

THE BLACK TORTOISE

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Title: The Black Tortoise
Being the Strange Story of Old Frick's Diamond

Author: Frederick Viller

Release Date: June 16, 2014 [eBook #46006]

Language: English

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Produced by Al Haines.

THE BLACK TORTOISE
Being the Strange Story of Old Frick's Diamond

BY
FREDERICK VILLER

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM THE NORWEGIAN
BY
GERTRUDE HUGHES BRAEKSTAD

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1914

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PART I

THE BLACK TORTOISE

CHAPTER I

MONK CONTEMPLATES A VOYAGE TO AMERICA

"I am off to America on Friday next."

"What! off to America?"

"Yes; I'm not joking."

"Are you really serious? Fancy, going to America this time of the year, at the end of November! It must be very important business which takes you there! Can't you send some one else? You know Clara won't consider her firstborn properly baptized if you don't stand godfather to him. That ceremony is to take place next Sunday."

"Unfortunately it is important business—very important business—that only I can undertake. I am awfully sorry to disappoint your wife, but I must go."

This conversation took place in Monk's sitting-room. It was my usual habit, on leaving my office at seven o'clock, to go up to Monk's rooms and have a chat with him, and sometimes persuade him to come home with me.

I ought perhaps here to inform my readers that, some years before this story begins, I had returned to my native country after having spent several years abroad, where I had made a small competency as an engineer. When I again saw Monk, the friend of my boyhood, I found he had, strange to say, adopted the profession of private detective. As far as I could understand, he carried on this business just as much out of love for his work as for a means of earning his living, and had already won himself a reputation by his shrewdness, honesty, and disinterestedness.

Monk's sudden announcement took my breath away; he had never for a moment said a word about going to America before.

"Is it a new case you have on hand?" I asked.

"No; it is not a new case."

I looked doubtingly at him; this was not the Monk I was accustomed to see standing quietly before me with the handsome, open countenance, and the intelligent grey eyes looking fearlessly into mine.

He was now pacing restlessly up and down the floor. All at once he stopped in front of me.

"Can you stay with me this evening?"

"Yes; with pleasure," I replied. "Clara has gone to the theatre with a friend. I am therefore free, and it was my intention to propose to you that we should spend the evening together."

"That's right; let us have supper at once, for I have something to tell you, and until I have done so I shall have no peace."

Monk rang; and soon after we sat down to supper. My host ate scarcely anything; indeed, he hardly attended to his duties as host, and could not conceal his impatience to hasten the end of the meal.

It was quite apparent that something unusual was the matter, so I got through my supper as quickly as possible without interchanging many words.

When we returned again to the sitting-room, Monk placed me in one of his comfortable chairs, and set before me some whiskey and water and cigars. He himself lit a cigar, but soon threw it half-smoked into the fire.

"You said you wanted to speak to me about something, Monk."

"Yes; if you have patience to listen to me."

"Of course I have!"

A faint smile lit up Monk's dark countenance.

"I have put your patience to a severe test over and over again with my lectures on detective science, logic, deductions, and the like; but what I have in

mind this evening is nothing of that sort. Do you feel inclined to hear a story about myself, the story of how it was I came to be the kind of man I am, and to lead the life I do?"

"My dear fellow," I answered, "I am more than ready to listen to you. Any one can see that sometime or another something has happened to you which has thrown a shadow over your existence; but, as you can understand, one does not ask one's friends about that sort of thing. One generally waits until one is approached."

"You are right, and I ought to have told you all about it long ago; especially as, for my part, I have nothing whatever to conceal. Yes, a man is wrong to shut himself up in himself more than is necessary; and in my case I am afraid I have been foolish, and doubly stupid, not to have called to my aid a clever friend's assistance. I have stared myself blind with trying to find a way out of the dark. It is, however, wrong of me to call the affair my affair, since I no longer play any part in it; but, in any case, it concerns some one who was as dear to me as my own life. Are you prepared to listen to me? If so, you shall get to know as much of my history as I know of it myself."

"Go on, Monk; go on! If an honest man and an intelligent woman can help you in any way, you have them at your disposal in Clara and myself."

I stretched out my hand to him; Monk seized it and shook it heartily. All doubt and restlessness on his side had vanished. In giving the account of his story, I only wish that I could have given it in his own clear language and striking words. To detail it in full is of course impossible; but I will do the best I can, and if the narrative should become tedious, or wanting in clearness, it is my fault, and not Monk's.

CHAPTER II

OLD FRICK

When we separated, about fifteen years ago (began Monk), that time you went to Zurich to complete your studies as engineer, I went in seriously for law, and was fortunate enough in four years' time to take my degree with honours.

My friends and teachers tried to persuade me to follow a scientific career. An endowment could have been had from the university; and with this, together with a small inheritance from my father, I could have followed without trouble

the beaten path to a professorship at the university,—so I was told, at any rate.

But this was not to my mind; to have got free from the student's bench only to climb immediately to the dusty chair of a professor, seemed to me anything but attractive.

I first got a situation in the office of a government official, far up in the country, where there was little to do, but plenty of game and fishing; and I returned to Christiania the year after, a bearded, red-cheeked, young Nimrod.

Then I became the youngest inspector in the Christiania police office, and spent about two years in fining young men for disorderly conduct in the streets, and keeping order among the erratic female population of the town.

As you can well understand, it was hardly an occupation likely to attract a man for any length of time, and I explained this to our amiable chief superintendent when, one day, I placed my resignation on his desk.

"Stop a moment, my dear Monk," he said, with his genial smile. "Could you not wait a little, before you hand in this resignation? I must admit I have not found that you possess any special talent, either with regard to arresting drunken students, or as a censor of vice; still, on the other hand, I should be much deceived, after my many years of experience, if you do not find your right sphere in the detective department. Practically every one is aware that it is to you we owe our success in the great post office robbery, although officially you had nothing to do with it; and I, at any rate, know how well you cleared up the Fjorstat murder. For many months I have been thinking of offering you an appointment on the detective force. If you will take your resignation back, you can consider the matter as settled."

I gladly accepted the offer, but not until I had obtained a year's leave; a year which I spent abroad in travel, to study languages and life in the great countries.

I need hardly mention how useful my stay abroad has been to me.

I have no doubt that I found my right vocation when I joined the detective police; especially if I am to take into consideration the overwhelming praise which my superiors gradually poured upon me, or the flattering attention which the papers and the public began to bestow upon me.

Monk paused, and for a few minutes paced up and down the floor, as was his habit when he was deeply occupied in thought.

Well, he continued, I think I have now given you an account of my life until the day when the incident occurred which since has played such an important part in my life, and continues to do so to this very day.

It was a rainy and stormy night at the end of September, about seven years ago, when, wet to the skin, and dead beat, I came driving up to my lodgings in University Street. At that time I always had rooms on the ground floor, so that I could get in and out quickly and unobserved.

I had been on an expedition after some burglars high up on the Egeberg hills. The expedition had been long and irksome, both for myself and my assistants, and without result.

I always employ the same cabman—you remember Peter Lyverson, of course? Well, he had been waiting for us five hours in one of the small streets in the East end, and was just as disappointed at the lack of success and as wet as I was, so I thought it only right to ask him inside and give him a stiff glass of brandy.

Lyverson had just finished his glass, and with a profusion of thanks was lighting a cigar and bowing himself out, when we heard a ring at the telephone.

"Wait a moment," I cried to him, and rushed to the apparatus.

"Hello! are you Monk, the police detective?"

"Yes; who is it?"

"Bartholomew Frick of Drammen Road. Can you come out here at once? My house has been broken into. I thought that a man like you would prefer to be the first on the spot, and as quickly as possible!"

"All right, I will come."

It was not pleasant, for I was wet and tired; but business is business, and Bartholomew Frick was right in saying that I liked to be the first on the spot. Some minutes later the carriage was rolling along the deserted streets in the pouring rain toward Drammen Road.

I used the time, while we were on our way, to recall what I knew about "Old Frick."

Bartholomew or "Captain" Frick, as he was also called, had left Norway when quite a young man—somewhere between twenty and thirty years of age. For a generation or so no one heard anything of him, until suddenly he returned to his native country, an old man. This was some years before my story begins.

He came to Christiania, bringing with him a whole shipload of curiosities and costly articles, and was, on the whole, considered to be a very rich man.

His title of captain he presumably got from the fact that he had won his fortune, so people said, as captain of a pirate ship, and later on as a slave-dealer.

A more likely explanation, and one which carried with it a greater conviction of truth, was that he had acquired his fortune at gold washing in Australia, and diamond digging in Africa. He had, in both places, been one of the first to discover the rich treasures there.

On his return to Christiania he bought himself a large house in Drammen Road, and this he filled with the curiosities which he had collected and brought with him from all quarters of the globe.

After becoming settled, he began to look about him to make inquiries regarding his family, and he found that his only remaining relations were his

brother's widow and two young children in needy circumstances.

Apparently in order to make some reparation for his earlier neglect, he overwhelmed the poor widow with benefactions, and brought the poor, weak soul to a state of great bewilderment by placing large, and to her notions fabulous, sums at her disposal.

After a short time she died, and Frick then adopted her two children, a boy and a girl, and it was generally assumed that they would inherit his wealth.

Old Frick was a well-known figure in Christiania, and had a widespread reputation for his riches, benevolence, and—irascibility.

The house is situated just outside Skillebek, as you must know. I should not wonder, however, if you have never seen him, although your house is not far from his property, for during the last few years old Frick has been confined to his house, an invalid, and he never shows himself outside of it. As it usually happens, the indifference of the world to him now is just as great as its interest in him and his affairs was at one time.

Presently, the carriage drew up before an iron gate, which was immediately opened by a man, the coachman of the house, with a lantern in his hand.

Words were unnecessary; he was prepared for my arrival, and I followed him immediately up to the house.

We went along a passage and passed one or two rooms, in the last of which stood some servants whispering together, until we came, at length, into a large room or salon which was lighted up.

This salon presented a motley appearance. Some of the furniture was old-fashioned, and some of it modern. There were tropical plants in large tubs; Venetian pier glasses on the walls, having between them large cases filled with wonders from all climes, and of all ages; stuffed animals in the middle of the room and in the corners. On a shelf stood some heavy altar candelabra from an old church, and from a neighbouring shelf hung a lamp, doubtless stolen from some Hindoo temple. On a bracket, opposite a clock worked by sand, a relic of the Middle Ages, ticked a splendid specimen of a modern Parisian timepiece. Indeed, I might go on forever enumerating the extraordinary and wonderful assortment of curiosities that met one's eye at every turn.

In spite of this conglomeration, the room was not unpleasant. My first impression—and later it proved to be correct—was that, though all these things had been brought together by Bartholomew Frick, they had been arranged by his niece.

At one end of the room only was there any noticeable disorder. There several chairs were overturned, a couple of cupboards stood wide open, and a window was entirely smashed, both glass and woodwork. The storm and rain, however, did not beat in, as this room lay to the leeward side of the house, and

the cheerful fire in the grate at the other end of the room impressed one with a sense of warmth and comfort.

By the fireside sat old Frick in an armchair. On the mantelpiece before him lay a large American revolver, with brightly polished barrel, and leaning against his chair was an enormous Prussian cavalry sword.

The master of the house was clad in a large-patterned dressing-gown and slippers, and he got up at once when I came in.

At his side stood his brother's children, a fine young fellow with an honest face, and a very pretty young girl.

Old Frick himself could hardly be considered handsome. He had a large, fat, red face, with an enormous reddish-blue nose, white bushy hair, which stuck out in unkempt tufts, and a white, thick beard under his chin. His eyes were light, and generally friendly: but when he was angry, which not seldom happened, they changed into a kind of greenish colour, which was anything but pleasant to see.

Every human being is said to resemble some animal or another in appearance; Bartholomew Frick would not have done discredit to a Bengal tiger.

He came quickly across to me, and pressed my hand in his own large ones; they were of the fulness and size of a walrus's flippers. He was stout, broad, and thick-set, but moved about with youthful energy, although somewhat clumsily.

"Oh, are you here already, Mr. Monk? Glad to see you! It isn't more than twenty minutes since I rang you up through the telephone; that's smart work if you like! That's the thing, young man, promptitude above everything! It is the most important thing in the world. How do you think Napoleon managed to conquer the whole of Europe? What do you think it was that helped him? His promptitude, my friend, and nothing else. Don't talk to me of generalship or anything of that sort. He was smarter and quicker than every one else, and that's the reason he could do what he liked with them all.

"But now you must hear how it all happened with regard to the burglary—ah, you wink at me, Sigrid? I suppose you mean that I must first introduce you to Mr. Monk? Very well! This is my niece, Sigrid Frick, and that is my nephew, Einar Frick; both are the joy and stay of my old age. But now what about the—what are you now making signs about, Einar? I suppose you mean Mr. Monk should be asked to take a seat."

"And a glass of wine," whispered the young girl, casting a compassionate glance at my wet clothes.

"Yes, of course: Mr. Monk shall sit down and have everything he wants. But meanwhile I can in a few words tell him how it all happened."

Bartholomew Frick was, however, not a man of few words, and it took some time before I got to know how he had lain sleepless, kept awake by a "devilish

unpleasant pain in his big toe," and so toward one o'clock had heard a strange sound in the room below,—for he slept just over the salon where we sat.

The old man had lost not a minute in getting out of bed; he had seized a loaded revolver, which always lay at hand on his table, and a sword, which was also within reach, both mementos, no doubt, of his adventurous life.

Thus armed, and with slippers on his feet, but with no other clothes on than his nightshirt, he had crept down the stairs and slowly opened the door of the salon.

Here he saw two men, who were quietly at work breaking open his cupboards and emptying their most valuable contents into a sack.

"I first of all fired two shots at their heads," continued Frick; "but when the smoke had lifted, I saw they were both as alive as ever, and on their way to the window to escape. I rushed after them with the sword, and they would not have got away alive if I had not stumbled over that confounded panther!" and he pointed to a large stuffed panther which lay overturned on its side in the middle of the room.

"But you might have killed them, uncle!" faltered the young girl, reproachfully.

"Yes, killed them! I only wish I had hacked them to sausage-meat! But just listen; now comes the most irritating part of all. Only one of the scoundrels could get out through the open window, for the one half has no hinges on it and does not open; so the other fellow, who evidently didn't think he had time to escape before I came up, disappeared head foremost, through both glass and framework. But he didn't get through quickly enough, for when I got away from the confounded panther, his left leg was still hanging inside the window ledge. 'You shan't take that with you, at any rate,' thought I, for now I was only a couple of yards from him, and the sword was just raised above my head, ready to strike, when, one of my feet caught in the jaw of the ice bear, and over I fell for the second time.

"Yes, you laugh! Perhaps you do not believe me? But I tell you, if that ice bear had not been in the way, I should have been able at this moment to place on the table before you the rascal's foot, and perhaps a bit of his leg as well. Here, you can see for yourself; the sword just cut off the heel with a bit of the sole, and more than that I could not manage; but another inch or two would have done it."

He triumphantly put before me a broad heel, with a bit of the sole attached, evidently cut from the boot with a powerful stroke.

"This was the only bit of the scoundrel that was left behind; the rest of him ran across the garden, over the railings, and out into the road. The revolver had also fallen from my grasp, or else I should have tried a couple more shots after them. I once shot a Zulu at seventy paces, with the same revolver; he had stolen

a hen from me, the rascal!"

I didn't quite know what to think of such a bloodthirsty old man. But a certain humorous twinkle in his eyes gave me to understand that this was not genuine, and, as the young people didn't try to hide their merriment, we all three had a good laugh.

I afterward learned that old Frick suffered from many of the defects which are so often the outcome of a hard and adventurous life, such as he had led from his youth to old age: stubbornness, waywardness, and tyrannical contempt for the feelings of others when his own were aroused. Otherwise his heart was soft, and as good as gold.

It was plain to see that the burglary had not in the least ruffled his temper. On the contrary, he felt himself considerably enlivened with this reminder of a life which had been full of such scenes.

At last he finished his description of how the thieves had disappeared, the house had become aroused, and I telephoned for, etc., with the result known. But what he was especially proud about was that he had given orders that nothing should be touched or moved in the room after the burglary.

"I myself have been a policeman," he said. "I was sheriff in Ballarat for three years in succession, and I had charge of many investigations there. One thing I have learned by experience, and that is, that the place of a crime must remain untouched until the police arrive, otherwise it is impossible for them to get to work."

I thanked him for his thoughtfulness and presence of mind, which seemed to please him.

I have described this, my first meeting with old Frick, so fully, not because it is of any great importance to my story, but because it will, perhaps, give you some idea of the man and his characteristics.

Next I proceeded to examine the scene of the burglary. It was just as Frick had said, nothing had been touched or moved. Even the sack which the thieves had used to stow away their spoil in, lay there on the floor, just as they had flung it from them when they took to flight.

Several of the cupboards in the room had been filled with gold and silver articles, and precious stones. It was a complete museum; and the thieves had, so far, carried out a sensible plan in having broken open all the cupboards and drawers, but only putting into the bag the articles which were of the most value and the easiest of transport. Otherwise, there was little else to discover. We could follow the tracks of the thieves through the garden, over the palings, and out into Drammen Road; but they had left nothing behind them except old Frick's trophy, the heel with the bit of sole adhering, and the sack.

This was emptied, and the contents set in their places in the cupboards.

Nothing seemed to be missing; and as each article was numbered, and the place in which it was to stand, it was an easy matter to control them.

Suddenly Miss Frick clasped her hands together, and exclaimed:—

”But the tortoise, uncle! the tortoise is gone!

