

My Lady's Jewels

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S.S. London City,

March 4.

Women hare a great trick of asking me to help them through the Customs with their jewelry.

I've said "Yes" once or twice, and not always had occasion to regret it. You see, there are women who are more honest than you think a woman could be, considering just what a woman is.

I make it a general rule, though, to say "No" to these requests, for it's bad policy to mix up business and pleasure; and I've no use for a woman when it comes to sharing a secret with her. She's so apt to be a bit mixed in her ideas of fair play.

It's all rot to say a woman can't keep a secret. She can! She could keep a secret till Old Nick turned gray, begging for it, *if it suited her*. But that's just the trouble! You never know when it's going to stop suiting her to keep mum. If she gets the notion there's more cash for her in talk, than in keeping quiet, she'll pull the lid off and let the secret pop out, regardless of the hole you may get shoved into as a result.

Anyway, I can't help making friends occasionally on the trip across. And there's a Mrs. Ernley, a pretty young widow, American, with heaps of dollars, who's shown a friendly side to me since the first day out.

I spotted her the moment she came aboard, and I gave the Chief Steward word to put her at my table. There are always little compensations, like that, to make up for the long hours, short pay, and big responsibilities of a sea-captain's life!

We got on splendidly; and as she had no one to look after her, I have done my best ever since.

She was up with me on the lower bridge to-day, helping me "keep the watch," she called it; though it's not much watch I can keep when she's looking up at me, and saying things, of an "Americanness" beyond belief, and of an artlessness that ought to be beyond propriety, but somehow isn't

"I've bought a heap of stuff in London and Paris," she told me; "and I'm afraid the New York

Customs will sure have it in savage for me. Captain Gault”

“I’m afraid so,” I said.

I was truly afraid; for that’s the way a lot of them lead up to asking me to help them hide the stuff somewhere in the ship, so as to get it safely past the Customs searchers.

“It’s a mighty wicked tax,” she said. “I wish we women had the vote, we’d alter things. I s’pose you don’t think a woman’s fit to vote, Captain. But let me tell you, she’s a heap fitter than half the men.”

“I’m not against the vote,” I said, “under conditions that are fair to the men.”

“What’s fair to one is fair to the other!” she said.

“That’s a bit vague,” I told her. “The suffrage is largely the modern equivalent of physical force. Women have less of it by nature, than men, and consequently there is a certain artificiality in the situation of a woman voting on equal terms with a man; for it implies that she is *physically* the equal of the man.”

“Might’s not right!” she said, warmly. “A clever woman has more brains than a laborer. Yet you give *him* the vote!”

“Exactly!” I said, smiling a little at her feminine method of meeting my distinctly masculine argument. “The laboring man has the vote, when you haven’t it, because the vote is the modern equivalent of *physical* strength. Nowadays, when a man wants a things, he votes for it, instead of fighting for it In the old days, he fought for it, and would to-day, if his vote were outvoted by a lot of people who were physically midgets. The vote is might as well as right. All the same, ethically, the very cows in the fields have a right to vote. I wonder how they’d vote on the pure butter question, and the vealing of their calves!”

“I’m not interested one bit about cows having the vote,” she said; “but I tell you, Captain, when we women get the vote, we’ll wipe this wicked tax on women’s jewelry. and pretty things, clean off the slate! If things go on like this, only very rich women will be able to dress at all!

“I hadn’t thought of it in that light,” I said. “How shocking! Still there’s always the cheaper sorts of dress stuffs—plain cotton prints can look quite pretty. No need really, you know, to allow this man-made tax to achieve its abominable end”

“Captain,” she interrupted, suddenly, “will you do something for me?”

I knew then that I could not delay the fatal moment any longer. She was going to ask me to risk liberty and profession for the sake of her pocket. And being a man, what chance had I?

“Captain Gault,” she said, “I bought something enormously expensive when I was in Paris.”

“Yes,” I asked, rather hopelessly, “was it a necklace or a tiara?”

“Look!” she said, and opened her handbag.

