," said old Smith, curtly. "It's no use talking." Elizabeth and the professor set the apparatus going again, and we waited another quarter of an hour while the professor tried to explain his formula to old Smith, and old Smith tried to explain the diamond market to the professor. "I don't know if they made each other understand. They didn't make me. I nearly went to sleep, and the experts yawned, and Elizabeth ran about turning taps and stirring stings up with little rods. At last she called the professor, and they pulled a lot of levers and squeezed out another glassy lump. Elizabeth declared that it was a brilliant, and snuggled it up in wool, and wouldn't let any one peep at it. "Give it to me," old Smith growled.

"I'll hold it!" And she handed him the little bundle of wool. "You mustn't open it for three minutes," she told him, "or it will be spoiled." He gave it three minutes by his watch. Then he unwrapped it, and they examined it as before. They pronounced it a brilliant of the first water, and probably worth five thousand pounds! "Umph!" said old Smith. "You've done me. How long are you going to give me to sell out the stuff that I've got on hand?" "Not a day, dad," said Elizabeth. "It will be in all the papers tomorrow, so you can prepare for a slump—unless we do business." "Look here, Elizabeth," I remonstrated. "It's a bit rough on your father." The old man turned on me savagely. "Business is rough," he said, "and you're a fool, shut up!" So I shut up, and he turned to the professor. "What are your terms?" he asked. The professor waved his hand at Elizabeth. "Miss Smith is the business manager of the firm," he stated; "and the old man turned to her. "Well, Elizabeth?" he asked; and she considered, touching her lip with her finger. "Well, dad," she said, "the professor isn't a business man. He doesn't care about flooding the market and ruining trade. You can square him if you can square me." "What do you want?" "I want just what I should have had if I hadn't insisted on marrying George. It's my own money really, because I'm your daughter and you ought to want me to have it; and I expect you do—you needn't grunt! You can do it without going back on your word, because it isn't giving, but paying. It's a matter of business." The old man nodded slowly, and half grinned and half frowned. "That's right," he assented. "I'll buy the thing on those terms." "O, dear, no!" said Elizabeth. "There's no buying. The professor isn't going to have you flood the market. If you agree the 'thing' won't be used, that's all." "Very well." He waved his hand at the experts, and they went. They laughed as they closed the door. "Thank you, dad," Elizabeth said, and kissed him. "Now be nice." She jerked her head toward me. She always wanted us to be friends. Elizabeth and I were married a few months later. Old Smith set us up very handsomely and we got on very well with him. We got on capitally with each other, and I thought that living with Elizabeth sharpened me up a bit. We had been married six months when we had the professor to dinner. When Elizabeth and he were talking and laughing about the diamond ma-

chine he let something slip. I don't say anything before him, and I thought I didn't take it in; but I did. When he had gone I took Elizabeth by the arm. "Elizabeth," I said, "you cheer your father about those diamonds." She turned a bit pale, though she tossed her head. "It was—business," she said. "No," I said, "I don't see; and won't see. So it's no use arguing. She stared at me and opened her mouth to speak, but didn't. "The crystals that the professor made," I went on, "weren't diamonds. They evaporated in the wool. You put the real diamonds in beforehand. He was cheating." "It was only father," she protested. "and it was my money by rights; and I don't care." "I do," I told her. "She looked at me for a long time. "What are you going to do?" she asked. "Tell your father, and give up the money," I said. Elizabeth gave a little laughing scream, and caught hold of me. "You go to keep me?" she cried. "Why," I said, "of course." "Then I don't care," she asserted. "except for father. He will be so sorry that—that—" She blinked a little. "That you did it," I suggested, and she wiped her eyes and stamped her foot. "You are stupid," she said. "He'll be sorry that I've been found out, and that he can't give me his money. You understood it properly—" "Now, look here, Elizabeth," I said. "I understand it my own way, and never shall understand it any other way. You won't get round me by any of your cleverness; and you may as well give it up." "George," she said calmly, "I give up. You may kiss me." I went round to her father's office the next morning, and burst my way through the clerks into his private office. He said he had no time to talk to me, but I sat down and told him I'd wait till he had. That seemed to please him, and he laid down his pen and chuckled. "What's it about?" he asked. "The diamonds that the professor made," I said. "He didn't make them, really." "Of course he didn't," he said. "You hussy of a wife—my hussy of a daughter—changed them in the wool." "And—you—knew!" I gasped. "And Elizabeth guessed that I knew," he told me, "if you come to that. It was her way of saving my face—about not breaking my word; and now you've gone and spoiled it like—dash it all!—like the straight sort of chap I wanted to marry my girl. She's a better judge of men than she is of diamonds!"