”It is a precious gem we have given that name—a large diamond set in gold, and in the shape of a tortoise,” she added, when she saw my puzzled expression.

”That is the most valuable of all my collection,” continued Frick. ”I don’t know what the diamond can be worth when it is polished, but all I know is that I have been offered £2000 for it as it is now. It is black.”

He raked about with his large fingers at the bottom of the sack, and finally turned it inside out, but there was no diamond tortoise. Then the room, and at last the garden, and the nearest part of Drammen Road were searched most carefully by aid of the lantern, but without result.

”How large was the tortoise?” I asked.

”It could at a pinch be hidden in the hollow of a man’s hand,—say about two inches in diameter with the setting.”

It was now nearly three o’clock in the morning. There was no more for me to do there, so I prepared to take my departure.

The old man began again to lament the loss of the diamond, and complained in the most energetic manner that he had not been able to shoot, or cut in two, the rascals who had robbed him.

”It would be stupid of me to promise anything,” said I; ”but, for my own part, I am pretty sure we shall have the birds caged before many days, and that we shall secure the diamond as well.”

With these words, I took my departure, put the cut-off heel bits in my pocket, and went home.

My thoughts on the way were naturally taken up with what I had heard and seen at Bartholomew Frick’s.

But, remarkably enough, it was the young girl, Miss Frick, upon whom my thoughts dwelt most of all. I had only heard her speak a few words, and this was the first time I had seen her face; but she attracted me strangely. I have never been of an impressionable nature, and no woman had ever had much of an attraction for me. So I was astonished to find how clearly her image stood out before me after the few hours we had been together. I already felt a strong desire to please her—a desire to do something which would compel her admiration.

You must, in any case, get the diamond back for her uncle, I thought; women naturally set value upon a detective’s skill. It will at any rate please her uncle, and bring me into her society again.

I had at once noticed that the robbery at Frick’s was of a simple and not very complicated kind; and though the matter from a professional stand-point

had not interested me particularly, it had suddenly become invested with a new importance.

As soon as I arrived home, I hurriedly changed my wet clothes, made myself a cup of coffee over the spirit lamp, and then took out the piece of heel.

It was a broad, strong heel, with an iron rim round it, and entirely new, just like the sole. It did not seem to have belonged to the usual kind of cheap boots which our ordinary criminals are apt to patronize; at the same time it did not seem to have belonged to the better class of foot-gear. The heel somehow seemed to me to be familiar, a vague recollection of something set my brain to work.

Ah, suddenly I saw it all! The heel and sole belonged to the same sort of shoes, in fact they were a perfect match to a pair which had just helped the police to circumstantial evidence by an impression on soft soil in a similar case. It was the same kind of boot with which the prison society provides discharged prisoners, so that they shall not be entirely shoeless when they come out of prison.

One of the thieves must be a discharged prisoner, I went on reasoning. The boots are quite new; he must, therefore, have been just lately released,—in all probability yesterday morning. The burglary must have been planned and the necessary watch on the house undertaken by a confederate who, of course, must have been at large for some time previous.

Ten minutes later I stood in the anteroom to my office at the police station. It was not yet morning. The official on duty sat and dozed over the stove.

"Find out from the ledger, if any of our burglars have been discharged from jail in the course of the last two or three days," I asked.

It is, unfortunately, a fact, that a large majority of crime is committed by prisoners who have just been let out of jail, and we therefore carefully keep a register of those who are let loose.

In the meanwhile, I went into the guardroom and ordered two constables to follow me.

"Black John, the Thronhjemer, as you perhaps remember, sir, was discharged yesterday morning; I don't see any others.

"That's all right! find out where he hangs about when he is out."

"I know him well, sir. He generally puts up at 'Fat Bertha's,' she who has the coffee-house and lodgings for travellers up by Vaalerengen. But he often frequents the sheds in the brick fields and round about there."

I always had a trap in readiness at the police station, and in a quarter of an hour I, and two officers in plain clothes, stopped at a suitable distance from Fat Bertha's lodging-house.

Black John was not there, however, and we began to search among the brick ovens.

Daylight was just breaking when we came to the second oven, and the workmen were arriving with their tin cans in hand. Two men crept out on the other side and began to run across a ploughed field which adjoined one of the sheds.

We set off after them; but it seemed as if they had got too much of a start, and were likely to get away from us in the morning mist.

Suddenly one of them began to drop behind, and we soon had him between us. We let the other one get away for the time being.

The fellow we had got hold of swore and cursed, but otherwise made no resistance.

"If it hadn't been for that sore foot of mine, the police wouldn't have got me this time," he bawled.

We followed the direction of his look, and saw how his left foot had forced its way through the shoe, which was dragging about his ankle.

Black John's volubility did not deceive me. I kept a sharp eye on all his movements. While he, with a kind of raw good nature, joked with the constables, he slowly passed one hand behind him, and with a deft movement threw a small parcel some ten or twelve paces behind him.

"You had better leave tricks of that sort alone, Black John," I said in a friendly tone, stepping back and picking up a dirty little packet wrapped in a greasy piece of *The Morning Post*.

Inside three or four wrappers of the same sort I found the strangest object I had ever seen.

It was a large black diamond, of a flattened oval shape, tapering at the ends. It was set in a broad gold rim of the same form as the stone, and, to make its likeness to a tortoise more complete, a head was introduced, together with a little stumpy tail, and four knobs underneath, to represent feet,—all of gold. In the head shone two green precious stones for eyes.

"Oh, no; it won't be of much use to me, I can see," said Black John, resignedly. "I suppose I am in for another year or two."

He exhibited a subtle humour, while he tramped along to the town between the two policemen. The effects of just-from-prison libations did not seem quite to have left him.

"Ours is a hard sort of a profession, sir," he continued confidentially. "I think it's just as well to be a convict all one's life. Then one wouldn't get such frights at night. Such a one as I had last night!"

"Were you frightened, then, last night, in the Drammen Road?" I asked sympathetically.

"Frightened, indeed! What would you say, sir, if you were busy rooting about in a house at night, when you thought all was quiet and still, and an old

ourang-outang in a shirt were suddenly to appear before you with a sword in one hand and a pistol in the other, firing away at you till the bullets whistled about your ears?"

In this kind of jocular strain he talked until we reached the town, where we parted.

* * * * *

It was half-past twelve, and the sun was shining brightly when I again rang the bell at old Frick's in the Drammen Road.

I had slept a few hours, handed in my report to the superintendent, and now I wanted to have the pleasure of giving old Frick his diamond back again.

I had taken a little more trouble than usual about my toilet; you can guess the reason why.

I was very pleased to find Miss Frick alone when I was ushered into the sitting-room. I thus had an opportunity of exchanging a few words with her; for when old Frick came in I knew only too well who would take up all the conversation.

She received me in a friendly manner, and when, without further ado, I showed her the diamond, she clapped her hands in joyful surprise.

"How glad uncle will be! When he once gets it back again he will look upon last night's affair as an exceedingly pleasant diversion. May I take it to him?"

"Yes, of course!"

"It was I who advised him to telephone to you in the night, Mr. Monk, and to-day I also assured him that you would be certain to find his tortoise again."

"It is a great pleasure, Miss Frick, to find you have such confidence in me. May I ask how you got to know of my name?"

The young girl blushed a little. "We have often read about you in the papers, and Einar tells me there isn't a case which you cannot clear up."

"I must thank your brother for his flattering opinion, and I am indebted to the burglars of last night for giving me this opportunity of making your acquaintance and the acquaintance with your family."

"But you must excuse me a moment, Mr. Monk. I must hurry away and find uncle and give him the diamond. I haven't even told him you are here!"

She ran out of the room, and I looked after her, enraptured. She was even prettier by daylight than by lamplight. Light, reddish-golden hair, blue eyes, a straight nose, and a beautiful shapely mouth, yet not of the smallest. As for her figure, it was that of a veritable Diana as she vanished from the room.

I stood looking out of the window, when the door opened.

I turned round hastily, and at first I thought it was Miss Frick who had come

back again. But the next moment I discovered that it was a young girl whom I had not seen before, who stood hesitating on the threshold.

She was also tall, fair, and slight, and with something of the same grace in her movements. Indeed, both in her movements and carriage she was wonderfully like Miss Frick. Nor was her face and especially the shape of her head unlike Miss Frick's, but her hair was much redder, her lips thinner, and her mouth more sharply moulded. Her eyes were certainly blue and pretty, but they wore a colder expression.

I thought at first it was Miss Frick's sister, but a glance at the small, coquetish, servant-maid's cap told me she held a different position in the house.

With an excuse she hurriedly left the room; she had thought Miss Frick was there.

Scarcely had she shut the door after her before Miss Frick again appeared, and as she saw perhaps that I looked a bit puzzled, she gave a low laugh and said:—

"You have seen my double, I suppose? She didn't know any one was here. All strangers are astonished at the likeness between Evelina and me. She is my lady's-maid."

"The likeness does not strike me as being so great," I answered; "do you think so yourself? I should never make such a mistake as taking her for you."

"Oh yes, indeed!" she replied; "at first it was almost unpleasant to me. Her father was, in his line, a well-to-do artisan, but things went badly with him, and he took to drink. The mother is not a very desirable person either, and so my uncle, who had known them many years, proposed that I should take the daughter as my maid."

It was a pleasure to me to talk with this pretty young girl. She was more natural and free from any affectation than any young woman I had met. It was easy to see she had plenty of common sense, and was well educated.

Mr. Frick did not tarry long. He came waddling in, clad in a large-checked, English pea-jacket, his full-blown face beaming like the sun. He was not satisfied this time with shaking one of my hands, but seized both in his gigantic paws. His praise of my skill was quite overwhelming and it was only by the greatest effort that I got him to change the subject.

After that followed an invitation to dinner at "Villa Ballarat," as he called the house. He would like to have a full description of how I had managed to discover the thieves.

This invitation clashed with my engagements that day, and I should have felt almost duty bound to refuse it, had I not happened to look at Miss Frick.

It appeared to me as if I could read something in her face which spoke of anxious expectation, and—I accepted the invitation.

The dinner went off very well. Old Frick told us how he had first become possessed of the tortoise; that, however, I will return to later.

Happily there was another person present who could listen to old Frick, while I had a much more interesting conversation with Miss Frick.

Young Einar, who seemed a fine young fellow, and whose occupation it was to keep his uncle's books and accounts, alone emptied a bottle of Pleidsieck monopole, and then stole away immediately after dinner with a good supply of his uncle's Havana cigars, to have a game of billiards at the Grand Hotel.

Before I left Villa Ballarat, I had another talk with old Frick, of a more serious nature. I represented to him how wrong it was to let so many costly articles as those he had gathered together, lie unprotected against thieves and burglars.

"You have seen yourself, Mr. Frick," I said, "how you tempt people to become housebreakers."

Old Frick showed himself for once amenable to advice.

"Come and see me to-morrow," he said; "I should like to have your opinion as to how I ought to arrange my things. The house here is becoming too small for me; I expect a guest in a few days. What do you say to my building a pavilion out in the garden, and arranging it specially as a museum or as a place of custody for all my curiosities? If I built the pavilion expressly for this purpose, I ought to be able to make it sufficiently proof against thieves. I could use iron safes, iron bars before the windows, electric-alarm apparatus, and suchlike. So long as I am well and able to move about, I can look after my things,—as you have seen I did last night; but when I get older, it will be more difficult. One cannot depend upon the young people in the house."

By sufficiently encouraging this plan of his, I got him to start the work, and within a month old Frick had a building constructed in the garden, about forty yards from the house. A building which should serve as a depository for all his collection, and at the same time give space for his office, and containing a fire-proof room for money and important documents.

This building will, later on, play a part in my story, and I shall therefore give a short description of it.

It was built nearly square, and divided into two. The whole of the one half was fitted up to receive Frick's collection. It formed a large room with no windows, but was lighted from above. Over the skylights were placed strong gilt iron bars to prevent entrance from above.

The heavy iron shutters, which, being painted white and lacquered, looked like innocent wooden boards, could be pulled down in front of the cases when the museum was closed.

These iron shutters were so well balanced with hidden counter weights

that the weakest child could move them up or down. They could be locked with strong safety locks, of which Bartholomew Frick alone had the keys.

The other half of the house was partitioned into two, forming a larger and a smaller room. The larger did duty as Mr. Frick's office, and there his nephew took up his residence in the morning among the heap of business books. The smaller room, which, on account of the many feet thick, brick walls, gave very little inside space, served as a fire-proof room for money and documents.

This room had no windows, and only one very solid, double iron door, which led into the before-mentioned room used as the museum.

It had been made according to my suggestion; for I reasoned thus: The office is, as a matter of course, the least-protected room in the building. It has windows, and necessarily a good many strangers will be going in and out there. The safest thing is to let the one door to the fire-proof room, where Frick likes to keep a large sum of ready money, lead out into the museum. It is only frequented by the people of the house and guests, and at night it is more secure against burglary than the office.

All round the garden there was an iron railing, twice as high as a man, and people who were going to the house had to ring a bell at the iron gate.

At that time, when I made old Frick's acquaintance, he had invested a great deal of his money in various enterprises, mostly industrial undertakings, and especially such as would bring new trade and industry to the country.

He himself took no part in the management of these undertakings, and the work in his office was not more than could be managed by himself and his nephew.

It was not long before I was a regular and, as far as I could perceive, a welcome guest at the villa; indeed, all through the winter there was scarcely a day when I did not visit there.

Old Frick was never tired of asking me about news from the police courts; but I soon realized that it was not so much my stories that interested him, as the fact that for each of my stories, which I tried to make as short as possible, he found opportunity to treat us to two or three of his own, which always took a long time.

He was, however, an admirable story-teller, and we often sat by the hour together, listening to him with the greatest interest.

Generally the party was limited to old Frick, Sigrid, and myself. Einar was a gay young fellow, who spent a good deal of his time and his money with his companions, and he gave us but little of his society. Thus the three of us spent

many pleasant evenings together.

CHAPTER III

MR. REGINALD HOWELL

Here was my first letter from Miss Frick:—

DEAR MR. MONK,—My uncle wants you to come and dine with us to-morrow at five o'clock. He is expecting an Englishman to-day, a son of one of his old Australian comrades, and would like you to make his acquaintance.

Yours, SIGRID FRICK.

It was not a love letter, not even a friendly epistle, but quite the most conventional piece of writing one could receive; and yet it caused me great happiness when this note arrived, in the fine bold handwriting I got to know so well.

It was on a Saturday, a few days before Christmas. From the first day I had seen Sigrid Frick, until now, I had employed the time in falling in love as deplorably as ever a man can do, and I could see that my attentions were not displeasing to her. And so, as a matter of course, I accepted the invitation for dinner next day.

On my arrival at Villa Ballarat, I found old Frick beaming with delight.

"Here he is, Monk; here he is!—Reginald Howell, son of my old friend Howell, who was the best man and the most faithful friend in the whole world. I don't think my old friend, even when he was young, had such a fine appearance as his son, here; but his heart was as true as gold, and he was as reliable as a rock."

It would have been difficult for old Frick to get away from his reminiscences of old Howell, but luckily his niece recalled him to the present by intimating that he ought to introduce me to the young Englishman before he indulged in them further.

He was a tall, handsome young fellow, about my own age, and of the dark English type. His manners were easy and unaffected, as is usual with Englishmen of good birth.

There was nothing particularly attractive about his face, although he had fine eyes, somewhat dark, almost black, in fact, but without the fire in them that usually accompanies eyes of that colour. His manners were rather insinuating, though not at all unpleasant.

I gradually learned to like him fairly well.

At first, it happened that he threw many a tender glance at Miss Frick, and on that account I felt not a little inclined to quarrel with him. But as this was only a repetition of what had happened in the past two months with half a dozen other young men who visited Villa Ballarat, I was sensible enough to allow these feelings to have only a momentary hold upon me.

He soon kept his eyes to himself, probably because he saw "how the land lay," as the sailors have it.

One thing which, in a great measure, spoke in the young Englishman's favour, was his apparent modesty.

When his father died the year before,—he had until then lived in Australia,—the son decided to go to Europe, and he took his passage on a sailing ship. But the vessel had caught fire in the open sea, and the passengers and crew had had to take to the boats. Only one of the boats had reached land—the one in which Reginald Howell and eight others had saved themselves. But the boat foundered on a coral reef, and Mr. Howell at last found himself, the only survivor, on a little island. The natives were friendly to him, and after two months' stay there, he sighted a ship which brought him to England.

People seldom refuse to relate interesting stories when they concern themselves; but it was only after repeated appeals from old Frick that Mr. Howell was at last induced to give a very sober and curtailed description of his adventurous voyage.

It was easy to understand that he must have behaved very coolly and bravely under such terrible circumstances, and that it was only due to his presence of mind and courage that he was able to save himself, yet he seldom spoke of himself, and then always in the most modest manner possible.

In short, he had the habit, owing either to the way in which he had been brought up, or by nature, seldom or never of speaking about himself,—a habit which never fails to make a favourable impression.

When the young man came to England, he of course gave the authorities an exact account of the wreck of the *Queen of the East*, and the fate of the crew. The account had been published in several of the English papers, and he laughingly proffered to show us some of these papers if we found his verbal account not exhaustive enough.

Mr. Howell had come to Norway at the express invitation of old Frick, who, when he had heard of his old friend's death, had written and asked the son to visit

him in Norway. The young man had received Frick's letter just when he was on the point of sailing from Australia—he had already arranged previously to visit Europe—and had notified his departure by telegraph.