“What did you pay for that?” I asked. “You ought to have it locked up in the strong room. For goodness’ sake, don’t let any one aboard know you’ve got a thing like that with you. A sea-captain’s responsibilities are bad enough, without adding to them gratuitously. Do shut the bag, please, and take it to the strong room! It’ll be much safer there.”

“I paid nearly a million dollars for it,” she said, looking up at me, “and I guess that’s as much as I’m going to pay. I’m going to smuggle it through the Customs. I’m not going to pay a cent of their horrible wicked tax.”

“Mrs. Ernley,” I said, “it’s evident you don’t know much about the U.S.A. Customs people. Let me tell you, dear lady, they’re smart; and the chances are they know at the present moment that you’ve bought this necklace, and what you’ve paid for it.”

“No,” she said, “they don’t just know anything at all about it. Captain. I made up my mind that I wouldn’t pay the tax. Why, it would be about six hundred thousand dollars on this one necklace! It’s just robbery! And so I made arrangements secretly through a friend, with Monsieur Jervoyne, the jeweller, to meet me at her house, and I bought this lovely thing there, and paid for it in cash. So you see, they can’t know!”

“My dear Mrs. Ernley!” I remonstrated,

“never be sure of anything where the U.S.A. Customs are concerned, except that they’re on the job all the time. Americans are like that, as you know. If they go in for graft, they do the thing properly; and if they go in for doing their duty, they do it properly likewise, in about forty different ways at one and the same time. That’s the way they’re built. They’ve got to be efficient per lb. whatever else they are or are not. And you can bet on this, when the Customs come aboard in New York, they’ll know you’ve got this, and they’ll know the name of the man you got it from; and they’ll be able to make a shot at what you paid for it.”

She shook her head, obstinately. It’s a confoundedly pretty little head, and I don’t mind

whether she shakes it or just nods. It looks nice any way.

"I'm sure they don't know!" she asserted. "I was far, far too careful. I was, now, Captain; and I bet my last dollar they don't even dream I've bought anything much. Not for all their secret agents and things. Oh, I know more of their ways than you think, Captain Gault! I've heard some of my relations talk; and they're in the Treasury, and I know I'm up against something; but I guess I'll get the thing through all right, if you'll help me. You see, I've got it all plotted out, as clever as you like. I've got a proper plan. Will you help me. Captain? Oh, I don't mean that you're to risk things for nothing. I wouldn't have that! I'll pay you a percentage, if you will help me. ...A percentage on what I paid for it, will you now?"

"Well," I said, after pausing a moment to think, "I might; but I don't like mixing business and friendship. I'm not set on having a percentage."

"That's the only way I'll deal with you, Captain Gault," she told me. "How would five or ten per cent, suit you?"

"Oh," I said, smiling a little at her casualness, "I guess two and a half per cent, will suit me very well indeed."

"That's settled, then," she replied. "Wow, here's my plan. When I ordered the necklace, I stipulated that they should make me another—an exact facsimile of it, Carn glass—you know that new glass stuff that looks as good as the best paste?"

"Carn Prism glass, you mean?" I suggested.

She nodded.

"Yes, that's it," she said. "Well now, I've the two here in my bag, and I can't tell the difference, and wouldn't be able to, Captain, only I've tied a bit of silk round the real one. Now this is my plan, you are to take and hide the real one for me—oh, I know you're a wonderful man at getting things past the Customs! And I shall have the false one in my bag. Then, if they've got scent that I've bought a necklace, and search me, they'll find the false one; and they'll reckon they've been misinformed.

Then, after I'm searched, you can give me back the real one as soon as things are safe, and I'll give you a cheque for the five per cent."

"Two and a half," I corrected her.

"Take me somewhere where I can give you the thing," she went on, unheeding my

correction, and I took her into my chart-room. Here she lifted the two necklaces out of her bag. They were certainly wonderful; and though I could tell one from the other, after an examination, they would easily have deceived lots of men who think they know diamonds “at sight”; and certainly, apart, I should have been puzzled to say which was which, without making a test

“Very well,” I said. “I’ll hide it for you in a safe place.”

And with that she handed me the real necklace—a regular chain of light—a marvellous thing it is. And I put it away; but refused to let her know how I should hide it.

