

IN THE TIMES--A NOVEL A WEEK

Beginning Monday, ending Saturday. Today is the best day to start. IN THE TIMES.

"DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND"

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NEXT WEEK--THE GLOVED HAND

A detective story that will keep you guessing till the last minute and one full of thrills. BY BURTON E. STEVENSON.

BEGIN HERE TODAY

Though I chaperoned Claire, an utter stranger from Vevey to Paris, where she was met by her father, M. de Ravenol, I refused to be responsible for the child on the trip to America. Mrs. Delario, a clairvoyant, accepted the charge. The girl was to be met in New York by her mother.

The mother, however, failed to appear at the dock. In the excitement caused by Claire's disappointment, Mrs. Delario dropped from her suitcase, opened for inspection by custom officials, a slipper. Inasmuch as she and I had both purchased slippers alike, I thought it was mine and slipped it in my suitcase.

Several days after arriving in New York, M. de Ravenol having come over in the meantime, I called on Mrs. Delario. She showed me seven diamonds worth a million dollars. Just then a detective appeared on the scene. She thrust the diamonds in my hand, and I fled with them to my own flat.

I had no wish to be responsible for a million dollars' worth of diamonds, so the next morning I took them back to Mrs. Delario. But she insisted I keep them, so for a second time I left her house with the jewels.

On my way home I happened to buy some hyacinths, and later, for want of a better place, hid the diamonds among them.

Upon reaching home I received a telephone from M. de Ravenol that Mrs. Delario was ill and wanted me, so I again hastened to her house, only to be confronted by monsieur, who accused me, at the point of a revolver, of having stolen the jewels from his daughter.

I finally escaped, and on the way home luckily met Bill Rivers, a former pupil of mine, then a reporter. I told him nothing of the diamonds, but said I had a feeling that my flat had been robbed. He went home with me, and found the flat ransacked, with \$500 I had left in my bureau drawer spread out on the bed!

After Billy left I rushed to the hyacinths. The diamonds were safe. I went out to buy a chain bolt for my door, and was followed by a detective. I telephoned Mrs. Delario. She, too, was watched by detectives.

Upon my return, as I was waiting for the elevator to go up to my flat, the door of the flat right under mine opened and the face that peered out at me was that of—M. de Ravenol! I questioned George, the elevator boy, and he acknowledged being in monsieur's pay. I barricaded my flat as best I could.

Now go on with the story (Continued from yesterday.) Outside the drizzle had settled to a steady downpour. It was dark and gloomy and my feelings were the same as I opened some canned stuff and got as much of a meal as I could with what was in the house.

I think it was the skimpiness of the larder at the time that showed me as much as anything else how important it was for me now to get help—I had food enough to last for a couple of days, and after that—if things kept on this way—how was I to eat it?

Billy Rivers was, of course, my logical resource. He had seen the flat the night before—he could start all the protective machinery in the city for me. With this resolution, I went to the telephone. It was "dead"—my connection was severed! I didn't need to be told that monsieur had cut my wires!

The full magnitude of my calamity burst upon me and I sat down on the divan with a sigh. I must write, but I didn't dare go out to mail a letter! I had only George to depend on for that and George was monsieur's paid spy!

I spent an hour composing a missive to Billy that would tell him a great deal and monsieur nothing—if it fell into his hands—and this is what came out of it:

arranging the climax. Don't waste time telephoning—the telephone is out of order—but attend to it personally. This is an ambulance call!"

It all hinged on the words "ambulance call" and if Billy would read them "hurry up," and then, taking them in connection with what he'd seen of the flat robbery, read, "My life is in danger."

I made three copies. I directed one to Billy at his office—I enclosed one in a letter to Philadelphia to my brother asking him to mail it there—I dropped the third carelessly into the manuscript of a short story, sent to a magazine, hoping the editor would think it an accident and kindly mail it for me.

It was half past ten and I was fagged out. My last chance had come. Would George mail the letters?

"Well, he's got to do it!" said I firmly, and took hold of the door knob and the Yale latch. The latter slid open.

I turned and pulled at the door knob controlling the old lock; turned the other way round and pulled again. I was locked in from the outside and the key was in the lock! I was hard and fast a prisoner in my own flat! My revolver was gone. I had food enough, mostly odds and ends, to last about three days on short rations. And with that I went to bed—there was nothing else to do.

I was nearly as much astonished in the morning to find the key gone from the lock as I had been to find it there. Apparently I was free to step out into—the great unknown! Only—I wasn't such a fool as to do it; I could and did, however, give George my letters to mail.