"You did right, Reginald, in coming as quickly as possible to your father's old friend. I suppose you intend to spend the winter with us. You can learn to go on 'ski' here; a fine sport, I can tell you. You must live with us. I have had two rooms made ready for you here in Villa Ballarat."

Mr. Howell said he thought he would avail himself of the invitation for one or two months; he was a keen sportsman, and had long ago made up his mind to have a look at, and a try at, ski-running.

"That's right," cried old Frick, clinking his champagne glass against that of the Englishman. "The whole house and all that I possess is at the disposal of my old friend's son. After dinner you shall hear what I owe him. I don't suppose I need offer to assist you with any money, for in his last letter to me your father wrote that he would leave you everything he possessed, for your mother died when you were a little boy, and you were the only child. Your father was not so very rich, but I think he wrote something about £1200 a year."

"Yes, thereabouts," replied the young man, good-naturedly, and smiling at the kind old man's loquacity; "and that is more than enough for me."

"Then perhaps I had better strike out your name from my will; it has, until now, been standing beside those of Sigrid and Einar."

We all laughed heartily and rose from the table.

When we were drinking our coffee, and had lighted our cigars, old Frick began the story of his friendship with Howell the elder, and the adventures which had bound these two so closely together.

To tell the truth, I tried my best to slip away, hoping for a chat alone with Sigrid; but that couldn't be managed, and after having heard old Frick's story, I must confess that only a man in love could dream of anything more interesting than his account of it.

I should like to give it in all its detail, and in old Frick's words, but I cannot, and I must restrict myself to giving you the main points in his story.

Bartholomew Frick had left Norway and run away to sea in 1830; his desire for adventure and his dislike for the schoolroom had driven him to this.

For many years he roamed about in the great East, in India, South Africa, and Australia, sometimes as a sailor, and sometimes as a hunter and adventurer on shore.

Then, at the end of the forties, he found himself in Australia when the gold fever was just beginning to rage. Soon after, a party of three people started for Melbourne to proceed to the gold districts. One was Frick, who was the eldest of them, and two Englishmen, Howell and Davis.

The acquaintanceship of these three men—they were adventurers, but all of good family—was not of long standing; but it developed, in the course of the following year, into strong friendship and most faithful comradeship.

They led the usual life of gold diggers for many years, and sometimes, when they were lucky, they would go off to Melbourne and spend their money in a few days' time.

Having gone through many ups and downs in the course of seven years, they at last came across a rich find of gold, and realized a fortune in a couple of months.

The partnership was then dissolved. Howell, who was the quietest and most level-headed of them, bought a large piece of land and took to sheep farming. In this way he was able to preserve his fortune and even to add to it, although he had not been one of the most fortunate.

On the other hand, Frick and Davis did not think they had enough. The money they had made enabled them to carry out a plan which Frick had thought of, and which for a long time they had been anxious to carry out.

In the middle of the thirties Frick, when quite a young man, had been in South Africa. He then followed the settlers who trekked to the north across the Orange River, and who had joined in raids across the river Vaal, and still farther to the north.

When on these expeditions Frick himself had found diamonds, and had heard wonderful stories from the natives of the great quantities of these stones which were to be found in caverns of a peculiar formation, reminding one more of deserted mines than anything else.

Frick had obtained the report through a source which did not admit of doubt that there was at least some truth in it; and the location given with regard to the place seemed to be efficient. But he could not then get any companions to form an expedition, as the supposed place lay far away in the desert, blocked by wild and hostile negro tribes. Nor had he at that time the means to fit out an expedition by himself, and he was therefore obliged to give up all thoughts of it. These were the diamonds in search of which Frick and Davis decided to go.

"Davis seemed to me to be just the right sort of a man," remarked old Frick, when he had gone thus far in his narrative; "he was at least double as greedy about finding the diamonds as I."

Now that they were able, the two companions journeyed at once to the Cape, bought themselves an excellent outfit, and hired people sufficient for a large expedition.

The money which they did not spend on the outfit they sent to the bank in London.

It was Davis who managed all that; he was the most businesslike of the

two.

This expedition got as far as the Vaal, but did not return, and this is how it happened.

When they had got so far that, according to Frick's and Davis's calculations, they should be only a day's journey from the diamond caves, they let the natives, with the ox wagons, camp, while they themselves continued their journey alone.

They were lucky enough to find what Frick maintained must have been Solomon's deserted mines, and they filled a whole sack with diamonds. But when they reached the camp they found it had been plundered, and all the members of the expedition killed by a hostile negro tribe.

Frick and Davis were also captured after a hard struggle.

In the night Davis, who was uninjured, succeeded in escaping, but Frick, who had received an arrow in his thigh, could not follow him.

Davis, with Frick's consent, took with him the bag of diamonds, and promised immediately on reaching civilization to prepare a new expedition for the release of Frick.

In the meantime, the blacks dragged him with them farther and farther inland, where it was impossible for him to think of flight, and so he lived with them for three years.

At last a gang of European pioneers turned up far in the interior of the dark continent where the tribe lived, and before the blacks had thought of keeping guard on Frick, he had joined the whites and followed them to their own settlements.

In all probability the blacks had, after such a long time, come to look upon Frick as one of themselves.

When Frick reached civilization the first thing he did was to ask after his friend Davis.

Yes, he had returned safely to the Cape Colony, but had not mentioned a word about any relief expedition for Frick. On the contrary, he had given out that Frick was dead, and had gone straight to England. He had mentioned that he had some diamonds with him, but he had not shown them to any one.

Frick was not very well pleased with this information, as you can imagine. He still had a few small diamonds with him, which he had found during his stay among the blacks. These he sold for a couple of hundred pounds, and set out for England to find Davis.

Here he discovered that the latter had drawn all the money out of the bank, had sold all the diamonds, and having bought a large country estate, was now living, a landed proprietor, in Yorkshire. Frick set off to visit Davis at his country house, but was not even allowed to enter. Davis refused to deliver up any part whatsoever of the money that had been deposited in the bank, or any of that

which he had received from the sale of the diamonds.

When Frick became furious and tried to force his way in to the scoundrel, he was turned away by the servants.

Frick then applied to the police, but they advised him to take legal proceedings. He would have to engage a lawyer in order to proceed against his old comrade.

It was not a difficult matter to find a lawyer, or even lawyers, but none of them would take up the case unless Frick would guarantee them their fees and expenses first. Davis was rich and powerful, and would naturally use all the weapons with which the English law so lavishly favours those who have few scruples and plenty of money.

Frick raged awhile like a lion in a cage, but happily he pulled himself together and shipped to Australia before he had become quite "mad from anger," as he expressed it himself.

In Australia he was well received by the third member of the late partnership, and when Howell got to learn of the story, he became just as furious over Davis's rascality as Frick himself. It was, however, an unfortunate period with Howell. His farm had just been visited by a huge flood, and the larger part of his flock of sheep had been drowned.

But Howell did not give in. He would not hear of Frick's remonstrances, but raised, with much difficulty, a loan of £5000 on his property. This money he forced upon Frick, and when the latter saw that his friend would not listen to reason, he no longer hesitated, but went back to England with the money.

There was now no difficulty in getting the affair taken up. A clever lawyer was engaged, and the case against Davis was carried on with all possible despatch.

Frick himself thought he should never succeed in bringing him to bay. Davis had understood how to make use of the time to guard himself well, and had employed all means to delay the case.

Frick's £5000 was fast disappearing, when his lawyer was fortunate enough to discover some dark doings in Davis's life before the time when Frick had learnt to know him.

These doings were of such a character that Davis, who in the meantime had been elected M.P. for his county, had to, at any price, prevent them being made public. He was therefore obliged to agree to a compromise, and to pay Frick half of what he was worth, which, after all, was only what was Frick's due.

"In the end, I got such a good hold of the rascal," continued old Frick, "that he not only offered to pay all I asked for, but he even wrote me a humble letter, and begged me, for God's sake, not to make the affair public. 'It would completely ruin him,' he wrote.

"As Davis had invested all the cash in his estate, it was difficult to get ready money. But the affair was at last settled, and I have not told the story to any one. I did not give any promise to this effect, but it's just as well that you, who have now heard it, also keep it quiet. If it can help the scoundrel to repent of his sins in peace and comfort for the rest of his days, it is no doubt the best.

"It was not possible to get your father, Mr. Reginald, to accept anything more than the £5000 he had lent me, although I was now much richer than he. No, he was as proud as Lucifer, just as proud as he was faithful."

With the exception of Mr. Howell, we had all listened with the greatest interest to old Frick's long story. In spite of Mr. Howell's good manners, his impatience had several times been noticeable, even to the story-teller himself.

The latter remarked: "Yes, you have, of course, heard the story several times before from your father, Reginald; so for your sake it was hardly necessary to tell it. But I am anxious that those who stand nearest to me in the world should know what a friend your father was to me."

Mr. Howell smiled, somewhat embarrassed; "Yes, of course, I have heard the story from my father two or three times. But you can understand he did not lay so much stress upon the help he gave you. It was no more, he said, than a man's duty to a friend; and that's what I think also."

"He is his father's son!" exclaimed old Frick, and was not satisfied until he had seized the Englishman's hand and shaken it vigorously, although the latter modestly tried to avoid it.

"Did you ever hear anything later about Davis?" he asked after a pause.

"No, not much!" answered old Frick. "He was already married when I took proceedings against him, but I don't think it was a very happy marriage; his wife took care to see that a good deal of the punishment he so well deserved was carried out. Later on, I also heard that he had much trouble in managing his large property, after he had been obliged to take out so much capital. Ah, well, that's his own lookout; we have, thank God, something else to talk about than that scoundrel. One thing, however, I forgot to mention, is, that when Davis was forced to pay me back half the money, I took the black diamond in its present setting, the one we call 'the tortoise.' I took that over for £2000, which would be about its value in its uncut condition. We found it, just as it is, up in Solomon's mines. It was the only one of the diamonds that Davis had not sold."

CHAPTER IV

THE BLACK TORTOISE AGAIN

I have little to relate about the months which followed after that Sunday at Mr. Frick's.

Young Mr. Howell still lived in the house; he took a fancy to "ski" sport, and learnt it in a surprisingly short time.

He accepted Frick's pressing invitation to remain in Christiania till the summer, when he intended visiting Finland and Spitsbergen.

Einar Frick and Reginald Howell became good friends, in spite of the difference in age, much to the satisfaction of old Frick. They were always together, and I fancy old Frick was not very strict during this time with regard to his nephew's office hours.

A detective, however, incidentally gets to know a good many things, and I soon discovered that the two young men did not always pursue the most innocent pleasures. Even in Christiania, there are always to be found at least a dozen young good-for-nothings, who have plenty of money and nothing to do. Einar and Mr. Reginald became regular visitors in this circle, where later it became the fashion to gamble, and not for very low stakes, either.

I became uneasy about this, and one day I spoke to Einar and gave him a serious warning.

By the young man's blushing and frank confession, I saw that he had not as yet entirely fallen a victim to evil influence. Besides, he added that he had latterly had more pocket money from his uncle, and didn't play higher than he could afford. Mr. Howell had several times prevented him from playing for high stakes. He also promised to withdraw altogether from the gambling circle, which Mr. Howell had said he also was inclined to do.

This reassured me, and on the whole I must confess that Mr. Howell's behaviour was in every respect that of a gentleman. That I, in spite of this, entertained a shadow of antipathy or suspicion about him, is one of those things which cannot be explained.

One thing I cannot pass over in my story: one fine day, when I summoned up courage and put the all-important question to Miss Frick, I received as satisfactory an answer as any man could wish.

She desired that we should, for a time, keep our engagement secret, for she shrunk from telling her uncle, who would scarcely take the prospect of losing her with composure. Old Frick was remarkably fond of his brother's children. The old man had lived his life for many years without having felt the sunshine of tenderness other than that of comradeship; now he seemed to be making up for it in the fond relations between him and the two young people who were tied to

him by the ties of blood as well as by those of gratitude.

I have, all the same, a suspicion that the old fox had an idea of what had passed between Sigrid and me; and at the same time, I also think that I had been fortunate enough to win his respect, so that if he were to lose his niece, he would rather have given her to me than to any one else.

* * * * *

It was the tenth of May, and a beautiful day; the spring had come unusually early that year, and the trees were already covered with leaves.

My work was finished. It had been a long and troublesome day, and I was just standing in my room, wondering if, as a reward, I should give myself an evening off and spend it at Villa Ballarat. I had not had time to visit Sigrid for several days.

Just then I heard the telephone bell.

"Hello! is that you, Monk?"

It was old Frick's voice; I knew it well; it was the same voice that, eight months ago, had asked me for the first time to come to Villa Ballarat.

"Yes, it is I."

"Can you come out here at once? Something has happened!"

"I shall be with you in ten minutes."

At St. Olaf's Place I took a carriage; I didn't want to lose a minute.

An uncomfortable feeling possessed me that some misfortune was pending, or had already occurred. I do not know if one can really have a presentiment without some material cause; in this case the feeling had sufficient ground by old Frick's abrupt message.

At the outer gate stood Frick himself, holding it open for me. He locked the gate carefully after us, stuck the key in his pocket, and then said, as he stopped in front of me, with his hands in his pockets:—

"The black tortoise is gone again!"

"Gone?"

"Yes, gone! Stolen, I say," and he raised his voice.

I asked him not to speak so loudly and to explain the matter. It was a relief for me to hear that it was nothing worse. Little did I suspect that anything worse could have happened.

"There is no one about who can hear us," said Frick. "It is as I say; the black tortoise has been stolen again, and within the last few hours. Since five o'clock."

I looked at my watch; it was exactly twenty-five minutes to eight.

"How can you be sure it happened after five o'clock? Didn't the black tortoise lie in the case with the iron shutters, in the museum?"

"Yes, of course; but now you shall hear. Old Jurgens, the lawyer, you know him, of course? He who has that collection of curios, the old idiot! Well, he dined with us, and afterward we drank our coffee out in the museum, as we often do. At five o'clock Jurgens left, and we all went over to the house. For some reason, as I shall presently explain, I forgot to lock the door of the museum and cupboard. In about half an hour's time I suddenly remembered this. I then had a look into the cupboards before I locked them, and so discovered that the tortoise was gone."

"Are you sure it was there at five o'clock?"

"Yes; we had been looking at it just before we all left the museum; I was the last who went out, and I had put it in its place before I left."

"Have you told any one that the tortoise is gone?"

"No; the first thing I did when I was sure of what had happened was to telephone to you; since then I have watched and seen that no one has gone in or out of the gate."

A long life rich in changes and events had taught this old man expediency and presence of mind.

He had done just the right thing, and his information and answers were clearer than nine-tenths of those which detectives are accustomed to get under similar conditions.

"Is Miss Sigrid, or your nephew, at home?"

"No, Einar went to Hamburg on business for me the day before yesterday; he will be there about a week, and Sigrid went for a walk about half an hour ago. It was while accompanying her to the gate that I came to remember the door of the museum wasn't locked."

"Haven't you missed anything else in the museum but the tortoise?"

"Not so far as I can see; in any case, there are still a number of small and costly articles which would be much easier to turn into ready money than the tortoise. It could not have been any ordinary thief, or if so, it must have been an unusually stupid one!"

"Has the black tortoise any special value to you or to any one else apart from the worth of the gold and the stone?"

"No, that I can gladly swear! You mean, I suppose, is there anything about this diamond, as one reads of in the English detective stories, where black and yellow people sneak about with daggers in their belts and vengeance in their eyes! No! there is nothing of that kind in this case. We found it in the cavern, as I told you, together with all the other diamonds. Man had not set foot there for thousands of years; and the negroes who live thereabouts do not care a fig for diamonds. For that reason they let Davis keep the bag, which he took with him when he escaped in the night. It is only when negroes have learned to know the blessing of civilization that they get a taste for diamonds."

"One thing must be done," I said, "while it is yet light. Will you take care that no one passes in or out through the gate, while I meanwhile find out if any one has got into the garden over the railing?"

As already mentioned, the whole of Frick's property, which was about three or four acres and laid out in a garden, was closed in by a high iron railing.

The distance between the rails was so little that even a child could not squeeze himself through. It was not altogether improbable, though difficult enough, that a daring and agile man might have climbed over the railings, notwithstanding the spikes.

It was, however, easy to find out if any one had got over in that way. It had lately rained a good deal, and the ground on either side of the railing was soft. Any footstep would therefore leave a trace, especially on the outer side, where there was a newly ploughed field.

I went all round the garden; no one had come that way.

Old Frick was patrolling to and fro at the gate, when I returned.

"Nobody has got over the fence to-day," said I.

"No," he answered thoughtfully; "that has been my belief the whole time. I fear that we must have thieves in the house,—but here comes Sigrid!"

He was quite right, for there was the dear girl walking at a rapid pace toward the gate.

A warm blush overspread her face when she saw me, but it disappeared quickly, and I noticed she looked very pale and fatigued.

We opened the gate for her, and I gave a sign, to Frick that I wished first to speak with her.

I went up to her, took her hand, and whispered some words which had nothing to do with the theft. Then, as we came nearer her uncle, I remarked aloud and as carelessly as possible:—

"Your uncle cannot find the black tortoise; he thinks he must have mislaid it in some place or another."

I said this purposely to arouse her attention, in case the diamond really had been mislaid. I was afraid that if I mentioned at once that it might have been stolen, she would have become too excited to think quietly over the matter.

"But, dear me, isn't it in the cupboard? I myself saw you put it in its place before we followed Mr. Jurgens through the garden."