March 6. Evening.

Women are as much like little girls as men are like little boys, when it comes to jewelry. Mrs. Ernley coaxes me at least twice a day to let her see and play with her gorgeous necklace. And while she plays with it, sitting on the settee, in my chart-room, I sit across on the locker and look at her.

She’s a remarkably pretty woman!

“Why do you stare so at me. Captain Gault?” she asked, this afternoon, looking across at me, with a touch of pure mischief.

“I guess it’s for the same reason you suppose it is, dear lady,” I said, smiling a little at her pretence. “You’re good to look at, and you’re generally an interesting study for a man of my temperament. I’m wondering what next trait will come out in you—weakness or virtue. Frankly, I suspect weakness.”

“Don’t you make any error, Captain; there’s no weakness about me!” she assured me, in her quaint way. “You can sure take that for a conviction!”

“A conviction, dear lady, should be that which is produced by the action of Reason upon Experience!” I told her. “Now my experience of you tells me that you are quite averagely human—a good average mixture of strengths and weaknesses. Up to the present, you’ve shown me your strong side.

Now, Reason, acting upon Experience, bids me to expect the other side of the shield.”

“Captain Gault!” she said, “you’re going too deep for me. Now be sensible, and look at my shining beauty. Did you ever see the like now? I just had to buy it. I couldn’t say no. I’d like

to see the woman that could. You'll call that a weakness, I suppose!"

"A weakness that I'm not going to quarrel with, seeing that it's going to put twenty-five thousand dollars into my pocket," I told her.

She looked so startled, that I had to explain.

"That's my share, you know. Two and a half per cent on a million dollars is twenty five thousand."

"Oh!" she said, in rather a queer tone. "Yes, of course. I never thought to work it out."

I said nothing; but I could not help wondering whether it was here that the little weakness was going to show up. It was obvious that she'd had a shock, when I explained to her just how much my commission was going to cost her; though, goodness knows, it's cheap enough, when one remembers what the Customs would have rooked her of. But you never know how women are going to look at things of this kind. Women are extraordinary mixtures of big extravagances and petty economies.

She was pretty silent for the rest of the time she was in the chart-room; and I rallied her mildly on her sudden soberness.

"Dear lady," I said, "if the size of my fee troubleth thee (forgive the tutoiement) "why I'll even hoodwink our common enemy for no more than the joy of the game and good friendship!"

She protested so hotly that this could not be thought of, and had so much good colour in her cheeks, that I had very little doubt but that I had shot true. However, she made it very clear indeed that my fee was mine, and that her word was more truly her bond than if it had been signed and stamped and sealed and lawyered. And all the time, she fiddled with the great, million-dollar chain of-light, running it through and through her hands.

Then she handed it back to me, and went away to dress for dinner. And see the nature of woman! She had changed the necklaces.

She had left with me the imitation, as I knew in a minute, by testing it. And, that it was no accident, I had easy proof; for she had shifted the mark (the piece of silk) from the real necklace to the imitation one. Truly, it takes some twisting to follow a woman! But there is, in a matter of money, a simple rule to aid a man with a woman, if he would get at the truth of her motive.

For, either her action is prompted by insane generosity or an even more insane meanness.

And here it was not difficult to see what had governed her action. She had been shocked to see that out of a million dollars she had pledged herself to pay twenty five thousand; and she had palmed me the false necklace, meaning to try to run the real one through herself, after all, and so avoid paying me my fee. She had lacked the moral courage to tell me so, honestly; but I suppose, once she is safe through the Customs with the real necklace, she will write me a polite little note, telling me that she decided to run the thing through herself.

She may even ask me to keep the glass one as a souvenir; and, being a woman, she will not mean to be cynical. She will really wish me to accept it, in memory of her! Little wonder the simple, straightforward, logical male feels at sea; for a woman obeys her impulses, while, all the time, he supposes her to be using her reasoning powers, which, by the way, are generally atrophied.

And now I'm interested to follow her further manoeuvres

March 9.

"For the last couple of days you've not asked to see your necklace," I told her, this morning, after I had invited her up on to the lower bridge. "And you're getting tired of keeping the old sea-dog company! Confess now, aren't you?"