In this manner of living—afraid to go out and being unable to communicate even with the grocer—two days wore away; to be exact, from Tuesday night to Friday morning.

I had given George my letters to mail on Wednesday morning, but as Thursday wore away and Billy didn't come, I saw what I was in for—I was to be starved into leaving the flat. I had left only a little coffee, a little patient breakfast food, a can of sardines and a jar of olives. By Sunday night there would not be a mouthful in the house to eat. It was now Thursday evening.

That night monsieur picked the new Yale lock on the front door! How long he'd been working at it before I woke up I can't say, and I might never have known it at all if he hadn't accidentally dropped his bunch of keys on the tiled floor.

Softly I crept out of bed. I took my hair brush off the bureau and as I saw his fingers come through I meant to give him one good whack! I tiptoed through the hall and placed myself back of the door where he could not see me should he get it open.

We stood thus possibly five minutes while keys slid in and out of the lock.

The sixth key did it. The Yale lock turned once—twice. He was taking it off the ring and dropping the bunch into his pocket. It was all I could do to keep from unlocked the lower lock—the one he kept me prisoner with.

And now he was ready. The key turned—the door handle turned. The chain bolt slid and slid, almost noiselessly along its socket. Then it stopped. When the door suddenly stopped, he thrust his hand in to see what was happening.

The chain back, the tighter closed the chain back, the tighter closed the door.

This was my chance to give him one with the hair brush—but I didn't. Truth to tell, I was too paralyzed with excitement. I did nothing—said nothing—scarcely breathed the whole time he was there.

He withdrew his hand. There was a dead pause in which he seemed to be considering what to do next. Then he closed the door and locked me in again.

Another Trap Friday morning found me pre-

ty desperate. I felt I must now get help or literally die—of starvation, if nothing worse; for if I went out, now that monsieur had a key to my flat, he could slip in and lock me out and stay till he found the diamonds. And if I took them out with me—well, that was something I simply couldn't think of.

Nothing had come of the letters I had given George to mail—he has always stuck to it that he put them in the box immediately. But let that go.

On Friday morning, the one person I could positively trust to mail a letter for me popped into my head—the postman.

I rang for George.

"George, I seem to have lost a check in the mail," said I soberly. "I want you to bring the postman up on his next trip so I can see about it."

I then rushed to my study and this is the letter I dashed off to Billy:

"Dear Billy: That affair is now life and death. Come at once. Bring two good revolvers. Don't bother with the telephone—my wires are cut and I'm a prisoner being starved to death in my own flat."

"When you get to the house the elevator boy will tell you I'm not at home. It's a lie—I'm upstairs. If he tries to prevent your coming up—or if he calls on the detective sitting in the lower hall—go to the nearest police station and get a couple of men. But don't do this till you've tried every other possible way of reaching me. Try it by the roof of the flat-house next door."

"If the elevator should happen to be up when you get to the house, pull your hat over your eyes and march straight past the detective and up the stairs as if you belonged in the house. When you get to my door—don't forget which it is—R. W.—ring three two's so I'll know it's you."

"If you can, as easy as now, bring me something to eat—I'm out of everything but four rolls and three sardines. Only hurry."

I addressed this to Billy at his office, found a ten-cent piece for special delivery, and hadn't more than just got it ready when George brought me the postman.

George was protesting, "I ain't take no letter—I ain't take no check."

"You better go down. I'll talk to the lady about it," said the postman.

I was obliged to spin some sort of a plausible yarn to save appearances, and when I handed him my letter with the dime and begged him to mail it for me, I knew I was saved.

There was nothing for me to do but wait and shiver. The day dragged on. Then at a quarter after six, or thereabouts, I heard the front bell ring three two's I'd told Billy Rivers to use as his signal, and I skimmed along the hall and flung the door open wide.

"Oh, Billy—my deliverer—you dear!" I gasped the minute the door was shut. "I declare you're good enough to kiss!" and with that—I up and did it!

Billy, embarrassed, thrust a big package in my hands, saying laconically, "Some eats."



THIS WAS MY CHANCE TO GIVE HIM ONE WITH THE HAIR BRUSH.

plates, leaving Billy to think what he pleased about my mental state. Returning, I ate, gulped the food down while Billy eyed me. Then suddenly I announced:

"That man—he was waiting for me with a dagger that night—look here!" I jumped up and got the dagger from my penholder tray—"he dropped it on the floor."