I could not help noticing that Sigrid spoke in a very absent-minded manner; she looked fagged out, like a person who had gone through some physical or mental exertion.

We told her not to mention anything for the present to the servants about the disappearance of the diamond, and then she left us and went into the house. It struck me as remarkable that the affair should interest her so little.

The next thing I did was to telephone to the police station, and order two of my men to come out immediately to Villa Ballarat. I then asked old Frick to take a walk with me in the garden until they arrived; in this way we could see that nobody went in or out of the house without our knowledge.

"Where is Mr. Howell?" I asked. I suddenly began to wonder why I had not seen or heard anything of this gentleman.

"Oh, he went by rail to Osterdalen this afternoon. He was invited by a man called Varingson, I think, who owns large forests up there. They are going to shoot capercailzie; it is only four days, I think he said, before close time begins."

"What time in the afternoon did he go?"

"He had sent his luggage down to the station before mid-day; but the train was not going before six or seven. We can hear from Iverson when he left. Besides, you know, everybody goes and comes as they like in this house."

Iverson was Frick's trusted man; he was formerly a sergeant in the army, an unusually trustworthy and clever fellow, whom Frick had taken into his service at my recommendation. He was generally known as the gardener, but he took his turn as gatekeeper, and with the coachman he kept the yard in order; was joiner, smith, and many other things, and received from old Frick a very liberal salary. Both he and the coachman were unmarried; they lived in quite a small lodge near the gate, but had their meals up at the house.

In the meantime my two men arrived at the gate, and I gave them my instructions. One of them was to keep watch outside the villa and arrange that he should be relieved, so that the house and garden should not be unwatched. If the diamond was still within the iron railings, the thief would at once try to get it out of the house.

The other constable got orders to instruct pawnbrokers and all others to whom the diamond might be offered that, should this occur, they must inform the police without loss of time, and that the person bringing it must be followed and watched.

At supper I received a long detailed account from old Frick and Sigrid of all that occurred in the house that day. Their statement as to time, etc., corroborated exactly. Sigrid had, however, a bad headache, and looked very poorly. Both Frick and I advised her to go to bed, which she did, soon after.

Then I had a conference with Iverson. The coachman was away for the day.

Lastly, I had a talk with the housemaid and cook. Sigrid's maid, Evelina, had been away that afternoon to visit her mother. She had, however, been at Villa Ballarat about six o'clock, but had gone out again immediately, and not yet returned.

What results or conjectures I arrived at after all these investigations, I shall

later on return to; for the present, I can only add they were not very satisfying; I began to be afraid that this affair would cause me more trouble and worry than any other business of the kind had hitherto done.

Before I parted from old Frick I got him to write an official notification of the robbery to the police; without this I could not take up the case in earnest.

CHAPTER V AT THE POLICE STATION

The next morning at eleven o'clock I stood in the police superintendent's office; he had told me to be there at that hour.

I had, for some weeks, figured as chief of the detective department, during my superior's holiday. The latter was applying for a position in another department, and I had had the chief superintendent's assurance that I would be appointed in his place. "I have already spoken to the Minister of the Interior about it, and you can consider the matter as good as settled," were the words with which my superior officer, some days before, had concluded a conversation which had given me great satisfaction. It was soon after I had been fortunate enough in clearing up the celebrated Bjornernd case, and in getting the murderer arrested.

My chief had always been very friendly to me, and treated me, especially of late, almost as a comrade; that is to say, as far as his old-fashioned dignified and solemn manners would allow of it.

He shook me by the hand as soon as I came in, and said:—

"Good morning, take a seat." He beckoned to a constable, standing stiffly in a corner, who then pushed a large armchair toward me. "You can go into the anteroom for the present, Strukstad; I have something to talk over with Mr. Monk.

"You are a lucky fellow, Monk, to have got another interesting affair in hand. I mean the diamond robbery at old Frick's, in Drammen Road. If I know you rightly, you have already made up your mind about the case. From what I have heard you are a friend of the family. Indeed, if I am not very much mistaken, it is not only the diamond which attracts you to the house."

I must confess I was much surprised that my chief should know a secret which I, like all other people in love, believed to be well guarded.

Naturally, I did not enter upon that part of the story, neither did my superior

seem to expect it; but I began, as shortly and briefly as possible, to explain to him a little about the state of affairs in the house, and among the occupants.

I afterward gave him an account of the previous day's events.

"As you may know, sir, there was a guest at the house yesterday to dinner. It was old Jurgens, the lawyer; you know him, his collection and his mania for collecting! I have heard that his relations are trying to prove that he is incapable of looking after his own affairs. He is getting imbecile from old age, and is squandering his large fortune by buying up all the world's curios.

"But he is still sharp enough not to let any one pawn off any trash upon him; but if there is an object of real value, one way or another, then he will pay the largest sums without blinking.

"He dined with old Frick. He came, of course, only to see his collection, and he nearly worried the life out of Frick with his importunate requests to be allowed to buy this and that.

"The party at dinner consisted of Jurgens, Frick, Miss Frick, and Mr. Howell. Young Frick had gone away two days before. There were in the house, besides, the cook, the housemaid, and the gardener. The coachman was on a visit to his family at Moss. I have already telephoned to the police there and ascertained that he reached there in the morning and left by the evening train at eight o'clock.

"Miss Frick's maid, Evelina, was also away during the afternoon; she had got permission to go home to her mother, who was ill.

"After dinner they all went into the museum, as the people of the house call the building which I told you about some time ago,—the one which Mr. Frick, upon my advice, had erected out in the garden between the main building and the Drammen Road.

"When they have guests at Villa Ballarat, it is often the custom to serve the coffee in the museum, especially when the guests wish to see the curiosities.

"Jurgens, the lawyer, had then for the twentieth time asked to see the black tortoise, and was persistently pressing Frick to sell it him.

"I will pay £500 cash for it!" shouted the old man.

"In the first place it is worth four times as much, my dear Jurgens," old Frick had replied, "and besides, I wouldn't sell it at any price."

"Jurgens then had to relinquish all hopes of obtaining the diamond; but he continued asking to be allowed to buy some of the other curiosities. He was especially struck with a little elephant carved in ivory with a clock in its forehead. The clock-works lie in the animal's body, and the trunk acts as the pendulum. The swinging backward and forward of the trunk has a most comical effect.

"He had no better success with the elephant than he had had with the tortoise; and it was rather a relief to the family when the tiresome old man was

taken away by his servant. You know he has some difficulty in walking, and has to be carried about in a wheeled chair, pushed by his servant.

"Frick said good-by to Mr. Jurgens, and was just going to lock the cases, after having put everything in its place, when a cry was heard outside.

"The clumsy servant, who had apparently been drinking, had nearly upset the old man on to one of the flower beds.

"All rushed out from the museum into the garden.

"After having got Mr. Jurgens righted again, and safely outside the gate, they all went into the house. Thus it came about that old Frick forgot to lock both the cupboard with the iron shutters and the door to the museum.

"It was then exactly five o'clock in the afternoon.

"Old Frick went up to his room and took his after-dinner nap. Miss Sigrid went out for a walk; she had been suffering from headache the whole day.

"At six o'clock they met again; she had been back a quarter of an hour, and awaited her uncle with afternoon tea in the sitting-room.

"The two sat together till seven o'clock, drank tea, and went through Sigrid's household accounts.

"At seven the young girl went again for a little walk, as her headache was no better.

"When Frick had seen her to the gate, he suddenly remembered that the door of the museum was not locked, and then he made the discovery that the diamond was gone.

"The gate-keeper Iverson had spent the time between five and half-past seven in the little lodge; he had been busy with some carpentering, and stood at the windows, which looked out on the gate and the road.

"I asked him if any one had passed in or out during that time. The key to the gate hung in the room where he was working, and he had himself let every one in and out.

"Yes, first there was Miss Sigrid, who went out at five and came home in about half an hour or three quarters.

"About six Evelina came home, but went out again at about half-past six.

"About seven o'clock Mr. Howell went out; he had a gun and game-bag, and took a four-wheeler which was passing at the time.

"Soon after, Miss Sigrid again went out, accompanied to the door by Mr. Frick.

"The cook and the housemaid had been in the kitchen or their bedroom the whole time."

"I must say yours is a model of a preliminary report, Mr. Monk; you seem to have got it all by heart, and not even to have made any notes."

"I believe I have a special talent in that respect, sir. I only get confused,

if I take down anything except what is absolutely necessary. I can see it much clearer when I've got it in my head."

"Yes, oh yes, each one has his own method! It is at any rate a very useful talent for a detective. But tell me one thing; how can you be so sure that the different times you mention are correct? It is not always that the people in a house are so exact in regard to time."

"As it happens, my statements have been confirmed on that point. Old Frick has a remarkably good pocket chronometer, and he takes a pride in always keeping it correct to the minute.

"Just before Jurgens left, a remark was made how correctly the little watch in the elephant's head kept time. It stands on a shelf just over the cupboard where the diamond had its place. Although it had not been regulated for a long while, it showed the right time to a minute; which was verified by comparing it with the chronometer.

"And thus we have a safe starting-point: the time was five minutes past five.

"Then Mr. Frick takes his afternoon tea precisely at six each day. The servants have got into the habit of being most exact in that respect, as the old man is very particular.

"Finally, Iverson looked at the clock when Mr. Howell left, to see if he would be in time for the train. Mr. Howell had made the remark as he was passing out that the time was ten minutes to seven, which agreed exactly with Iverson's watch.

"As you see, the different times which I have mentioned cannot be far wrong—not more than a minute or two."

"Yes, I see that. I suppose your inquiries at the pawnbrokers' and jewellers' have been so far without result?"

"Yes; up till now they have led to no result, and I think they never will."

The superintendent nodded. Neither of us said as much, but we were both agreed that the thief who could steal an article like the tortoise, which would be so difficult to dispose of, whilst he had plenty of other salable articles to select from, must have had his special reasons, and would not have rushed to his own destruction by trying to dispose of the stolen jewel to a pawnbroker.

"Of course I know," said the superintendent, cheerily, "that you haven't by a long way finished with your investigations. But it would really be interesting to make a few guesses as to who could have taken the diamond. Who can have taken it, do you think?"

I saw that my august superior wanted to discuss the case; and I could not refuse, although I had no mind for it at this stage of the inquiry.

"As far as I can see," I answered, "there are only five persons who could

have taken the diamond; the gardener Iverson, Mr. Howell, the maid Evelina, the cook, or the housemaid. All these people had the entry to the garden between five and half past-seven, and also into the museum."

"You forget two people, Mr. Monk."

I stared at him.

"You forget old Frick and Miss Frick."

The superintendent smiled, and I tried also, but it was a sorry attempt, and a most unpleasant feeling crept over me.

The superintendent evidently took notice of this.

"Yes, I speak, of course, from quite a theoretical standpoint. It is part of a policeman's ABC that he must suspect every one as long as the guilty party is not discovered."

"Not every one, sir!" I felt I spoke with an earnestness which was not in harmony with the situation, or with the genial tone of my superior; but I could not get rid of the unpleasant feeling which the mentioning of Sigrid's name had caused me.

"Perhaps you are right, Mr. Monk; in any case, this will not prove the opposite. But tell me, what is really your opinion of Mr. Howell?"

It was obvious that the superintendent wanted to get away as quickly as possible from the subject, which I had been foolish enough to discuss in rather a disagreeable manner, and I felt not a little ashamed of my want of tact.

"It is only right, sir, that you should direct my attention to him. From five o'clock till ten minutes to seven he had the opportunity of taking possession of the diamond and getting away with it from the house. There would be no risk for him to enter the museum; if any of the servants had seen him do it, it would have attracted no attention; he is just like a member of the Frick family.

"That is one side of the case; the other side is that Mr. Howell in every respect gives the impression of being a gentleman, that he is tied by the bond of friendship to the Frick family, and finally that pecuniarily he is so situated that he need not steal either diamonds or anything else."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Yes; I go by what he and old Frick have said; besides, at half-past nine this morning, I called on Wendel, the banker. I myself recommended this highly respected firm to Mr. Howell, and I asked the chief, quite confidentially, how Mr. Howell's account stood.

"He informed me that the latter at the present moment had from three to four hundred pounds standing to his account. It was the remainder of a sum of money he had brought with him in cash and deposited with the banker; besides which, instructions had been received from Messrs. Hambeo and Son, the London bankers, to open an account for Mr. Howell to the amount of two thousand

pounds.”

”Well, I should be glad if I had such an account at the bank! It does not seem probable that the Englishman should have taken the diamond. By the bye, Mr. Monk, I must not detain you any longer; go on with the matter as you yourself think best; you have, of course, not had much time for inquiries, and I ought, perhaps, not to have been so inquisitive at such an early stage of the investigations; but you must rather look upon our conversation as a kind of refreshment, which I take between the dustbins and the demonstration in the theatre. Well, good luck to you, and let me hear from you as soon as you have anything of interest to report.”

The superintendent shook me by the hand.

”Strukstad, let the manager of the theatre come in,” he said resignedly, as I went out at the back door.

Later in the day a letter was handed me from the superintendent, marked ”Private,” which read as follows:—

DEAR MR. MONK,—I have not been able to dismiss old Frick’s diamond from my mind. Couldn’t it have been lost in quite an ordinary way; fallen on the floor, put on a wrong shelf, or in some such way got astray?

One might also imagine that some one for fun has hidden it, to play old Frick a trick.

I confess it is not likely, but it is still more unlikely that any one should have stolen it—the most unsalable article of all the valuables which you say lay in that cupboard.

I ask you to take this into consideration, and apply the greatest caution in your investigations.

The disappearance of the diamond will soon be the general talk of the town.

It is of the greatest importance that the police should not make fools of themselves. That is to say, they must not let themselves be deceived by people’s extraordinary stupidity.

I know your good sense, and in all probability these lines are superfluous.

Yours, etc.

CHAPTER VI

A MORNING VISIT

I did not forget the superintendent's good advice. Immediately after the disappearance of the diamond I searched the whole of Villa Ballarat most carefully.

The servants behaved with exemplary resignation, and offered to open all their trunks. I even took the liberty of searching Mr. Howell's rooms. All his drawers and trunks were open, but contained nothing of interest. My investigations also made it clear that this gentleman had proceeded direct to the station on the day the diamond disappeared, and from there took the train to Elverum.

I don't know how it was, but I always had a misgiving that this young Englishman might have had something to do with the disappearance of the diamond. This, perhaps, was the reason that made me feel, more acutely than ever, that not one of us really knew the young man, in spite of his having been several months in Villa Ballarat. His manners were free and open; but—one did not learn to know him.

I soon placed Iverson, the gardener, the cook, and the housemaid *hors de concours*. Iverson had for many years shown himself to be a most respectable and reliable person. He was a bachelor, had a nice little sum in the bank, and it was easy to find out about his antecedents. He was the son of well-to-do peasants in Smaalenene, and when quite young had gone into the non-commissioned officers' school and followed a military career, until he entered Frick's service. He had always borne a most irreproachable character.

Last of all, we now come to the lady's-maid, Evelina; and should you have a suspicion that she is likely to play an important part in the lamentable events which now followed, one upon the other, you will not be far wrong.

From the first, or, more correctly, from the second day I entered old Frick's house, this young girl had struck me as being strange. There was something mysterious about her, perhaps on account of her reserved and even sulky manners.

Sigrid also considered her unusually silent, more so by nature than most young girls are. She thought that she was a girl of strong character, and liked her, in spite of her reticent ways.

During the latter days she had been still more reserved than before, and had not given one the impression of being in good health, although there was little change noticeable in her appearance on account of her naturally pale complexion.

The afternoon of the disappearance of the diamond, Evelina had spent in the following manner (her explanation tallied exactly with that of others): She had, soon after dinner, when the family had retired to the museum, served the coffee there. When that was finished, she had left Villa Ballarat to visit her sick mother, just before the time Jurgens had left the house. At six o'clock she had returned to the villa again to fetch something she had forgotten, and had, at the same time, put on another dress on account of a change in the weather; but she

had been scarcely half an hour in the house.

It struck me as strange that Evelina had suddenly become more lively than I had ever seen her, and Sigrid also thought that she looked better and more cheerful since the day when the diamond disappeared.

As regards Evelina's mother, Madame Reierson, I found out that she made her living by washing and ironing, and by letting a couple of her rooms; but it was said that she was fond of drink, and that her principal income evidently consisted in what her daughter allowed her. Miss Frick's generosity no doubt enabled Evelina to give her mother considerable help.

Madame Reierson's specialty lay in talking of times gone by, when Reierson was alive and was a well-to-do turner in Grönland; "she too had had her own house and a horse and trap."

As you see, I had not gained much by my investigations, but my opinion regarding the loss of the diamond had, however, begun to take shape, which made it desirable that I should make Madame Reierson's acquaintance.

* * * * *

At half-past nine the next morning, when the May sun was shining warmly, a gentleman entered the courtyard of 44 Russelök Street.

The gentleman was not very elegantly dressed; his coat was somewhat shabby, and his trouser-bottoms a little the worse for wear, but still he might pass as quite a respectable person; for instance, as a poor theological student of middle age.

I hoped, at least, that my appearance was something like this, for this was the rôle I intended to play.

In the courtyard a woman was standing rinsing clothes under a pump. I asked for Madame Reierson, and learned that she was living in the fourth story on the right-hand side of the staircase.

"I mean the woman who takes in washing."

"Well, I don't think there's much washing done, but there's only one Madame Reierson in this house, at any rate," was the surly answer.

"I think you're right about the washing. In any case, the clothes I last got home were only half washed," I remarked.