"No," she answered. "I'm just denying myself. I'm showing you I can be stronger than you think."

"All women are liars," I whispered solemnly, to myself. "I suppose they can't help it, any more than a man can stop being logical at some one else's expense."

But I said nothing out loud; and for a minute or two, we walked the length of the bridge, without saying a word.

"Being strong isn't just being strong in the way you find easy to be strong," I said at last. "That sounds rather difficult," she answered. "Try now if you can't do some better than that, Captain Gault, or I'll miss what you want to tell me."

"I mean," I said, "that if I set out, say, not to tell lies, just to prove how much of a moral athlete I was, it would not prove anything; for the simple reason that lying is not my particular poison. Of course, if I've got to, I do it in a finished kind of fashion ; but I've no particular Ananias leanings. Given two ways out of a difficulty, I'd not necessarily choose the lie. Sumga?"

“Sure I do,” she said; “but I don’t see what that’s to do with my refraining from coming to see my nee—you and my necklace, I mean. I wanted badly to see both of you. No, don’t get conceited! But I have kept away. Doesn’t that show strength, to keep away from doing things you’re wanting bad to do?”

“Dear lady,” I answered. “God made Adam, and the Two of Them helped to make Eve—I guess that’s why the result’s been so uncertain.”

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“Adam should never have been let in on the job,” I told her. “A human is sure some machine. I guess he was too much of an amateur, and left out the governor—.”

“That’s rude!” she cracked out at me.

“The truth’s generally a bit that way,” I said. “I’m not one to shut my eyes, when it’s some one else’s sins I’m looking at. I’ve a strong fellow-feeling for old Sir Almoth. I consider he justified his name. He’s some marksman.”

“What are you talking? Words or sense?” she asked, honestly bewildered.

“Both,” I told her. “If that old amateur, Adam, had only added the governor. Logic, you could have found out all that by yourself. I’ll make you a bet, and the amount shall be the sum that you were to have paid me for running your necklace through the Customs—twenty-five thousand dollars.”

“What—what do you mean?” she asked, stammering slightly, and turning rather white looking. “What do you want to bet?”

She stared me right in the eyes, closely, and with an intense, expectant attention.

“That you will not manage to run your necklace through by yourself,” I said, slowly, looking at her steadily. “I did not ask you to pay me any commission; and I halved what you offered me; but had I arranged to do it for a full five per cent, it would have been money well spent, from your side of the bargain”

She was as white as a sheet now, and had to catch at the forward bridge-rail, to help steady herself; but I did not spare her; for if I could crush the meanness in her, with the Hammer of Shame, I meant to do so. “Why had you not the moral strength to tell me the truth, when I worked out for you, how much two and a half per cent, on a million dollars would come to?” I said. “Why did you not just say, simply, that you had not thought to pay

so much? I should have relieved you of the bargain in a moment. What is more, I should have respected you for having the moral strength to tell me the truth; though I should have regretted the trait of meanness it would have disclosed; for you are a very wealthy woman, and you could well afford to pay me twice what I agreed to run your necklace through for. I did not, as I have said, ask you to pay me anything. I would have done it for nothing—just for friendliness' sake; but when you turned it into a business proposition, I met you on a business footing. It was to save your pocket some six hundred thousand dollars; and for the risk I took of losing personal liberty, and my situation as Captain of this ship, I consented to accept twenty-five thousand dollars as payment.

“And now you have shown not only meanness, but, a thousand times worse, you have lied to me, lie after lie; and with every lie you hurt me badly; for you blackened not only yourself in my eyes; but, at the same time, you blackened all of your sex; for a man judges women through the goodness or badness of the women he gets to know personally. I tell you frankly, Mrs. Ernley, I wish your necklace had been at the bottom of the sea, before you had let it be a lever to further lower my general opinion of all that you stand for.”

“Stop! Stop!” she said, quite hoarsely.

She had flushed once or twice as I set out my indictment; but now she stood shivering and deadly pale.

“Help—help me down the steps,” she said, and I helped her down to the deck.