"Gee whiz!" Billy cried, taking the dagger from me; and then he demanded: "Who?"

"That man—De Ravenol—the man in Paris who wanted me to bring his daughter over with me! He was a diamond thief—that's what he was!"

"Wow!" from Billy. "Billy, it's absolutely true! And I foiled him!"

"Wow! You did?" "I should say I did. And what's more, I've got the diamonds here—there—behind you in those hyacinths."

"Wow!" he whooped, and before I knew what he was doing, he was out of his chair, his hand on the glass.

"Don't touch them!" I shrieked. "Wow!" he cried, dropping his hand and jumping back. "Do they bite?"

"No—they sting. They pizen your very soul. But, Billy—stop wowing—I'm watched."

He sat down with the command. "Divulge the dread secret," and between bites I told him the whole story.

"What are we going to do?" he repeated my concluding question masterfully. "We're going to trap that bold man all by our little own selves—you and I." He whipped out a cigarette and lighted it. "Trap him—we! See?"

"I didn't see—"Right here in this little flat—see?" I saw still less—"And we'll give him one nice lesson on stealing diamonds from defenseless women—and threatening you."

The scheme was to decoy monsieur to the flat by a letter from Mrs. Delario indicating where the diamonds were hidden; we banked on his remembering the one place he hadn't searched—the hyacinths; and if he got the tip, we believed he'd return the moment I went out.

but the hyacinths as I told you over the phone Tuesday, I thought the same place would continue safe in case of a second invasion.

"I am going to try to see you Saturday night for final arrangements if I can slip out without being seen. But if the detective is in the hall I'll have to wait. Expect me between eight and ten. Be sure to be alone so we can talk. I still hold to my proposal—one third to you if you will help me to dispose of gum-drops."

"Gum-drops" was Billy's touch. "And this, purporting to be from her to him:

"Monsieur: I have refused to have anything to do with this matter since I know the truth of the ownership. Get the hyacinths while she is at my house tonight, and the trouble will be over for everybody."

I typed my own letter with a carbon copy while Billy laboriously produced the one from Mrs. Delario.

"But say—suppose he telephones her to make sure she wrote?" questioned Billy, "and she gives us away by telling him she didn't?"

"I'll fix that," said I, and hastily scribbled this off to her: "Don't answer any telephone calls between seven a. m. and ten p. m. Saturday if you value my life. If possible be out all day so you cannot be reached. Destroy this immediately."

The decoy letters we sent to the hotel where monsieur was staying. The rest of our plan was this: Billy was to "sneak it" upstairs, and get into the flat; I was then to put on my wraps, go down in the elevator—so he'd report it to monsieur; wait in the lower hall for a mythical automobile till George went up with the car, and then creep up the stairs.

Billy then left me, gliding silently away in the darkness of the stairs. He must have reached only the first turn when I heard him exclaim, "Oh! Excuse me! I never saw you!"

Followed one word—"Pardon"—and I recognized monsieur's voice!

IX. The Capture. That night nothing happened—at least to me. You may imagine, if you can, what I went through on Saturday! My one diversion was to rehide the diamonds. This time—after I had taken them out of the hyacinths—I sealed them in an envelope and thumb-tacked it to the bottom of a sideboard drawer.

The last half hour before Billy came was positively the longest in my life.

"Then he hasn't killed you!" were my first words.

For answer Billy was pulling a pair of handcuffs out of his overcoat pockets.

"Very interesting man," mused Billy. "Not at all the sort of person you'd expect to find in a diamond robbery. Wonderful knowledge of European politics."

"Billy, what do you mean?" I demanded.

"Why I took monsieur home to his hotel last night."

"But—how—did—you—manage—it?" I gasped.

"I didn't. He did. He wasn't going to give himself away by going upstairs; he said he was going down. So we went down together. When we got to the street we just kept on till I'd seen him home. We were thick as thieves by that time."

"I invited him to see Chinatown tonight and he accepted. But he got the letter all right! He sent me word this morning he couldn't go to Chinatown."

"I told him I was calling on the people in the front flat and I couldn't get in."

"Billy, you are positively the cleverest man I know!"

"Well, let's to work—monsieur is downstairs anxiously waiting for you to go out," said Billy.

"How do you know?" "Shadowed him. . . . My revolver's all right? And the red pepper?"

"Yes—but I've been thinking about that pepper and about ammonia instead?"

"H'm-m," considered Billy. "What's the advantage?"