My depreciatory remark about her neighbour's work evidently appealed to the woman; she deigned to let go the wet clothes she had in her hand, and turned round to me.

"Ah, indeed! Really! So she has been washing for you, has she, and you don't like her washing? Well, you're not the first as says that. It's a shame that such a drunken wretch should take the bread out of other people's mouths, and

live in grand style, and enjoy herself.”

”Well, I, for my part, have been thinking of giving her up as my washer-woman.”

”Ha! ha! you give her up?” said the worthy woman, with a scornful laugh. ”A lot she’ll care about that! As long as she’s got that fine daughter of hers in service at old Frick’s, in the Drammen Road, she can live in grand style, and enjoy herself without washing a rag. But I should say it’ll all come to a terrible end some day; when people begin to run after them actors I wouldn’t give you a thank you for ’em!”

And with that our short but pleasant conversation ended.

I tried to find out a little more about the actor who had suddenly been introduced upon the scene, but I was sharply sent about my business by the woman, who ”did not go about telling tales, let alone to strangers.”

There was nothing more to be done, so I mounted up to the fourth story.

On a door with glass panes were fastened two visiting-cards. I read: Ludwig Frederiksen, actor; Tho. Herstad, medical student.

To the left I found an ordinary kitchen door. As I knocked at this a stout woman appeared. Madame Reierson was clad in what I would call a simple morning toilet. I can hardly describe the various articles of her dress; all of them, however, appeared to be too tight-fitting for her buxom figure, and to have seen better days.

I lifted my large, broad-brimmed, low-crowned, clerical hat to her, and then explained that the object of my visit was to ask madame to do some washing for me.

She seemed greatly surprised that any one, unsolicited, should intrust his clothes to her to wash, and asked rather suspiciously who had recommended her.

”Perhaps we might go inside,” said I. ”I would like to sit down a little. I’m not quite well, and the stairs trouble me.”

She mumbled something about ”*she* didn’t mind,” and showed me through the kitchen into a disorderly room, filled with foul air. This served as her parlour and her bedroom.

I sat down heavily and laid my hand on my heart.

She didn’t seem, however, to be troubled with any sympathetic feelings, for I heard her mumble something about, ”Why do folks climb stairs when they can’t manage ’em?”

”But who has shown you up to me, then,” she continued.

I could see it would be difficult for me, if not impossible, to get into conversation with this unpleasant woman, as she apparently had not yet had her ”morning drop,” and was therefore not amenable to any friendly approach.

I decided to come to the point at once.

"Miss Frick has recommended me to come to you, as I wanted a good washerwoman,—Miss Frick, who lives in Drammen Road."

The woman sat herself down in a chair right opposite me, and looked rather astonished.

"Do you go to the Fricks'?—You?" was the unflattering answer, as she critically surveyed me.

I regretted the plain attire, which I had thought would be suitable for my supposed errand; but there was no help for that now; I had to get along as best I could.

"I am studying for the church," I said with dignity, "and I am secretary to the women's mission, and we generally have the committee meetings at Miss Frick's."

"Oh, indeed! Really!" Suddenly there was a gleam in the woman's eyes. She had evidently got an idea into her head, because from that moment her manner was affable and insinuating.

"Oh, indeed! Now really! So you are going to be a parson? That was what our eldest son was also to be. Reiersen wanted him to become a doctor, but I swore that he should become a parson. Well, I expect you meet a lot of grand ladies there, then! Have you seen my daughter at Miss Frick's?"

"What, your daughter?"

"Oh, well; that's no matter;" she evidently did not find it very opportune to say anything about her daughter, since I myself didn't appear to know her position in Frick's house. "But as you go to old Frick's, you have, of course, heard summat of his big diamond which he has lost."

I knew, of course, that the town had already begun to talk of the diamond affair, but it came quite unexpectedly upon me to hear this woman talking of it. Did she want to know what suspicions they had at Frick's house? Did she know anything about it? Had she her own suspicions, or was it only curiosity?

"Yes, fortunately, they have got hold of the thief."

"No! now you don't say so!"

Just at this interesting point of the conversation we heard the kitchen door open.

Madame Reiersen left me, and quickly disappeared.

Then began a lively conversation in almost a whisper, but the door was rickety and my hearing sharp; it was Madame Reiersen's voice and another woman's voice. I recognized it; it was her daughter's.

"—Not home?—not come home yet, do you say?—been out the whole night—"

I heard the mother mumble something, that "he" must soon come home.

"And he has not even left any message? He promised that I should meet

him at ten o'clock to-day.—A strange gentleman, do you say, whom Miss Frick has recommended to come to you—?”

The mother must have spoken of my presence, but the daughter seemed to have a legitimate suspicion about the recommendation from Miss Frick. Perhaps she was inquisitive, and wanted to see the phenomenon who came to Madame Reiersen with his washing; for the door immediately opened, and I stood face to face with Evelina, the lady's-maid.

She stood there, tall and erect, pretty and tastefully dressed as usual. When she recognized me, her pale face became still paler, and it seemed to me she tottered a little. She only pressed her thin lips together and looked calmly at me.

“Are you here? I did not know the police were here.” She looked at my garb and smiled a little scornfully.

At these words, Madame Reiersen forced herself past her daughter and surveyed me angrily.

“Police, do you say? Does he belong to the police? Well, I might have guessed it, since he sneaked in here and began to talk of the stolen diamond and suchlike.”

I looked at the daughter, but her features were immovable. Either she had nothing to do with the diamond robbery, or she had a stronger will power than most people.

“You forget, Madame Reiersen,” said I, “that it was you who began to talk to me of the robbery at Mr. Frick's.”

Was I mistaken, or was it really so? It seemed to me that the young girl's look was directed for a second or two at her mother with great displeasure.

“Well, if it was I who began the talk, it must have been because you fooled me on to do it,” said Madame Reiersen, jumping up from her chair; “else why did you come here? Perhaps you fancy we have stolen Frick's diamond! Be so kind as to look for yourself, and see if it is to be found in my house.”

The worthy dame began to pull out her chest of drawers, and to open her cupboards, while her tongue went on with startling rapidity.

“I hadn't thought of making any investigations in your house, my dear madame,” said I, trying to pacify her; “I came really to find out a little about your lodger, the actor, Frederiksen.”

This time the daughter's self-control did not serve her; for some seconds her face was overspread with a deep flush, and she went away and looked out of the window.

“Frederiksen is old enough to answer for himself,” said Mrs. Reiersen, curtly. “He is not at home now, and I don't know when he is likely to be.”

As I had nothing further to do there, I took my hat, nodded to the woman, and left without ceremony. The young girl still stood at the window, and did not

turn round when I went out. Either she did not notice it, or she did not wish to show her face.

When I had descended to the next floor, I heard the sound of heavy steps coming up. First of all a ruffled silk hat appeared on the stairs, afterward a pale, dissipated-looking face, with clean-shaven cheeks, luxuriant curly hair under the brim of the hat, a black frock coat of faultless cut but with spotted silk revers, light trousers somewhat frayed at the bottoms, and cracked patent-leather shoes with large bows. The apparition stared at me stupidly and disappeared through the door leading to his apartments. It was Ludwig Frederiksen, who had little or no reputation as an actor, but was well known as a Don Juan, now somewhat on the decline, but worshipped, nevertheless, by the fair sex, not only of the better classes, but also of the demi-monde.

He possessed the happy gift of being able to easily forget unpleasantness, for at this moment he evidently did not recognize me, while less than a month before we had had a not very pleasant conversation at my office.

The cause of this conversation was a respectful application from the artist for a loan of some thousand of kroners, directed to one of the merchants of the town. This document the merchant in question found best to deliver into the hands of the police, although the bewitching artist had offered to deposit, as security, several pink and perfumed notes, billets-doux, from the merchant's own daughter to the owner of the curly locks.

"We shall probably have another interesting conversation," I thought, as my eyes followed the form of the artist as he mounted upward and disappeared; "but not now."

The fact was that in the course of the last half hour, certain ideas, which earlier had begun to dawn in my mind, now assumed a more solid form, and fitted together, so that they formed a chain.

I thought I had hold of one end of the chain, and I was determined to fumble my way to the other end; or perhaps it would be better with a resolute pull to try and grasp it without fumbling at all.

The chain had, however, begun to link itself in this way, and when I left Mrs. Reier's parlour, I felt convinced that Evelina knew something about the diamond, and very likely her mother also.

As I had passed through the little kitchen my elbow knocked against a dirty coffee-service which stood there,—a pot and two cups with dried-up grounds at the bottom. This accident was sufficient to set going a train of thoughts which, no doubt, had already been unconsciously developing in my mind; but which would never have been started into active life if Mrs. Reier's objectionable coffee-cups had not been standing there.

They brought to my mind an expression in Evelina's explanation the other

day:—

”I went home to my mother as soon as I had served the coffee in the museum.”

She had served the coffee in the museum; she had seen that the diamond had been shown about; had seen Jurgens’s imbecile greediness to become possessed of it; she had heard him bid ten thousand kroners for it! Later on she had passed the museum, when all were gone, and seeing the door standing open, knew she had only to stretch out her hand to become possessed of a large sum of money.

Perhaps she had some use or another for the latter, of which I, as yet, had no certain knowledge,—but of which I had a suspicion.

If this train of thought was correct, then Mr. Jurgens had now the diamond in his possession.

The improbability that this worthy old man should have become the receiver of stolen goods did not concern me. I knew that the mania for collecting sweeps away all moral considerations like chaff before the wind, especially when second childhood has already begun to obscure the mind.

CHAPTER VII

LAWYER JURGENS

My decision was taken. I would pay a visit to the lawyer without loss of time. The difficulty lay in getting the old man to speak out the truth, if he really was in possession of the black tortoise.

I dared not use strong means; it was a weakly old man I had to do with, but to get the better of him was not so easy. He was possessed of not a little cunning, and his firmness, when it was a question of preserving any of his treasures, was quite incredible; of this I was already aware.

Mr. Jurgens knew me well. I had had to do with him twice before on official business, when some one had tried to rob him. Besides, we had met each other several times at Frick’s, and finally, I had now and then gone, like so many other interested people in the town, to see if he had any remarkable increase in his line collection.

Of course you know the Jurgens collection in the national museum? It has a whole department to itself. Some time before his death he presented all of it to

the public.

While I called at my lodgings to change clothes I laid my plan of campaign.

It was neither particularly subtle nor cunningly conceived—only a common trick, as you will see; but, as you will also see, it was good enough for the occasion.

I rang at Mr. Jurgens's house in Munkedam Road. He lived on the first floor.

At the back lay a kitchen and servants' room, where his cook and house-keeper lived; on the other side of the hall was a room which belonged to the servant-man. Jurgens himself lived in a room looking out on the street, and the remaining three rooms, which likewise looked to the street, gave him ample space for his collection of antiquities and other curiosities.

By my advice, he had taken a lot of precautions to protect himself against thieves. There were strong doors provided with patent locks, iron bars before the windows, and some fire-proof iron safes as a place of deposit for the most costly articles.

The man-servant opened the door to me. The reason why the lawyer had a man-servant was, as I have already mentioned, because his feet were almost lame. He could just manage to get along from one room to another, with much difficulty; but in the street he was obliged to be wheeled in a chair. Otherwise the lawyer was a man of small pretensions, and notwithstanding his large fortune, was very economical. That is to say, in everything possible, except what concerned his collection. In this respect he was, as already mentioned, irresponsibly extravagant.

The old lawyer got up with difficulty from his armchair and tottered toward me.

He shook me by the hand, fumbling a long gold chain, which he wore round his neck, with the other hand, and himself began the conversation.

His voice was a little shaky, and he seemed to be uneasy when he saw me; but it was difficult to say if these symptoms were a natural consequence of the man's age, or if he really had something to hide, and felt uneasy at my appearance.

"Well, really, Mr. Monk," he said, "it is a long time since I had the honour of seeing you at my house. May I perhaps have the pleasure of showing you some rare curiosities which I have lately acquired? You have generally so little time that I believe you have really never seen my collection properly."

These words proved to me that if the old man had the diamond in his possession, he had it in a safe hiding place, and of these there were plenty. The old furniture was full of the most extraordinary corners, secret places, drawers, and such-like.

"Many thanks, Mr. Jurgens," I answered promptly, "but this time I am here on official business, and have still less time than usual."

"What a pity," grumbled the old fellow, letting himself fall back into his chair, and taking a pinch of snuff with his shaky hands. "Any snuff? No, young fellows nowadays don't take snuff; but take a seat, Mr. Monk, take a seat!"

"Thanks!" I brought a chair forward in front of the old man and leaned toward him. "The fact is, that an audacious robbery has been committed; an unusually costly article has been stolen, and the superintendent has sent me to inquire about it."

"You don't suppose I buy stolen goods, sir?"

The lawyer's eyes blinked, and his hands and shrivelled fingers moved up and down the watch chain.

"No, of course not; but you know that it has happened once or twice before, that stolen goods have been offered to you for sale, and that you have been of inestimable value to us in giving the thief's description; therefore—"

"No, this time I cannot help you; no, not at all!"

"But you haven't yet heard what it is."

"No—but—but—I have not bought anything for a long time; nothing of consequence, or anything that could be of interest to you."

"That is tiresome—most tiresome! Our last hope is gone; if only the bracelet is not sent abroad! It would then be very difficult to get."

"Bracelet, you say; was it a bracelet, you said?"

"Yes, it was a bracelet, an uncommonly costly bracelet, set with precious stones, which disappeared from Adelina Patti's dressing-room in the theatre yesterday. You know she is appearing here for a few days. She had had it given her by the Emperor of Brazil."

"Indeed! What a pity! But as I said, no one has tried to sell anything of the kind to me lately."

There was no doubt that the old fellow felt very much relieved. He took hold of the bell rope and ordered his man-servant to bring in wine and cigars.

"Take a glass of wine with me, sir; both old and young need a good glass of wine, and you'll not get better than this: I brought it myself from Oporto in '47."

We each drank a glass, and I must admit that the wine was good.

The lawyer had hastily left the subject of the stolen gem, and had begun upon several interesting reminiscences from the year 1820 or so.

But it was not my plan to let him have his own way; I had opened my trenches, and I wished to advance to the attack.

"It is a nuisance," said I, "all these robberies of curiosities and costly jewels, which have taken place in the town of late. No one knows what bother they cause the police."

"I can understand," said the lawyer, unwilling again to approach the same theme; and he filled the glasses again with a shaking hand.

"Yes," I continued, "every one who possesses such things should be just as careful as old Frick of Drammen Road."

On hearing old Frick's name, the old fellow almost jumped out of his chair, but I continued mercilessly.

"This last robbery at old Frick's is a laughable affair." I then burst into long and hearty laughter, which evidently affected Jurgens's nerves in the most unpleasant manner.

"Haven't you heard about it? Well, as you know, old Frick possesses a whole lot of curiosities, and many of them are of gold, silver, and precious stones, and all are very valuable. People are always coming there, some as guests of the house, and some to visit his collection. Old Frick got tired of always having to watch them so carefully, and so he had imitations made of all his most valuable objects,—gilt-brass mounts instead of gold, and glass instead of precious stones. This is, however, a great secret, so much so, that even his best friends think they are the real things they see, while these are lying securely in the cellar of the bank."

"Eh, what do you say?" The old fellow stretched out his neck like a vulture.

"Yes, indeed—but listen: a few days ago the most costly of all his curiosities disappeared; I fancy it was a black diamond in gold setting. It was called the 'black tortoise.' We expect the thief has gone abroad with his treasure. Ha! ha! just sixpenny worth of brass, and half a crown's worth of cut glass!"

I again burst into a peal of hearty laughter. The old man sank back, but tried to raise himself, gasping for breath. I thought he was going to have a fit, and in a minute I got his necktie undone, and rang for the servant.

We soon brought him round again; he was a tough old bit of humanity, that I must admit.

I knew now what I wanted to know; the lawyer had the diamond in one of his hiding places. The difficulty was to get him to give it up without being obliged to resort to unpleasant means.

For this reason I took leave, as soon as I saw he had got over his little attack, and without suggesting anything as to what the cause might be.

The servant followed me into the hall to open the door for me.

Having reached the hall, I asked hastily, "Do you know who I am?"

"Yes, sir, you are Inspector Monk," answered the man in surprise, and somewhat tardily.

"All right, let me then remain here in the hall, but open the door and then shut it, so that your master can hear it and think I am gone."

The man hesitated a little and looked doubtfully at me.

"Quick! What I do, I do in the name of the law, but I have no time for further explanations. Now then!"

He did as I told him and went in again to his master.

Everything happened as I had foreseen. The servant came out soon afterward, sent away by his master, and disappeared at a sign from me into his own room.

I took off my shoes and opened the door stealthily to the lawyer's room. As I had expected, he had gone into one of the other rooms, where he kept his collection.

Without making any noise I followed him.

In the innermost room the old man stood before the open door of one of his iron safes. His shaky hands were busy trying to adjust a pair of spectacles with round glasses to his nose.

I took my time, until he had taken out from a secret drawer an object which he held close up to his eyes. The next minute my hand lay on his shoulder, and immediately after the black tortoise was safe in my pocket!

I led the old fellow carefully across the room to a chair. He had never uttered a word.

He remained seated, gasping for breath with half-shut eyes, and his withered hands dancing up and down in his lap.

I made him drink a glass of wine, and after a little while he found his speech again.

"What right have you to sneak in upon me and take my property? The diamond is mine—I have honestly bought it—" and he stretched out his hands, as if to get it back.