“Now leave me,” she said, almost in a whisper, “I can manage. No, I will not have you with me. I have done wrong. But I cannot bear you near me. You—you have shamed me so!”

I watched her go along the deck, and pass down one of the stairways, then I went back to the bridge. I do not regret what I have done. I am getting a sick fear that every woman I meet is going to turn out mean or treacherous or deceitful or worse. If I have helped one to cure herself I'm satisfied.

March 19. Night.

We docked this morning, and Mrs. Ernley has never come near me once of her own free will. And there has been a deuce of a scene with the Customs.

I did not know, at first, whether to say anything about the necklace, or not; but finally decided that I had better show it, and say it had been left in my charge by a Mrs. Ernley, one of the First Class passengers. If it served to bluff the Customs into supposing that this

was the necklace she had bought, and that she had been swindled into paying real money for a Carn Prism sham set of sparklers, it might serve to lull them from making a drastic search of her. And, goodness knows, I'm willing enough to do the little woman a good turn if I can. When the Chief of the searchers came along to the chart-house, he asked me a leading question, straight off, which made it sufficiently plain that he knew a good deal about Mrs. Ernley's Paris transaction.

"Captain," he said, "I hear from one of our people, who's been aboard, that you and Mrs. Ernley have got pretty friendly on the trip across; and I want you to be a real friend to her; and do your best to persuade her to show up her necklace, like a wise woman. We know a good deal about it, Captain; so, for the Lord's sake, don't try to do any bluffing, and don't encourage her to, either. It'll mean serious trouble if you do. We know it's aboard this ship; and we mean to have it. It's six hundred thousand dollars of duty we're out for, and we're going to have it; but she swears she has no necklace; and my women-searchers haven't been able to locate it yet. Now, will you, Captain, wise her up, that she can't put a thing like this over on us; and I guess we'll let her down easy for false declaration."

"Mister," I said, "perhaps this is what you're looking for;" and I went across and hauled out the sham necklace from a drawer. "She asked me to take care of this for her."

He gave out a little shout of relief; and snatched at the thing. He ran to the North window, and held it up to the light, then he pulled a magnificent looking brilliant from his vest pocket, set in the end of a little steel bar, and he began to compare the "stones" with it. He let out a sudden exclamation; and whipped an eye-microscope from his pocket. He fitted this to his eye, then turned up the other end of the steel bar, and I saw that there was a "tester" set in it. He scratched carefully with this at one of the "stones" in the necklace. Then he gave a shout of disgust, and turned and hove the necklace on to my chart table.

"Careful with the thing, man!" I said.

"Anyone would suppose you were blasé!"

"Careful!" he said. "My oath, Captain, drop it! I don't know whether she's put the blinkers on you too. She may have; though I'm doubting it. But that's not worth more than the platinum setting that mounts the stuff. It's one of those new "prism" fakes. Though, I'll own I never saw such a good one. Now, Captain, we're going to get the real goods; so don't get up against us. Help us, and we'll make things as pleasant as we can; but butt in on us, and you'll get twisted; and the lady'll get prison; for Judge H gave it out in court last week that he's going to teach some of these dollar-dames they can't monkey with the U.S.A. laws and get off the way some of them have been doing."

"I'll do my best," I said, "to make things all right. The lady certainly handed me this necklace as the real thing."

I picked it up, and took it across to its drawer; as I did so, there was a knock on the chart-room door, and a Customs officer pushed his head in. "We've got it. Sir I" he said, in an excited voice. "Miss Synks found it in the ventilator of the lady's cabin. Will you come, Sir? She's making a rumpus down there. Perhaps the Captain had better come too. Some of the passengers seem inclined to make trouble for our people."

The head searcher was already half out through the doorway, but he beckoned to me to follow.

When we got down into the main saloon, off which Mrs. Ernley's cabin opened, I found there was certainly some riot going on!

There was a crowd of First Class passengers round her cabin. The door was open, and over the heads of the passengers, I could see Mrs. Ernley and a young, smartly dressed woman. Mrs. Ernley looked to be dressed ready for going ashore. She was standing in the middle of her cabin, and appeared to be holding something frantically to her breast, which the other woman was trying to take from her.