A Bit O' Philosophy

By Annette Angert

IT'S the oddest thing in the world to meet you here," said the girl, as they made their way through the Salle de Jeu. "I thought you were on a long yachting cruise." "So I was," admitted the philosopher. "But adverse winds wafted us into Monte Carlo this morning." "There's not a breath of air stirring," she commented absently. "I was referring rather to—er—to the winds of circumstance," he explained. "Maunceforth and I got so bored with each other's society that something had to be done. Let's put something into Monte Carlo," he exclaimed, and have a little flutter, Maunceforth, alas! is not a philosopher." "Poor Lord Maunceforth!" riplied the girl. "No, I should hardly call him a philosopher, any more than I should call you one." "I am a philosopher," he stated. "O—are you? I really beg your pardon. Of course, I—I didn't know that." "One does not wear one's philosophy on one's sleeve," he explained with dignity. "Besides, I have only become a philosopher quite lately." "Then that accounts for my not guessing it," she replied. "I always understood, too, that philosophers were awfully truthful people." "They try to be," he qualified. "Also, they invent systems. For example, there's the Pythagorean system, the Socratic and the Epicurean systems—and, finally, there's my system." "Yours?" "Yes. I invented it last week. That's why I tried so hard to dissuade Maunceforth from putting in at Monte Carlo—I knew how it would be. Monte Carlo is the grave of systems," he sighed. "I am sorry," she sympathized, "that your system has broken down so soon—for I suppose you will now return to the yacht at once—and leave Monte Carlo?" "By no means," said the philosopher. "Indeed, I do not regret the calamity very deeply—although, he hastened to assure her, "it was a fine system to assure her, "it was a fine system. I undertake you would lose

money at it much faster than you could even at Lord Rosslyn's." "Then I consider it very plucky of you to have played it," rejoined the girl with decision. "So do I—amazingly plucky," acquiesced the philosopher. But a man will risk much for the sake of theory. What do you say to the grotto by the dove-cote?" he paused on the last step of the casino stairway to ask her. "It's cool, shady and—sequestered." "I fancied, perhaps, you—you were going to add—appropriate," she murmured, with the least little flicker of an eyelid. "The amendment is adopted," he promptly replied, as they turned down a side path toward the gardens, and she put up her pink parasol. "So you thought it odd?" "Thought what odd?" she demanded in some surprise. "The—amendment?" "No, the resolution. Maunceforth's and mine—ours, in fact." "Do you mean his—your—resolution to put in at Monte Carlo?" "You have divined my meaning exactly," said the philosopher. "It was a kind of joint resolution—seconded by me, on protest." "O—on protest." She made a little wry face. "I had my system to consider," he explained. "Yes, of course. I can realize the extent of the sacrifice," she said gently. "Still, I hope the situation is not quite without its—its compensations, after all." "Thanks to the laws of chance," he replied, "I find the compensations far outweigh the—er—sacrifice." "That's very sweet of you," she cooed. "So you didn't expect—either—to—"

of content, and the philosopher took his place beside her. "Quite the last place in the world," he admitted. "If it had not been for Maunceforth's persistence—" "And your system," she put in. "Don't forget your system." "I'm not likely to," he assured her. "In fact, that was my strongest argument against coming here; but Maunceforth is the most obstinate man I ever encountered." "He—he is rather obstinate," she conceded, digging the edge of her parasol into the gravel. "Ah, then you have noticed it, too?" asked the philosopher with sudden interest. "Well, suppose we say—determined," she suggested, as a compromise. "I think I should call him rather a—a determined man, wouldn't you?—once he has made up his mind to—to do a thing." "No," said the philosopher, with unalterable conviction. "Under those circumstances I should describe him as obstinate—distinctly obstinate." "But it—it depends a little, doesn't it, on—the—well, the—kind of thing—don't you think?" she hazarded. "For example?" he inquired judicially. "Well, then—" She hesitated a moment. "For example, suppose he—he wanted to see somebody awfully particularly—some girl or other, you know—" Again she paused, and again the philosopher nodded judicially. "Taking it, of course, as a purely hypothetical case," he rejoined, "I should say that it might—possibly—depend a little on that." "I am glad you agree. I thought you probably would," she added. "It does, of course, make a difference." "It depends," explained the philosopher, ignoring this remark, and pursuing, as it were, his judicial train of thought; "it depends also a little upon the girl. Assuming, for instance, that the girl was inclined to be a flirt—" "Like Agatha Slack, let us say?" she suggested. "Agatha Slack is a most serious-minded young woman," he reproved her. "She attends lectures and believes in woman suffrage, and all that kind of extraordinary rubbish. Per-

sonally, I admit, I do not care for a woman to be too serious-minded. Poor Agatha! No, I certainly should not call her a 'flirt,' any more than—be turned to fix his glance considerably on his companion—"any more," he repeated, "than I should call you one." "O, but—" The girl looked up, caught his eye and blushed. "I—I am afraid I—that is—I you know, I—She stopped and bit her lip. "I don't quite grasp your meaning," said the philosopher, calmly surveying her. "Well," she declared, meeting his gaze with unflinching audacity, "I believe I am inclined to be what you say Agatha isn't—there!" "A flirt!" ejaculated the philosopher, in amazement. "You? Impossible!" "Impossible? How—how dare you be so rude!" she wrathfully exclaimed. The philosopher regarded her a moment as one regards a familiar object suddenly presented to him in an entirely new and unexpected light. "How very interesting!" he murmured, half to himself. "I really never should have guessed it."