"The diamond is stolen property," I said, "and will be delivered by me into the hands of the authorities. I am sorry I have been obliged to play a trick upon you to get it from you; but I understood at once that you wouldn't give it up of your own free will."

"I have bought it and paid for it, and it is not stolen property; your conduct will cost you dear, Mr. Monk."

"No more talk about that, if you please, Mr. Jurgens," I said firmly. "From whom did you buy the diamond?"

"I bought the diamond from Miss Frick, and she got it from her uncle."

The old man could not say another word, for my hands were round his throat. Only for a moment, however. I remembered myself, and let go my hold, but remained standing in front of him quivering with rage.

"What is it you dare say about the young lady, about Sigrid, about my—I mean about Mr. Frick's niece? Mr. Frick himself has given information of the robbery, and now you say that Miss Frick has sold the diamond to you; that is

the same as saying that she has stolen it. You can thank your stars that you are an old man, otherwise—”

The old man stretched out his hand, as if to ring; but no bell was near. His eyes wandered wildly.

Then it stood clearly before me that I had nearly frightened the life out of him, and I at once became calmer.

”Be sensible, sir, and take the matter quietly. It was imprudent of you to buy the diamond, but we all know, of course, that you did it in good faith. But it will be necessary that you give a truthful account of how you got it, and from whom. If not, it may become a disagreeable business for you. That you can well understand.”

”I only understand that I have bought the diamond from a young lady and given five thousand kroners for it. She did not ask for more,” said the old man, trembling, while his eyes began to look brighter. ”When you say it was not Miss Frick, perhaps, after all, it was not she; but then it must have been the other young girl in the house. I believe they call her Evelina. Yes, it was she, if you absolutely must know it.”

”Well, that is far more probable, sir,” I said encouragingly, for I felt a little ashamed of my violent conduct to the old man, ”and you must excuse me if I was a little rough with you.”

I rang myself for the servant, and with him as a witness, I gave the lawyer a receipt for the tortoise, which I took with me, and left.

* * * * *

The superintendent was not a little surprised when I put the diamond before him on the table; and when I had given my report, he congratulated me at the result, and complimented me on the manner in which I had conducted the affair.

I found it unnecessary to mention Jurgens’s wretched attempt to prove that it was Miss Frick who had sold him the diamond.

The superintendent did not lay much stress on the part Jurgens had played in the matter.

”The man must soon be pronounced incapable of managing his own affairs, and be placed under proper control. He will, of course, be declared irresponsible by the court, if the public prosecutor should proceed against him.”

In this I fully concurred. Then I gave the superintendent a detailed account of my visit to Mrs. Reiersen, and of how the actor’s name was mentioned, and of my hurried meeting with the latter.

”Do I understand you aright,” said the superintendent, ”that you have a suspicion that the pretty maid and the fascinating actor are intimate?”

"Yes, I have."

"And you go still farther; in this, you seek the reason why the unhappy girl has committed the robbery, isn't that so?"

"Yes, indeed, I cannot deny that something of the sort was in my mind; only it seemed strange to me that a girl like Evelina, who not only has the best of characters from Miss Frick, as a good and honest girl, but who, after all I have been able to ascertain, also possesses a certain amount of character and love of truth, can have fallen in love with such a man, or given herself into his power!"

"Why, my dear Monk!" broke in the superintendent, with a smile, which could have made those who did not know him take him for a heartless cynic, "do you, after so many years in the police service, still nourish illusions with regard to the fair sex?"

"I have, of course, in my day seen a good deal of—"

"Yes, you have seen a good deal; which shows you that the greatest Don Juan is also the greatest liar, and that a man with a smooth face, who can flatter and deceive, has greater power over the fair sex than any honest man whatsoever. Isn't that so?"

I was accustomed to my superior's humorous exaggerations, and could not deny that my experiences as a detective in the police force to a considerable degree went in the same direction.

"Well," continued the superintendent, "when you have been in the police force for a generation, you will certainly not have much respect for women's ideals. But let us return to this affair about the diamond. You shall at once have a warrant, and then you had better arrest the young girl as soon as possible. The sooner it's done the greater the prospect of getting back the money which she got from the lawyer."

"Pardon me, sir," I answered, "Evelina is most probably at this moment at Mr. Frick's house, and will remain there over night. It would be very unpleasant for the Fricks if the arrest took place in the house. Have you any objection to my waiting until to-morrow? Then she will probably visit her mother, and we can avail ourselves of the opportunity and make a domiciliary visit at the same time. If Mrs. Reiersen is an accomplice, we might succeed in taking her by surprise, and in getting her to give up the money. I have an idea that it will be easier to take her than the daughter by surprise."

"But are you not afraid that one of them can make use of the time to get the money out of the way, if it has not already been taken to some place or other?"

"On the contrary, I believe it will be of advantage to leave them in peace to-night. I shall have them watched by some of my best men meanwhile."

"And the actor?"

"He is already in good hands. Detective Kolstad has orders to follow him

like a shadow, and arrest him if he should attempt to leave the town.”

”Well, that will do! Do as you think right, Monk. I begin to think you are the better detective of us two. If you should meet old Frick to-night, give him my compliments, and tell him I shall keep his diamond until the case has been settled in court; but in the meantime it will be in good hands.”

It was not with a light heart, however, that I walked along the Drammen Road, after having given the constable the necessary orders. I knew that the news I had to bring would greatly distress both old Frick and Sigrid.

After having proceeded some distance, it struck me that after all I had nothing to do at Villa Ballarat that night. It ought not to be known in the house that the diamond had been found—not so long as Evelina was there. Old Frick and Sigrid would naturally ask me if I had any news, and I should be obliged to tell a lie and keep back from them what had happened.

Although I was very anxious to see Sigrid, yet I was sensible enough to turn back, and, after having had some supper at a café, I went home to my lodgings.

I telephoned to the police office, and asked if there was any news from the constables who had to watch the three persons before mentioned.

No, there was no news. Evelina was quite safe inside Villa Ballarat, and the house was being watched.

I lighted a cigar, and gave myself up to thinking over the day’s events. I had been successful in everything, and yet I felt far from satisfied; it must have been due to a certain feeling of pity for poor Evelina, and the concern it would occasion her master and mistress. Or—?

If you believe in presentiment, or that great misfortunes—without our being able to divine the cause—throw their shadows before, you will have to attribute it to such a cause. But enough,—I felt unwell and depressed, and when I had lain down it was a long time before I went to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ARREST

”The actor has vanished, sir!”

These were the words with which I was awakened at seven o’clock next morning.

Before the bed stood my trusty constable, Kolstad, with a face considerably

longer than usual.

"What do you say? Have you let him slip through your fingers? That was a—"

"Yes; but who could possibly imagine that—"

"All right, go into the next room a bit and get yourself a cup of coffee; I shall make haste and get dressed, and then we can talk it over."

It was not long before I had finished dressing and was ready to continue the discussion.

My landlady had in the meanwhile tried to serve the worthy officer with a good breakfast, but disappointment had evidently taken away his appetite; it was impossible to get him to continue his meal after my appearance.

"It is just as well that I give my report at once, sir, and tell you how shamefully I have been made a fool of. Yes; that such a pomatummed lady-killer should befool me—I who have been in the service of the police these twenty-seven years!"

"Don't trouble yourself about that, Kolstad," I said reassuringly, for the man was so excited that he apparently had some difficulty in explaining himself; "we shall soon get hold of him, if we want him. I am sure it is not your fault that he has disappeared temporarily: have another cup of coffee, and let us hear about it."

"No, thanks, no more coffee; but here is the report, sir. You remember that it was yesterday, at dinner time, that I got orders to watch the actor and arrest him if he should try and leave the town? Well, it was not difficult to keep my eye on him for the first few hours, for he was sitting in a room on the first floor of the Tivoli Restaurant, together with eight or ten other actors and actresses. They had the best dinner one could get and drank so much champagne that it was simply disgusting to see all the empty bottles being taken out—I know the head waiter there, you see, and went and spoke to him while the carousing was going on. Frederiksen paid for it all."

"You are sure it was he who paid?"

"Yes, that I am; the head waiter showed me the bill: it was 142 kroners. By that I knew, sir, that you, as usual, were on the right track. If only I had not been so stupid, well—you must excuse me, sir, if I am a little excited—it is the first time it has ever happened to me that—but—"

"Now, now, let us come to the point, my good Kolstad," I answered, with assumed severity, as the best means of "bringing him to."

It helped, for he pulled himself together, and from then on he did not attempt to diverge from the dry style of an ordinary report.

"Well, sir, I telephoned to the station for assistance, and got one of our new men. We took it in turn to keep watch while the actors were eating and drinking.

After dinner they had coffee and all kinds of liquors, and went on like that until six o'clock in the evening. Then Frederiksen went home to No. 44 Russeløk Street, and there he remained till nine o'clock. He must have slept during that time, for he looked quite sober when he came out again, and he had been not a little muddled when he got home after the carousal at the Tivoli. He had a large hand-bag in his hand, but no other luggage. He wore the same clothes he had had on in the afternoon."

"Was the hand-bag new?"

"Yes, it was brand new; and now you shall hear how sly the fellow was.

"He went up to the cab-stand at the corner of Drammen Road, and there he took a carriage. I and the young officer took another carriage and drove after him. Whether he knew that any one was following him or not, I can't say. We were obliged to keep a little behind, so that he should not be suspicious.

"He drove to the Victoria Hotel, and there we saw him go in at the door, and the carriage drive away empty. Soon after I went in and asked the porter what was the name of the gentleman who had just entered the hotel, and what room he had obtained. The porter, who was a new man and not one of my acquaintances, answered that the servant was just then upstairs with the visitor's book, but that the new arrival had taken room No. 47. He had not said anything about how long he intended to remain, or anything of significance.

"Now, for the time being, I felt entirely sure of my bird. After telling him who I was, I got the porter to promise to telephone to me if the stranger should be getting ready to leave; then I set my young officer to watch outside, and went home to take a nap.

"It was just about half-past ten when the porter rang up and said that the gentleman in No. 47 had just ordered a carriage, as he was going by the midnight train to Sweden. As you know, sir, the train goes eleven five, so I had only just time to dress and go to the station; but I was, of course, sure that the young officer would follow the actor so that we could arrest him together. I got to the station seven minutes before eleven; but there was no sign of the actor or the officer.

"A minute before the train started, I went for the last time through all the carriages and had a railway official with me. There was not a sign of the actor! In the first class there sat only one personage. It was Mr. D—, the ambassador from Paris, said the official. I went in and looked at him—yes, quite right, it was he."

"Do you know the ambassador, then?"

"Yes, of course, I know him by sight; it is he who is so like Peer Gynt on the stage,—not, perhaps, in the beginning of the piece, but in the third and fourth acts."

I couldn't help laughing. "There, you see, Kolstad! it's not an easy thing to

have to do with an actor. It was just by playing his old rôle of Peer Gynt in the fourth act that the actor made a fool of you!”

”Yes, of course it was; but who the devil could imagine—”

”No, you are right there; but how was it that your assistant didn’t follow him from the hotel?”

”Well, it happened like this. The constable saw a servant beckoning for a carriage from the stand. He went up to the servant and asked who was going away. It was Mr. D—, the ambassador, he answered, and when the constable saw a fine old gentleman with grey whiskers step into the carriage he suspected nothing, but continued to keep his watch outside, as before.”

”That is all right, so far; but I can’t understand that the man’s hand-bag did not betray him. Both you and your assistant knew it well. Besides, it seems to me that the porter must have been astonished to see a young, smooth-shaven man come into the hotel, and then leave it as a ‘fine old gentleman,’ as you say, ‘with grey whiskers.’”

”Yes; but I have not yet told you all, sir. You shall hear how clever the rascal was. Inside the large hand-bag which he carried, he had another suit, a false beard, and all his apparatus, besides a smaller travelling bag to carry in the hand. It was in the carriage that he transformed himself into an ambassador; the hood was well pulled down, as it rained a little. The hotel porter had, therefore, only seen him as the elderly gentleman the whole time; and we, who only saw him step out of the carriage with his back toward us, several hundreds of yards off, could have no idea that he had thus changed his appearance. It did not enter into our minds to ask the porter about the appearance of the man whom we had followed the whole time.”

”But the large hand-bag?”

”Well, he let that remain in the carriage, and gave the coachman orders to take it back to his lodgings early to-day. I got hold of the driver at last, and heard how all had happened. He himself thought it was a little strange that the man should disguise himself during the drive; but as far as I could understand, he was a little tipsy on this occasion, and as he got two kroners as a tip he presumed it was no business of his. Now you know all, sir, and can see how cleverly I was taken in by that vagabond of an actor; only—”

I did not let him dilate further upon this subject, but sent him away. I had heard enough.

It will also be sufficient for this narrative, if I explain that the actor, on the same day, after telegraphic instructions from us, was arrested at Gothenburg, where he arrived next morning, and that he, when arrested, was only in possession of a very small sum of money. He was taken back to Christiania, and it was soon ascertained that he had been or was engaged to Evelina. Also, that the day

before his journey he had been very flush with his money; but it was impossible to prove any complicity in the theft, and he was set free in a few days, with the warning not to leave town, as he would have to appear as witness at the trial of Evelina Reierson.

* * * * *

In the meantime I must return to my account of what happened later on that day, which began with the melancholy apparition of the disappointed constable beside my bed.

As I have already stated, it was my intention to have Evelina arrested that day. There was no longer anything to wait for after the actor had disappeared; and when I, in addition, received information from one of my men that she had left Villa Ballarat to visit her mother, I decided to avail myself of the opportunity. As before mentioned, I wished to prevent the arrest taking place at old Frick's.

I have no liking for this sort of work, but this time I decided to take it in hand myself, for several reasons.

It appeared to me, beyond all doubt, that Evelina's motive for the robbery must be sought for in her relations to the actor. In any case, I felt she deserved some pity, and I wished therefore to make the arrest myself in order that it might be effected as gently and considerately as possible.

It occurred to me to be quite likely that the mother might be an accomplice, or in any case be cognizant of the crime and the place where Jurgens's money was to be found. To get hold of this was now my chief aim, and I hoped to take the woman by surprise and get her to reveal it.

It was not later than nine o'clock in the morning when I drove to Russelök Street with a policeman in plain clothes.

We told the driver to wait outside the gate; the constable remained behind in the yard, and I went up alone.

I stopped outside Mrs. Reierson's door and listened. I heard voices within, but very indistinctly. As I opened the door, I saw the first room was empty; then I heard the voices still more plainly in the inner room, although the door was shut.

"You should have done as your mother told you, you unlucky child; then we should have been able to take things as easy as any one—but—"

It was Mrs. Reierson's shrill angry voice. It was interrupted by a sound of suppressed sobbing, and then by a youthful voice rendered hoarse by passion and sorrow. I stepped nearer to the door and listened, although the task before me was most repulsive to my feelings.

"Don't talk to me any more, mother! you know that what you wanted me

to do I could never have done, never in this world! and what I already have done cannot now be undone—I have nothing more to do now but to put an end to myself—if only I had the strength to—”

Here the unhappy girl’s words were interrupted by loud sobbing, and some angry exclamations from her mother.

Soon after the door was opened, and the ugly old woman appeared in the doorway, while her daughter could be seen lying across the bed with her head buried in the pillows.

I have seldom felt so uncomfortable.

The mother’s shrill imprecations against the police in general, and me in particular, passed me by unheeded. I only saw the young girl’s deadly pale face, as she lifted it to me, and the hopeless expression of her eyes.

She was gifted, however, with a strength of mind which few persons possess. She got up hurriedly, stroked back her hair from her face, and was the first to speak.

Her voice was low, but wonderfully calm; every drop of blood seemed to have fled from her lips.

”You have come to arrest me, Mr. Monk, because I have stolen Mr. Frick’s diamond. Well, I have been expecting it both yesterday and to-day. Yesterday I should probably have denied it, but to-day I don’t! I have stolen the diamond—let me be taken to prison and be sentenced as soon as possible, only let it be done quickly.”

Her mother had become purple in the face on hearing what her daughter said, and tried several times to interrupt her; but there was a dignity in her daughter’s words and bearing which stayed her.

”Don’t lose courage, Evelina,” I said, and I hope my voice was sympathetic. ”There are probably extenuating circumstances which may make your guilt less than it seems. If you are only frank, and confess all, your punishment will be less,—perhaps even—”

The young girl interrupted me. ”Thank you very much for your kindness, Mr. Monk. You are a good man; but I don’t wish my punishment to be lessened. I have told you I have stolen the diamond. More than that I shall not say, even if you put me on the rack.”

”For God’s sake don’t talk like that, Evelina.”

Her mother could now control herself no longer, and began:—

”What are you saying, Evelina, you stupid fool! Just fancy!—That one should hear one’s own flesh and blood tell lies about herself and get herself convicted! You can see very well, sir, that she is out of her senses, and doesn’t know what she is saying.”

”You had better look after yourself, Mrs. Reierson, and help us to get a full

confession and the money back. The diamond has been sold for five thousand kroners, and perhaps you have got the money yourself.”

I shan't weary you by recalling the scene which followed; suffice it to say that the mother raged like a fury, and denied knowing anything whatever about the diamond or the money. The young girl did not utter a single word from this moment until she was taken to the police station. I let her mother accompany us in the carriage, to which she seemed to have no objection.

Before the examining magistrate the same scene was gone through. The young girl confessed she was guilty of the robbery, but refused to give any further explanation. She only asked that there might be no delay in passing sentence upon her. The mother declared her daughter was mad, and denied all knowledge of the matter.

At the domiciliary visit to Mrs. Reiersen's, no trace could be found of the money.