At this moment, one of the Customs officials entered the cabin, and went to assist the woman-searcher in taking from Mrs. Ernley what she held so crazily to her. Mrs. Ernley gave out a scream, and at that, there was an ugly growl of sound from the passengers round the doorway.

"Man-handling a lady like that!" I heard one man expostulating, above the sudden murmur of voices.

I reached quickly, and caught the head searcher's elbow.

"For the Lord's sake, sing out to your man to quit mauling the lady," I said, "or there's going to be a lot of unnecessary trouble."

"Svensen," sung out the Chief searcher.

"Come out of that!"

At his voice, the semi-circle of passengers glanced round quickly; and I took charge.

"Come, ladies and gentlemen," I said. "This is a matter between Mrs. Ernley and the United States Customs. I am sure you do not want to embarrass her more than need be; so

please allow matters to arrange themselves. You can trust me to see that the lady will get courteous treatment, while she's aboard my ship."

"That's the tune, Captain!" called out one of the men passengers. "If this sort of thing is necessary, let it be done properly, I say."

"You may be sure that the head officer and I will show all consideration for the lady," I answered. "He must carry out his duty; but he has no wish to make it more unpleasant than need be. Now do, please, all of you go away from the doorway. There is no need for any scene."

They melted like snow, now that their instinctive desire for fair and courteous treatment for a woman in trouble, had been assured, and I stepped right in through the doorway, and touched the woman-searcher on the shoulder.

"Allow me, one moment," I said. "Perhaps I can get Mrs. Ernley to listen to me, without continuing this painful situation."

The woman-searcher glanced over my shoulder at her Chief, who must have nodded his assent to my intervention; for she loosed hold of Mrs. Ernley, immediately.

"Mrs. Ernley!" I said. "Mrs. Ernley! Please listen to me. You must give the necklace up. You will have to pay the duty; but the Chief searcher has kindly assured me that he will not press any charge against you, if you will consent now to let matters go forward, without further trouble." I looked over my shoulder at the head officer.

"I am right in making the lady this promise?" I asked, under my breath. "I have your promise?"

He nodded. I could see that the man was genuinely sorry for her; but he had got to do his duty, which was to see that Uncle Sam got his full and necessary pound of meat.

"Now, Mrs. Emley, please give me the necklace, and end this distressing scene. It is distressing us all. We are all genuinely sorry for you, but you must realize that luxuries must be paid for; and the Customs can favour no one. Come now." And, very gently, I eased her hands open, and took from her the tightly rolled up glittering string of stones. She stood then, looking not at me, but fixedly at the stones, as I held them out to the head officer. She was trembling from head to foot, and I beckoned suddenly to the woman-searcher to hold her; for I thought she was going to faint.

The head officer let the glimmering string of light swing a time or two in his hands, as if he were, himself, fascinated by the flashes they sent out. Then he turned, and put his head out

of the cabin doorway.

“Jim,” he called, “slip up and fetch Mr. Malch.”

“The official appraiser,” he explained, turning back to me. “I’ll have him on this job; then there sure can’t be any error!” In about two minutes, the man, Jim, returned with Mr. Malch—a long, thin, hardbitten looking man.

“Hand it across, Soutar,” he said, “I’ll soon put you wise to the quality of the goods!” He took it over to the port-hole, and laid it out in the bunk—Mrs. Ernley’s own bunk.

Then he pulled a case out of his pocket, and bent over the necklace.

I was standing by Mrs. Ernley, talking to her quietly, to try to ease the tension a bit. The woman-searcher, who was evidently the Miss Synks who had found the necklace, had moved behind Mrs. Ernley, ready to support her, if need be. I must say, they were downright considerate to her, taking things all round.

Suddenly, the appraiser burst out into a contemptuous laugh.

“For all sakes, Soutar, aren’t you wise to know glass from the real thing!” he said, turning round. He held the necklace out to us all. “There’s not a diamond there!” he went on. “It’s one of those Carn Prism fakes. If the lady bought this for the real goods, she’s been done as brown as a coffee bean!”