"You think?" demanded the girl, flushing. The philosopher gravely consulted his watch. "Say in about ten minutes," he replied. "Ten minutes is such a conventional period—so elastic and respectful. I feel positively indebted to Maunceforth's obstinacy," he added. "That second dove has a sort of baritone voice, not unlike M. Gilly's. Curious. Have you noticed it?" "No, I haven't," she retorted. "Gilly!" explained the philosopher, patiently, "is one of the artists singing here in the new opera. 'Le Cobzar.' But you were saying—" "I was not saying anything. You don't give me a chance. I was merely listening to you." "If my remarks bore you," said the philosopher, sitting up rigidly, "pray do not hesitate to say so." "They don't in the least," she protested. "I'm enjoying them awfully—I really am." "So am I," he confessed. "And by-the-by—I was nearly forgetting—there is something I wanted particularly to ask you."

"Yes," she said, leaning toward him with an almost childish gesture of eagerness. "Yes," said the philosopher, clearing his throat. "I wish that dove would stop singing a moment—she distracts my attention. Well, now, has it ever occurred to you that you are a very lovely and particularly adorable sort of little creature?" "No-no," she responded, in a tone of careful deliberation. "I—don't—think—it—ever—has." "Nobody ever told you?" asked the philosopher nochnantly. She puckered her brows in a strenuous effort of memory, and again shook her head. "I don't think so," she repeated. "I can't recall anybody telling me just precisely that; but I believe in—my memory isn't very reliable in—my things." "Then I am glad to have the opportunity of being the first to inform you of the fact," said the philosopher in his most urbane manner. "You are an adorable, lovely little creature." "O—thanks," she murmured, looking down. "Thanks so much! It's—its so kind of you." "Not at all," said the philosopher. "I speak from conviction, not caprice, and it's the happiest chance in the world that brought me to Monte Carlo at the identical moment that you and your dear, good aunt happened to be staying here." "Chance?" echoed the girl, glancing at him out of the tail of her eye. "Well, to be perfectly candid with you," he replied, "chance was a sort of accessory before the fact. Maunceforth caught a rumor at Naples—then there was my system. I did my best to dissuade him from coming—even against my own private inclinations." "The laws of chance are very curious—are they?" "They are simply incomprehensible," he admitted. "Black should never—but, all the same, I am glad Maunceforth prevailed." "Yes," said the girl, absently producing the gravel with her parasol—"yes." "Then you are glad, too?" he demanded. "Glad I came?" "I—I didn't say that," she protested. "Did I?" "You said 'yes, yes,'" he pointed out, "which is practically equivalent to an affirmation."

"I was thinking of something else," she confessed, blushing. "I—I think, perhaps, I had better tell you something—" "Do," said the philosopher encouragingly. "Well—of course it—it was a terrible misfortune about your system—and all that; but you see, I happened to—see Lord Maunceforth also this morning—before I met you in the casino." "Dear me," murmured the philosopher, "did you? I quite imagined he had remained on the yacht!" "No he came ashore early—on purpose—" "On purpose?" "To—to see me." She colored slightly under the philosopher's unwinking gaze. "Dear me!" he repeated. "What an extraordinary fellow!" "I don't see anything extraordinary about it!" she retorted, frowning. "It was the most natural thing in the world—considering. He got my aunt's letter, you see, at Naples, saying we were coming to Monte Carlo—He told me that, when he mentioned the fact to you, it was simply all he could do to prevent you from traveling down here by the next train!" "What a shocking prevaricator!" exclaimed the philosopher. "And he pretended he wasn't coming ashore till this evening! Let us—let us dismiss him from our thoughts," he added loftily. "I am afraid I can't do that," she dissented. "At least, not altogether." "Why?" demanded the philosopher, fixing a stern eye upon her. "Because," said the girl, "because—"

"And at that moment the dove began cooing again."

"Those birds," declared the philosopher testily, "ought to be shot. They are a perfect nuisance. To return, however, to the point, I am, as you see—"

"I am beginning to believe that you must really be a philosopher after all!" she remarked with conviction. The philosopher gravely took off his hat.

"And I," he rejoined, "am now quite sure that you are a flirt!"

Customer—Hi, mister! I found this piece of wood in the sausage. Waiter—Yes, sir; but I'm sure—"

Customer—Look here; I don't mind eating a bit of the dog, but I'm hanged if I'm going to tackle the kennel.

No Day Calls. Eva—"I should never select a beau from the young men of the day." Edna—"No, I should select from the young men of the day. That is the time they