I informed Mr. Frick, by letter, that the diamond was found, and of Evelina's arrest and confession; at the same time, I asked him for the present not to mention the matter to Mr. Howell, who was expected back about this time.

Mr. Jurgens was declared by his relations incapable of looking after his affairs, and the authorities decided to drop the proceedings against him for having bought stolen goods.

It was discovered that the money for the diamond had been paid in thousand kroner notes. Next day a person had changed five of these in one of the banks in the town. But the cashier had not taken any particular notice of the appearance of the person. He declared it might possibly be Frederiksen the actor, but he could not say anything definitely about it.

No trace of the remaining notes could be discovered.

CHAPTER IX

THE PHOTOGRAPH

The next morning, as I was sitting in my office, writing a note to Mr. Howell—it was on the day he was expected back—to request the favour of an interview with him, the constable came in with a visiting card. A gentleman desired to speak to me. I read:—

”Ask him to step in.”

[image]

Visiting card of Mr. Reginald Howell

Mr. Howell entered and shook my hand in his free-and-easy English manner.

"Glad to see you."

"Welcome back again."

He had quickly mastered Norwegian, and we always talked together in that language.

"I was just writing a note to you, Mr. Howell, to request the favour of an interview with you; you have forestalled me, perhaps for the same purpose."

"I—suppose so," answered the Englishman, hesitating. "I should like to say a few words to you in confidence, with regard to the robbery at Mr. Frick's."

He looked round as if to assure himself that we were alone.

"You can speak freely: we are alone; I was wishing to ask you a few questions about this same matter. You were, of course, in the house on the day, right up to seven o'clock."

"Quite right; but tell me, Mr. Monk, shall I be called as a witness in this case?"

"When the case comes before the court, there is every probability that you will be called to give testimony."

"But am I bound to appear and answer?"

"Yes, you are! I hope you have no objection."

There was something in the young man's manner which caused me to pay the greatest attention to his words and behaviour.

"But can the matter come before the court before you have found the thief?"

"As soon as we have got sufficient evidence against some person, that person will be charged and brought before the court."

"But before this happens it is not necessary for me to reply to any questions about the affair?"

"When the police, who are conducting the inquiries into the matter, ask you, you should certainly answer. To refuse to answer would be considered somewhat strange, and might even lead to unpleasantnesses for you."

"Many thanks for your information," answered Mr. Howell; he had got up and was walking restlessly up and down the room. "It is not pleasant for a man to contribute to the ruin of some wretched creature, but perhaps it is impossible to avoid it."

From the words which had been exchanged between us, I felt sure the young Englishman did not know of Evelina's arrest. As you remember, I had requested old Frick and Sigrid not to speak to him about the affair. I could also see that my answers to the questions he put to me had not told him anything which he did not know before; he was not altogether so ignorant about the matter. He must have put these questions to me as a feint, for some purpose or another. I was almost certain that he knew something of importance to the discovery of the robbery.

I decided at once to inform him of Evelina's arrest but not of her confession. It would, indeed, be strange if he did not betray how far the knowledge he had of the matter did not point in the same direction.

"Besides," I continued, "you need not be afraid that your evidence will be of such fatal significance. We have already got the diamond back, and the guilty party arrested. It is Evelina, Miss Frick's maid. Circumstantial evidence is so strong that a confession is unnecessary."

"Well," said Mr. Howell, quietly, "I can just as well tell you now what I know, as later on. It was on the afternoon when the diamond disappeared, after the old crank, Jurgens, had dined at Villa Ballarat. Soon after we had had some coffee in the museum I went up to my room and loaded some cartridges, for I was going to Osterdal for some shooting, you know."

"Yes; I know what took place in the house that afternoon. Please go on."

"Well, when I was ready with the cartridges, I went down into the garden to smoke a cigar. The other people had gone to their rooms, I suppose, for I did not see any of them. As I went by the museum it seemed to me that the door wasn't shut, and when I touched it it slid right up. You know it is a large iron door, but so well balanced and oiled that it moves quite noiselessly. Well, I glanced into the museum, and there I saw a lady standing before the cupboard on the opposite side of the room, with her back toward me. With one hand she held up the iron lid, and in the other she had an article which she seemed to have just taken from the case, and which she was examining. It did not occur to me to think it was anybody but Miss Frick; I thought I recognized the light spring jacket with dark braid."

I looked up suddenly and met Mr. Howell's gaze; his eyes did not impress me pleasantly, and it appeared to me that their expression was dark and cunning.

"Continue," I said hurriedly, and, I believe, rather roughly.

"Well, you know, Mr. Monk, that I am very fond of photography, and that I always go about with a little snap-shot camera. You know it, of course,—we have often had fun at Villa Ballarat photographing people when they least expected it!"

I nodded.

"I had the apparatus with me, and so it struck me that I would photograph Miss Frick as she stood there, without her knowing it. I went hurriedly and softly inside the door, took the photograph, and went out again without her seeing me. She stood quite still, as if she was wondering what she should do with what she had in her hand."

The Englishman paused, as if to give me an opportunity to speak. But as I did not even look up, but went on drawing figures on the paper before me, with as careless an expression as possible, he continued:—

"Later in the afternoon I took a carriage outside and drove to the station. On the way I took some negatives to the photographer, amongst them the picture of which I have just spoken, as there were some of them that I wanted to get developed by the time I got back. On my return from Osterdal I heard that the diamond had disappeared, and then I remembered the photograph. I naturally said nothing about it to Mr. Frick or his niece, but I called for the prints. Would you like to see the one from the museum?"

This was the second time that Sigrid's name had been mentioned in connection with the disappearance of the diamond. It awoke the most unpleasant feelings in me; but as I felt Mr. Howell's searching look resting upon me, I assumed perfect calmness, and took what he handed me.

It was quite a small photograph on thin prepared paper, and placed between two glass plates held together by an india-rubber band.

I took it with me to the window to examine it closely.

It was, as before said, a small picture, only two or three inches high and very narrow, but exceedingly clear.

A young girl stood before the well-known cupboard in old Frick's museum. Her position was exactly as Mr. Howell had described it.

The one hand held the lid open, the other held an article which was hidden by the shoulder; the head and neck were bent somewhat forward, examining the object.

It was a tall, fine figure in a light walking costume, trimmed with dark braid.

There was not much to be seen of the room. One saw part of the cupboard on both sides, a chair, the arm of another chair, but nothing else. Over the cupboard, at about the same height as the young girl, was a shelf. Part of this shelf, on which could be seen several small curios, was included in the picture.

One glance was enough for me to be certain who the young girl was.

I turned round to Mr. Howell. "It is Evelina, as I suspected."

"Yes, of course; I am only astonished that I could have taken her for Miss Frick when first I saw her. It must have been the costume which deceived me. Miss Frick has worn it all the spring."

"Yes, I know," I answered curtly. It was irritating always to have to return

to Sigrid in this manner.

"Very well; on this occasion I also played the detective, Mr. Monk. I have privately found out from the other servants that Miss Frick had, that same afternoon, given the costume to Evelina. You see everything is quite clear in that respect."

"Will you allow the police to keep the photograph, Mr. Howell, and is there anything else you can tell us about the matter?" My manner was, perhaps, somewhat abrupt.

"Wait a little," he answered; "I hope you understand now the reason for the question which I put to you at the beginning of our conversation?"

"Yes; you would rather not appear as a witness, as far as I could understand."

"Exactly; and, as you yourself say, the person in question is already arrested, and the circumstantial evidence is so strong that my evidence cannot be of much importance one way or other. This being the case, would it not be possible for me to avoid appearing in court? and could you not consider what I have said as confidential, so that I might take the photograph and destroy it? Otherwise I shall appear very much in the light of a spy or a thief-catcher, Mr. Monk. Also, it would be most objectionable to me to have to testify against the unfortunate woman."

"Your sentiments do you all honour, Mr. Howell; but I cannot, all the same, prevent your being called as a witness. Neither can I, of course, keep your photograph against your will; but I must mention it in my report, and most earnestly request you to preserve it. What you have said to me in my office, with respect to a matter concerning which inquiries are now being conducted, I cannot, in my capacity as a police official, consider confidential."

"Well, Mr. Monk, I see it cannot be helped, and I ought, perhaps, to have denied all knowledge of the matter. But you can, at any rate, bear evidence that I appear most reluctantly; I would like both the unhappy girl and the Frick family to understand this."

"I can only confirm what you yourself say, Mr. Howell," I answered stiffly, for I began to be more and more convinced that the man was playing a part. "You will leave the photograph then in the hands of the police?" I continued.

"Yes, I may just as well leave it; I cannot see that I can do any one any good by not doing so. You police deal with people in your own way,—we speak and do just as you want us to do."

"Allow me one question, Mr. Howell,"—I had again taken the photograph in my hand,— "this photograph is very small; it looks as though it had been clipped at the sides. Was the photograph originally broader, and did it include nothing more of the room?"

"Yes, it was originally broader, but only the middle part was clear and dis-

tinct. Either side of it was, for some reason or another, very foggy, so I cut it off to get the picture to fit between the two glass plates. I had, besides, no interest for anything but what you see there. The young girl is, of course, the principal object of interest,"—he sighed gently.

"What time could it have been when you took the photograph?"

"Well, that question I cannot answer very exactly. I thought, of course, at the time, that I should never be asked about it, but—let me see—it can't have been far off six o'clock, for it was not long after that I left for the railway station, and that was somewhere about seven."

* * * * *

The next minute Mr. Howell was gone, and I sat beside my desk in deep thought.

The Englishman's visit had made an unpleasant impression upon me, and I could not make out what his purpose in making it really was.

The man wished to come forward as a witness—that I felt sure about. All the rest was mere dissimulation; but for what purpose? What could be his motives?

It puzzled me at the time, and it puzzles me still!

* * * * *

During the whole of this long story, Monk had remained calm. He had been speaking evenly and dispassionately, as if he had been reading a police report. But now he changed in expression and manner. He began to pace up and down the floor with contracted eyebrows, and I saw that the perspiration stood on his brow.

* * * * *

You look astonished at me (he continued). After what you have heard, does the whole affair seem clear to you? It will, perhaps, seem still clearer when you have heard me for a few minutes longer: and you will not be able to understand how it could become an enigma! Yes, an enigma which I would give half or the whole of my life to solve!—But wait a bit! When you have heard the rest of my story, you will join with me in asking, "Who stole old Frick's diamond?" And you will likewise understand that upon that question my fate has depended from that day to this. But I shan't proceed any longer in that strain; I will continue as impartially as I can. On that will, perhaps, depend how far you or anybody else can help me—alone I can do nothing. I, who was so proud of my own acuteness and ability to penetrate where others failed to see a way!—No, don't interrupt

me. We shall discuss it afterward, when I have finished my story.

I had got as far as Evelina's arrest and that Mr. Howell had called on me with the photograph. So far, everything was in order. The accused had confessed, and the stolen article had been brought to light. But it had been impossible to discover where the five thousand kroners had disappeared.

Evelina refused positively to say a word beyond the confession, and as we were not able to prove any complicity against the actor and Mrs. Reiersen, they were discharged.

The state of affairs in Mr. Frick's house was anything but satisfactory. Sigrid had been suffering from nervous headaches ever since a few days before the robbery. Old Frick was in a rage, and spent the whole day in swearing at the duplicity and untrustworthiness of mankind. I believe, however, that sympathy for the wretched Evelina was the true cause of his anger. The young girl's arrest had, in fact, brought gloom and sadness into the house. Einar Frick was still absent on business. Mr. Howell decided to go to Spitzbergen as soon as the case against Evelina was settled.

It vexed me that I could not trace the money, or obtain any proof of the actor's complicity; and I took it for granted that the sly fellow had succeeded in getting it safely put away in Gothenburg, before he was arrested.

But although we had a clever officer there, and got all possible assistance from the Swedish police, we did not succeed in obtaining any proofs, and as long as Evelina would not speak we could proceed no further in the affair.

Thus matters stood, and I think that all the actors in this drama were only wishing that it would come to an end as soon as possible.

Suddenly one day I received the most astonishing news—Evelina had demanded to be brought before the examining magistrate, and had retracted before him her confession in full. She had declared that when she confessed she had not been herself, and that she was really innocent and knew nothing of the robbery. She would not say anything further, and refused to answer any questions.

Of course, those who knew the ins and the outs of the case only shook their heads at this unexpected development, and began to doubt her reason. The doctors, however, who examined her, could not discover any signs of a deranged mind.

The proofs were otherwise very strong against her; and as there was no prospect of any new evidence in the matter, the hearing of the case was fixed for the first sitting of the court.

I visited the young girl in prison and found her taciturn, depressed, and pale; but she gave me the impression of being entirely normal. I tried earnestly, and in a friendly way, to prevail upon her to adhere to her confession and to give a full explanation; but she only smiled sadly, and begged to be left alone. What

could have caused her to retract her confession? The more I pondered over this, the more sure I became that this step must be due to some outside influence; that she must have received some message or communication from without. She did not wish to receive any visitors in her cell. Only the mother had obtained permission to visit her once, and then the conversation had been quite short, and had taken place in the presence of a constable.

The mother had, on that occasion, until interrupted by the constable, tried to continue her reproaches against her daughter, because she had confessed something which she had not done.

But her daughter had contemptuously turned away from her, and soon after the mother was taken away without the robbery having been further discussed between them.

I felt sure that these reproaches from the mother, which the daughter seemed to treat with disgust and contempt, had had no effect, and that the explanation must be sought for elsewhere.

By closely examining the jailer, he at last told me that he one day surprised the young girl while she had a small piece of paper in her hand, but that she immediately turned away and had probably put the paper in her mouth and swallowed it. The man declared, however, that it all happened so quickly that he could hardly be quite certain about the matter, and Evelina, as usual when I spoke to her about it, took refuge in an obstinate silence.

My suspicion that Evelina acted on other people's advice was now strengthened. How far this circumstance can have any influence upon your opinion, when you have heard me out, I don't know. To me, all is dark; but I shall try to tell my story in such a way, that nothing of what I know shall be hidden from you.

Fortunately, I have got on so far with it that I can now let others speak for me—at least for a while. The next great event in my story is the trial of Evelina, which took place about three weeks after her arrest.

The proceedings are to be found fully reported in all the papers at that time, and you will get a more complete idea of the case by reading one of these reports, than if I give you a verbal account.

* * * * *

Monk opened a drawer in his writing-table, and took out a locked portfolio, from which he produced a large grey envelope. The envelope proved to contain several cuttings from the *Morning News*, which Monk laid before me.

"But," I objected hurriedly, "I would much rather hear the account from your own lips. Otherwise I should miss your impressions, which, to me, have

much more value than a newspaper reporter's idiotic and irrelevant remarks. And even if he does report the bare facts, such a report cannot possibly be as satisfactory as your own account."

"There is a difference in newspaper reporters," was Monk's dry reply. "As you will see, the *Morning News* man has not only reported carefully and judiciously, but his remarks are impartial, and show good sense and power of observation."

"That's all very well; but I depend, however, more upon your power of observation."

"In this case, you cannot do so. If a detective ever has made a great fiasco, I did so on that occasion, as you yourself will learn. Don't you understand that I am afraid that you are beginning to look at the events with my eyes? I am afraid to lead you into the labyrinth in which I, myself, am lost, and which I probably have myself built up!"

It struck me that Monk's reasoning was correct, and I made no further comment.

"Only one question," I said; "have you any objection to Clara hearing your story?"

"No; on the contrary, it was my intention to ask you to tell her everything, when we are finished. I hope for help from her; she is an unusually intelligent woman, and besides, women have, in many respects, much finer feelings,—instinct, or what you call it,—than we men."

"Then I have a proposal to make to you. We shall not continue to-night, but I shall tell Clara all that you have now told me. Clara and I will read the newspaper account together, and then we will see you again."

"I gladly accept your proposal," said Monk, a little hesitatingly; "but if I could be allowed, I would ask you both to read the account in the paper in my presence. Of course I have read it, not once, but ten times, to myself, without any result; but now it has struck me that the whole affair might appear to me in a new light, if I heard some one else read an exact account of what happened on that fateful day."

"Yes, with pleasure," I exclaimed. "I promise to do this, both on my own and on Clara's behalf."

Monk shook me by the hand, and asked if Clara and I would come up to him one day, when I had told her all I had heard from him.

"You shall see us here to-morrow," I answered quickly, and so we parted that evening or, more correctly, that night. It was half-past one when I reached my home.

I had had a busy day, and the intense interest with which I had listened to Monk's account had tired me. I only longed to get to sleep as quickly as possible.

But then happened what a more experienced man than I might perhaps have foreseen.

When I got home Clara was sitting up waiting for me. So I explained to her, as casually as possible, that next day she should hear Monk's remarkable story,—a story, the continuation of which we were to read together; well—what further happened I cannot remember, but I am sure it was past four that night before I got to sleep, and then Clara had heard everything that the reader knows of Monk's history.

"Pshaw! it isn't difficult to understand how the story will end! The horrid Englishman naturally managed things so that Miss Frick should be suspected of having stolen her uncle's diamond; and—"

These were the last words I heard Clara utter as sleep overcame me. "Yes, if there must be a villain in the drama, Clara must be right in thinking that the Englishman must have played that rôle," I thought with my last efforts, before my senses were entirely bedimmed.

* * * * *

The next day we all three were sitting in Monk's study.