Mrs. Emley let out a shrill scream—

“It’s reall It’s real! I know it’s real! I paid a million dollars for it!” She sprang at the man, and snatched it rudely from his hand.

“Real glass, Madam!” he said, grimly.

“I guess you can take that kind of stuff ashore by the cartload, duty free. We ain’t going to object! Of course, the setting’s fine. It’s real platinum; but I guess we’re looking for more than settings!”

Mrs. Ernley let the necklace fall with a sharp little clitter of sound, to the floor. And Miss Synks was just in time to catch her, as she fainted.

I helped lift her on to the settee; then I picked up the condemned necklace, coiled it up and tossed it on to the table.

"Poor little woman!" said the Chief of the searchers. "She's sure been put through a quick-change scene of high-voltage troubles. I guess she's got a sure police-case against that Paris jeweller! That's if they ever put hands on him again, which ain't a likely thing, after cleaning up a million as easy as all that!"

Abruptly, a sudden idea came to him ; and I saw suspicion flash into his eyes.

"I'll take another look, Captain Gault, at that necklace you've got in charge for the little lady!" he said, with a little curt note in his voice. "Maybe I made a mistake somewhere. We'll have Mr. Malch on the job. He's the man that knows the real goods."

"Certainly," I said. "Come up to the chart-room."

He beckoned to the appraiser, and we all went to the chart-room. I stepped across to the drawer, and fetched out the first necklace. I handed it to the Appraiser without a word. I was getting a heap weary of it all. "Same sort of prism muck!" said Mr. Malch, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously, after a series of tests. "I guess it's the guy over in Paris that's made the dollars this trip! Come on, Soutar. Sorry to have bothered you, Cap'n; but I guess it's all in the day's work."

"Just so," I said, as dryly as I could.

After they had gone, I went down to see how Mrs. Emley was. She had come round, when I called, and was helping her maid to pack. She looked up at me, very white-faced, and very red eyed.

"Please go way. Captain Gault," she said. "Thank you for all you've done. I want to go right away and never see any one again. I've been a very silly, weak woman. Please go away."

And of course, I had to go.

But this evening, when all my business was done, I dressed, and had a taxi sent down to the ship. I was going up to see Mrs. Ernley, at her big house up Madison Square way. I meant to make the returning of the sham necklace an excuse to call; though I wondered whether she might not still refuse to see me.

However, when I sent my name in to her, I found I was to be received, and I went in, wondering how I should find her. She was sitting in a pretty boudoir sort of room; and when I entered, she was playing idly and rather sadly with the other necklace; but as I came into the room she threw it on to a chair, and came across to meet me.

"A million dollars is a lot to lose in one lump," I told her, as she sat down again; "even for a rich woman like you."

"Yes," she said, quietly. "But I guess that's not what I'm feeling worst about, now I've got steadied a bit. I sure showed that I was poor stuff, didn't I, Captain Gault? I guess I've never been so ashamed of myself in my life as I feel right now."

I nodded.

"I'm glad to hear it," I said. "I fancy you've won more than you've lost, if you feel that way, dear lady."

"Perhaps I have," she answered, rather doubtfully, as she reached out for the necklace she had been playing with. "The police here have cabled across; and I guess they'll do their best to nab that crook. Monsieur Jervoyne, who sold me this rubbish; though I'm not surprised I was taken in. Even the Customs Expert couldn't tell they weren't real, first go off, could he?"

I nodded again.

"Mrs. Emley," I said, "you've come well out of this affair, in many ways, and I think you've taken it as a bit of a lesson, haven't you?"

"Yes," she said, slowly. "I don't think I shall ever forget what I've gone through to-day; and all the voyage, for that matter. I suppose. Captain Gault, you feel just simple contempt for me. You feel I've proved I was weak. You said I should."

She dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief. "I suppose being rather well-off does make one inclined to grow soft, morally," she murmured at last. "I guess Life is either Training or Degeneration," I told her. "But smuggling diamonds isn't necessarily degeneration. It consists largely of using Circumstances. But it's sure a man's job. A woman's too much given to expecting heads I win, tails you lose. And that's just dodging Circumstances. And dodging Circumstances is plain Degeneration."