"It wears off quicker, and I think it's probably safer for us if he struggles and we have to hold him down."

"Guess it is," Billy agreed. "Got it ready?"

"I took him to the kitchen and showed him half a glass of household ammonia diluted with water and covered with a saucer. Then I hung his coat and hat in my wardrobe. After that, he looked at me and I looked at him—the fatal moment had arrived."

"Well!" said Billy. "I put on my wraps and with knees ready to close up under me like jack-knives, I rang for George, on whom we relied to tell monsieur I had gone out. Billy was sure George had not seen him enter."

By the time George and I reached the second floor, Billy was ringing furiously from the sixth—this was to get George out of the way at once so I could slip upstairs. We reached the first; George started back and in ten seconds I had gone along the hall to the front door, rechecked my steps, and was gliding up the stairs. In two minutes I was safe in my own flat.

You were caught in the act of breaking and entering my flat—you may make your explanations to the police."

"Madame," monsieur said, "before you call in ze police, I have something of great importance to yourself to communicate."

He paused. I nodded.

"Zose diamonds which have been stolen belong to ze emperor of Germany."

With those words monsieur actually turned the tables on us! I am free to admit that neither Billy nor I doubted the truth of the statement once it was uttered.

"Very well, then," said Billy at last. "Granted the diamonds belong to the Emperor William—now, then, what are you doing with them?"

Monsieur answered with humility.

"Now ze madame president of Mexico is young; she have great beauty and she rule her husband wis zat beauty. So once she have hear of ze seven blood-red diamonds, above all ozer sings in ze world she desires zose diamonds and she have communicate her wish to der kaiser and he have seen in her wish some way to his own for ze Faserland."

"To zis end he have arrange treaty wis Mexico which make Mexico a sister state of ze great German alliance he have in mind. To zis end, also, he have commissioned me—"

The rest of what monsieur said was lost on me, for there had swooped on me a lightning stroke of understanding—the whole nefarious scheme of Germany and the emperor lay bare to my inner eye. Mexico—the Panama canal—these were the strategic points of a world conquest.

"Never!" was the one impassioned word I uttered.

"Say—this is the very deuce of a hole," Billy whispered to me. "I should say it was—if the diamonds belong to the emperor, what the dickens are we going to do with monsieur?"

"Got to let him go, of course—"

We acted without delay. "Monsieur, you are free to go," Billy announced, and relieved him of his handcuffs.

"But would it not be better to consider," urged monsieur, "ze wrass of ze emperor is terrible. Consider, madame, I beg you to consider."

"Zose diamonds zat you have found in zat slipper you have ze misfortune to carry off. Consider to give zem back."

"They were not in the slipper I carried off," I said, knowing instinctively what he meant. The diamonds had been hidden by Claire in Mrs. Delario's slipper and so smuggled—but not in the slipper I had.

Monsieur positively jumped. "Zey were not in zat slipper? Zen Madame Delario must have zem—in spite of her denial—in spite of zat I search ze entire house—and herself—and find also ze slipper in her wardrobe as she would not leave it if she find zose diamonds. F go immediately—I see her zis evening." He took up his hat.

X. "The Jewels Are Mine." "I confess I didn't very much like the way Mrs. Delario lied to me about the uncle abroad who had left the diamonds to her."

"I might have said the same to her if I'd found them in my slipper." I excused, as I packed them in their box the next day, tucked it in my stocking and started for her house.

Mrs. Delario herself admitted me; gave a gasp when she saw who it was and whirled me into the seance room and locked the door on us before we exchanged a syllable.

Hurried Mrs. Delario told me about her son's "kidnaping"—how two men had stepped up to Eugene, called him by name, told him he was under arrest and to come with them quietly; how they had taken him to a private house and made him strip to his underclothing and examined every rag he had on. He had finally escaped by denying his identity, and claiming to be his own cousin!

"Mrs. Delario, there seems to be some sort of misunderstanding about those diamonds," I began suavely.

"They're mine," she returned vehemently. "I swore to you they were mine. I swear to you again—now—here—they are mine."

She told me then, hesitating no longer, the unbelievable story—unbelievable by every modern standard and from every scientific point of view, explaining why she'd prevaricated in the first instance about her uncle.

She began at the beginning and marched through to the end of it. I sat and stared. She told me—as she had on the steamer—how she'd gone abroad to hunt new psychics for her seances and the circle meeting at her house, of which she was a sort of priestess, and how she had thus come in contact with the Duval girl.

(Continued in Our Next Issue.)

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