She nodded.

"I guess you're right, Captain Gault," she said quietly. "A woman's awful apt to think she ought to be able to eat her maccaroons and have them still in her hand. And that's plumb impossible, it seems!"

I stood up, smiling at the pretty, earnest way she mixed her words.

“In this case, dear lady,” I said, ‘the plumb impossible’ has happened, or something like it. I’ll run along now; but you’ll like to know that the necklace you’ve got in your hands is worth just about one million dollars cash; so I’d sure put it away safe to-night before you turn-in.”

She had stood up, as I was speaking; and she held the necklace out now in her right hand, and stared first at me, and then back at it, as if she were half dazed with what I had just said to her.

“What?” she asked, at last, in a voice that was low and deep, like a man’s with the nerve shock that had half paralyzed her and relaxed her vocal chords. “What?”

“Please sit down,” I said, and guided her back gently into her chair. . . . “Now you’re all right. . . . Sure?”

She nodded speechlessly at me.

“Listen to me then,” I told her. “That’s your million-dollar necklace. The actual thing that you bought in Paris. It’s genuine and quite all right. I saved it for you. Yes, I’ll tell you how.

“When the Customs man came up into my chart-room, I showed him the sham necklace, and he tested it and found it was sham. Then one of his men came up, to say that they had found the real one in your cabin ventilator. I had pretended to put the false one back into one of my chartroom drawers; but really I had coiled it up tight in my hand.

“I followed the Chief searcher down and I coaxed you to hand over the real one, which you had rolled up into a ball in your hands, after you must have snatched it from the woman-searcher.

“Then I handed the Customs man the false necklace, which had been ready in my hand, and kept the real one in its place.

“Of course, they simply found out, for the second time of asking, that the false necklace, was as false as it was! Pretty obvious sort of thing to find. Afterwards, you remember, you snatched it back, when the Expert told you it was only Cam glass, and then you fainted and dropped it on the floor. I helped lift you to the settee; then I picked up the false necklace; wrapped it up, and threw it on to your cabin table; but what I actually threw, was the real one, and kept the false one again in my hand.

“Now, don’t you admire my nerve, chucking down on to the table right in front of the Expert, a million-dollar necklace, as if it were just common so-much-a-ton-stuff eh?”

Wasn't that a great bluff, dear lady?"

"Sure! Sure! Sure!" she gasped out, her eyes dancing. "And then?"

"And then, I guess I sealed the trick. The Customs man got a sudden notion that he would like to have another look at the necklace I had shown him. in my chart-room.

"Well, I took him up there, along with the Expert, and I went over to the drawer, dipped in my hand, that held the sham necklace, and then pulled the thing out, in a sort of ad lib. fashion, for them to examine for the third time of asking. They certainly showed some interest in that length of prism sparklers! By the way, I've brought it back for you," and I drew it out of my pocket and laid it on the table.

Mrs. Ernley rose now and went across to a small writing desk. I saw a minute later, that she had started to fill in a cheque; and I guessed it was my commission.

I walked over to her, and put my hand across the cheque-book.

"Dear lady," I said, "I can take no commission for what I did. Our business transaction ended when you changed the necklaces. . . . But, out of curiosity, I should like to know just how much the cheque was going to be?"

"Look!" she said, and I drew away my hand, and looked. It was for a hundred thousand dollars.

"I'm glad!" I told her. "I guess you've stamped pretty solid on the poor streak in you. You're sure going to be one of the few women I can think well of. But I can't take that cheque, dear lady. If you want to go on the way you've begun, send it to the Sailors' Home. They need the cash pretty bad, I know."

Then I shook hands and left; though she begged me to stay; and showed the nicest and best possible side that a woman has to show.

"What a strange man you are, Captain Gault," she said, as I turned and smiled at her in the doorway.

"Maybe!" I said. "All humans are a bit strange to others, when you get the lid off some of their soul pots!"

But when I got out into the street I couldn't help thinking how true my notions of woman often are. Her actions are prompted either by insane meanness, or else by an equally insane generosity!

I guess it's right that old Adam left the governor out!

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