"We mustn't lose any time," said Clara, as she smartly cleared aside the tea and cakes to which Monk's kindly landlady had treated us. "Remember, Mr. Monk, that we now change rôles. It is you who seek advice and help, while Frederick and I represent the detective firm. Well! we had got so far that the case was on for trial,—my husband has told me everything,—and here are the newspaper accounts of the case, which you want Frederick to read aloud, isn't that so? So set to work, Frederick!"

PART II

CHAPTER I THE TRIAL

In the *Morning News* of June 2, 189-, appeared the following, under the heading:—

THE BLACK TORTOISE IN COURT

The court to-day was filled to overflowing, and a large number were unable to gain admittance.

The disappearance of old Frick's diamond—we hope our respected fellow-citizen will excuse our using the familiar name by which he is so well known—has been eagerly discussed and commented upon by the newspapers for the last few weeks.

The case did not promise to become a particularly difficult or complicated one, although it was known that the accused had retracted her confession; but the stolen article was of such an unusual kind, and of such great value, and the persons who were to appear in the case were so well-known, that it was only to be expected that the proceedings would attract as many people as the court would hold. One could hardly imagine anything more sadly interesting than the pale and pretty girl who stood charged before the court with the theft of the now famous diamond. By her side sat her counsel, a young advocate who is already known in legal circles as a most able and successful counsel for the defence.

Among the witnesses was the well-known figure of old Frick, and by his side his niece, Miss Frick. Not far off stood Mr. Monk, acting chief of the detective department, already a well-known and popular figure in our town, as much appreciated for his acuteness and boldness as for his tactful conduct when in the execution of his duty as a police official.

The dark distinguished-looking man beside Miss Frick was the Englishman, Mr. Howell, who, as everybody knows, has been compelled by a strange coincidence to appear as a witness in the case, and who, it is said, will give the most remarkable evidence ever heard in our courts of justice. The Englishman did not appear particularly edified with his task. From what I hear, it seems he has tried to escape giving evidence. It is anything but a pleasant duty to give evidence against a young woman when one feels that it will mean conviction for her.

* * * * *

The presiding judge of the court took his seat, the case for the prosecution was stated, and the usual questions asked of the accused as to her name, age, etc.

She did not look up, but answered in a fairly audible voice. Then she was asked whether she was guilty or not guilty.

All waited anxiously for the answer.

Her voice was this time so low that the judge had to lean toward her and request her to speak more loudly.

The silence was so intense that the answer, although scarcely more than a whisper, was heard all over the court: "Not guilty."

Had the public expected anything else? Perhaps—perhaps not....

The public prosecutor then began his charge:—

The crime with which the accused was charged was not of a particularly complicated nature with regard to the question as to how, or by whom, the theft had been committed. But it was a different matter with regard to the motives and the circumstances under which it had taken place, and he was willing to admit that in this respect little or no light had been thrown upon the matter. An uncommon article, an object of great value, in other words, the black diamond, which now lay on the judge's table, was stolen on May 10 from Mr. Frick, who was now present in court as a witness. The police were at once informed of the theft, and they succeeded not only in recovering the stolen object, but also in providing such information that the public prosecutor was able to prove fully before the court, both how the theft had been perpetrated, by whom, and how the thief had disposed of the stolen object.

He would call witnesses to prove at what time the theft had been committed, that the accused at that time had been at least half an hour in the house, that she during that time had the opportunity of going into the room where the diamond was kept, and at a time when the cupboard was not locked. He could prove by a means which seldom fell to the lot of the authorities, that the accused, in the time during which the theft had taken place, had been into the room and even opened the case where the diamond was kept. He could next prove that the accused at an earlier hour of the same day had had an opportunity of hearing an assurance from a rich man that he would pay a large sum of money to become possessed of the diamond. She thus knew beforehand that she could sell the stolen article without any difficulty.

Finally, he could prove that the diamond was actually sold by the accused on the same day to the man just mentioned.

Thus far the chain of evidence was as complete as any could be, and in order to substantiate the guilt of the accused it was of no consequence that she had retracted her confession, and had hitherto refused to give any explanation whatsoever; every experienced judge would know exactly what value to put on circumstantial evidence of such a character. It was just as good, if not surer, than a confession.

What still had to be explained was, what had become of the money which the accused had received for the diamond and what could be the particular motives for this criminal act.

Some information might possibly be obtained during the examination of the witnesses; but if this was not the case, the prosecutor would be obliged to

maintain that the punishment be in accordance with the utmost rigour of the Law. The public prosecutor would, therefore, conclude with the request to the judge that he ask the accused most earnestly to give a full explanation. If she still persisted in her refusal to give this explanation, he must warn her that it would be with detriment to her cause, and possibly to that of justice.

It was so quiet in the court, when the public prosecutor sat down, that one could hear a pin drop.

The judge then turned and addressed the young girl. In calm, considerate words he called her attention to the fact that she had the right, in any case, to do as she pleased—either to speak or to keep silent; and that no pressure would be brought to bear upon her, least of all to make her confess. This much, however, he felt it his duty to tell her, that she was certainly not acting in her own interests by maintaining silence. If she were innocent, which he still hoped, then her own explanations would only serve to show it: and if she were guilty, they would enable the court to consider her case in the most lenient manner possible.

Every eye in the room was turned on the unhappy girl, but her face remained as impassive as that of a statue; her lips were pressed together, and her eyes cast down.

Her counsel leaned toward her and whispered something in her ear. She did not raise her eyes; her only answer was a slight inclination of the head.

"I must request," said the young advocate, "that my client's wish to make no further statements shall be respected. She has decided to say nothing; and I know that her resolution in this respect is not to be shaken. Whether this decision is wise or no, and whether or no it is taken by my advice, is not for the moment a subject for discussion. It is enough to say that whatever appeals were directed toward her to state what she knows of the case would, however well meant, only prolong the proceedings."

No sooner had the counsel sat down than a murmur went around the court, giving expression to nearly all the different feelings which move the human heart. Some feared that the accused would damage her own cause, others admired her firmness, while many expressed astonishment at her audacity. As all the papers have already published detailed accounts of what happened at Villa Ballarat upon the day that the robbery was committed, it will be sufficient to mention that the evidence of all the witnesses only served to corroborate what the public already knew, thanks to the unremitting zeal of the newspaper reporters.

It also seemed as if the counsel for the defence understood that it would be hopeless to upset that part of the evidence.

He certainly tried to make it appear possible that some strange person might have crept into the garden of the villa between five and half-past seven in the afternoon; but this attempt was stranded, upon the gardener's definite as-

surance that the gate had been locked the whole time, and on the evidence of the chief of the detective police with regard to the examination he had made of the railing and the ground round the garden.

The counsel for the defence was more fortunate in his attempt to obtain evidence of good character and behaviour for the accused. Mr. Frick and his niece were especially unremitting in their praise of the young girl.

Miss Frick caused much excitement when, in answer to a question by the counsel for the defence, she answered:—

”Evelina has for several years had all my trinkets and jewels in her custody. Thanks to my uncle’s generosity, I have more of those kinds of things than I need, and it would have been very easy for her to take any one of many of these, without fear of discovery. Her mere assertion that something had been lost would have been enough.... No! she is honesty itself! She could never steal my uncle’s diamond, of that I am convinced, however much appearances are against her!...”

There was great sensation in court when Mr. Howell was called as witness. Every one, of course, knew of the strange circumstances under which he had been involved in the matter.

He began by asking the judge if he might be excused from appearing as witness. The judge asked him to give his reasons for this request. Mr. Howell explained that he was a private gentleman and not a police spy. It was quite by an accident he had come to play a rôle in this affair—a rôle which did not please him. He had already given his explanation to the police, and had hoped that would have been sufficient.

The judge answered that none of these explanations could exempt him from appearing as witness. One could not help respecting his feelings; but since no lawful reasons could be given, they must request him to give what evidence he could.

Mr. Howell, who spoke the Norwegian language fluently, submitted to the inevitable, and gave a short and clear account of how he came to photograph the accused, so to speak, ”in flagrante.”

The papers have already published an account of this scene, so that I shall not repeat his evidence ”*in extenso*.” I shall only reproduce the following of the examination.

Public prosecutor: ”What did you do with the film after you had taken the photograph?”

Witness: ”I went to my room with it, took the films out of the apparatus, and took them to the photographer’s to be developed. I called at the photographer’s on my way to the railway station.”

Public prosecutor: ”You maintain, then, that it is the accused whom you have photographed, but without your being aware of it? Are you sure it is the

accused?"

Witness: "Any one who has seen the accused a few times will see that she is the person in the photograph."

Public prosecutor (taking an object from the judge's table): "Is this the photograph in question, which you, yourself, delivered up to the police?"

Witness (taking the photograph in his hand and carefully examining it): "Yes, it is."

The public prosecutor declared himself satisfied, and the counsel for the defence began: "Now, are you quite sure that when you photographed the accused you did not believe her to be some one else—for instance, Miss Frick?"

Witness: "Yes, I believe I have already explained myself sufficiently clearly on that point."

Counsel for the defence: "I cannot understand how you can now be so sure that the picture represents my client, while you believed quite otherwise when you had the living person before you. What is the reason for this?"

Witness: "I have before explained I was in a great hurry at the time. I wanted to get away before the person should turn round—it was all done in fun on my part. Besides, I thought I recognized Miss Frick's jacket,—she had been in the habit of wearing a jacket trimmed with braid. Later, I got to hear that Miss Frick that same day had given it to her maid as a present, and on looking at the photo I became convinced it was the maid."

Counsel for the defence: "Good! Are you also quite sure that the picture you now see here is the same as that you took on that occasion? The film has been several days out of your keeping, and in other hands."

The young Englishman seemed rather impatient at this examination. "If the film has not been tampered with at the photographer's," he exclaimed quickly, "it is the picture of what I saw in the museum. Whether it has been tampered with or not, I see here before me the same person, in the same position, and in the same room—others must now decide which is most probable."

He took up the picture again, examined it carefully, and handed it back to the public prosecutor.

"I have only wanted to show," said the counsel for the defence, quietly, "that you yourself at one time have doubted the identity of the person who stands in front of Miss Frick's cupboard in the photograph. I have now only two other questions to ask you.

"What was the time when you took the photograph?"

Witness: "About six."

Counsel for the defence: "Are you not able to give the time more exactly? Might it not just as well have been half-past six?"

Witness: "I cannot give the exact time. I didn't attach much importance to

the incident. When I had taken the photograph I went up to my room, and was busy there for some time before I left. It was then about seven, so from that I conclude that the photograph was taken about six."

Counsel: "Might it not have been a little over half-past six?"

Witness: "No! I can be quite certain it was not over half-past six."

Counsel: "Could you see that the person held the diamond in her hand? In the photograph the object which she holds is hidden by her shoulder."

Witness: "When first I caught sight of her, she held the diamond somewhat higher, so that I was able to see it; afterward she lowered her arm, and while in that position she was photographed."

The counsel for the defence seemed to be satisfied.

Then Mr. Rodin, the photographer, was called as witness.

The well-known artist, whose pleasant manners have obtained for him so many customers and friends, bowed to the judge and court, and, the usual formalities having been observed, he answered quickly and decisively the questions which the public prosecutor put to him.

Public prosecutor: "Do you recognize this photograph? Has it been in your hands before?"

Witness: "Yes; this film, together with some others, was given me to develop, by Mr. Howell, on the evening of the 10th of May, about seven or half-past."

Public prosecutor: "And are you sure that this photograph is an exact reproduction of the negative?"

Witness (smiling): "The photograph cannot lie, sir! Even if I had wished it, I could not have produced anything else than what was to be seen in front of the apparatus at the moment it was opened to take the photograph."

The public prosecutor finished his examination, and the counsel for the defence began his.

Counsel: "Can you be certain that this photograph is the same one which you developed several weeks ago for Mr. Howell? It has not been in your possession since?"

Witness: "Yes, sir, I am quite sure; you can see for yourself that my initials are written on the back;—look, O.R. 10/5, H. 10. The first are my initials, then follows the date it was received, then the initial of Mr. Howell's name, from whom I received it, and lastly, the number in the series. The roll which he brought me that day consisted of ten films; this was number ten, the last photograph he had taken."

Counsel: "You cannot, however, be quite certain that this is the same picture which Mr. Howell brought you. During the work, some of your people might have mixed Mr. Howell's pictures together with other people's. Such a thing

might happen, might it not?"

Witness: "No, sir; I develop all Mr. Howell's films with my own hands. He is very particular about them. As you will see, this picture is very clear and distinct, and I flatter myself that all the pictures which have passed through my hands are the same,—that is to say, when such an expert snap-shot taker as Mr. Howell has taken them."

Counsel: "Is there any reason, Mr. Rodin, why one could not photograph first the room, then a person, and then transfer that person to the first picture, so that a person appears in the room on the picture?"

The public had remained unusually silent and attentive during the whole of the proceedings; at this question the silence became still more intense. Every one understood the counsel's object in putting this question—that each one of his questions was an attempt to clutch at a last straw in the interest of his client; but all understood also that each straw slipped out of his hand, one by one. The same happened to this question. The witness answered, without any hesitation, "It is possible, sir; but every experienced photographer would tell you that this has not been attempted in the present case."

The young advocate looked disappointed. He made a motion like one who washes his hands, and allowed the witness to step down.

The photograph was sent round among the members of the jury and the court, while the next witness was being called. It was the young chief of the detective police, Charles Monk. The public hailed his appearance with murmurs of approbation which must be just as much attributed to his winning appearance as to the reputation he had already gained as a police officer. His evidence was calm, clear, and concise, as befits a policeman, and all listened with breathless attention to the account of how the young chief had taken upon himself the rôle of detective, and had not rested until Mr. Frick's diamond was in the hands of the police. When Mr. Monk, in his evidence, came to speak of his visit to Jurgens, and of the stratagem he had used to deceive the old man, many of the spectators began to clap their hands and shout, Bravo! The judge's authority for the moment had to be called into account to produce silence.

Although there was scarcely a person in the court who did not wish that the young girl in the dock should be acquitted, so paradoxical is human nature that the same people applauded the great skill with which the net had been drawn around her.

The last hope for the prisoner seemed to vanish at the evidence of the detective.

The counsel for the defence had not many questions to ask. He tried to show that both on her arrest and upon Mr. Monk's first visit to her mother's home, she had been in an irresponsible condition, and for that purpose he had no

doubt summoned her mother and her lover, the actor, to give evidence. Although their evidence was a voluntary matter, owing to the relation in which they stood to the accused, they both declared themselves willing to tell what they knew. Their evidence did not, however, throw any new light on the matter. Both were convinced of the young girl's innocence, and asked the court not to believe her, even if she should again confess. She had always been of a nervous temperament, and often a little strange.

Neither the loquacious woman with the ruddy complexion, nor the pomatummed Don Juan, whose shady character is so well known in the town, made a good impression; and the counsel for the defence concluded their examination as soon as possible. The general impression was that he, for the defence, had originally intended to prove that his client was irresponsible, but that during the proceedings before the court he had abandoned this line of defence.

* * * * *

I had proceeded thus far in my reading when I stopped and looked at my friends. Clara was listening with her mouth open, and did not seem as if she would tolerate any interruption. Monk sat silently in an armchair in the darkest corner of the room.

"Shall I continue?" I asked, "or will you allow me to ask a question?"

"I would rather you read the newspaper account to the end, first," was Monk's answer; and I heard by the tone of his voice that he was unusually agitated.

"Yes, go on reading, and let us hear what happens," said Clara, trying to look over my shoulder.

I read as follows:—

... The examination of the witnesses for the defence was concluded, and the public prosecutor rose. His speech was short and pithy.

He thought all must agree that the charge he had preferred against the accused had been fully proved by the evidence given in court.

With regard to the responsibility of the accused, he also believed that this had been asserted beyond all doubt; the opinion of the medical men was definite, and the evidence by which the defence had attempted to weaken these were but of little value. He did not believe for a moment the counsel for the defence would seriously question the responsibility of the accused. That the feeling of having committed a great crime, and of having to answer for it, might have caused the conduct of the accused to appear strange, and to some degree self-contradictory, was only natural.

That the accused had retracted her first confession, and later on had refused

to give any explanation whatever in the court, might perhaps surprise some, but it could in no way weaken the clear and distinct proofs of her guilt. It was perhaps to be regretted that the police had not succeeded in ascertaining where the money for the stolen object had disappeared to, as this circumstance prevented any possible accomplices being brought to justice. It was likewise to be regretted that motives for the crime could not be sufficiently explained; but the accused was no doubt herself principally to be blamed for this, through her persistent silence. None of these circumstances ought, however, to have any influence upon the answer of the jury to the question, "Guilty or not guilty?"

The counsel for the accused rose to begin his speech for the defence. He seemed at first to be somewhat uncertain, but he soon decided upon the line he would take.

He did not want to conceal, he said, that he was in a very difficult position, and the one who made his position most difficult of all was his client.

All had heard that the young girl who was charged with having stolen the diamond, which was now lying upon the table in court, had at first confessed, but had afterward retracted her confession, and otherwise refused any information whatsoever in the matter. But what every one, in all probability, did not know, was that she had maintained the same silence with regard to him, her counsel and adviser. He had not succeeded in getting a single word from her lips, except the assurance that she would say nothing, would answer no questions, and would give no information. "I thought it only right," continued the young advocate, "to make this open declaration, in order that my inability to give information which might be to the advantage of my client, should not be misunderstood. You must not believe that I have received any information from her, and that I have not found it to her advantage to make use of it.

"It appears to me, and I hope the gentlemen of the jury will agree with me, that the unfortunate girl, paralyzed by the terrible blow of suspicion which has fallen upon her, and feeling how terribly hopeless her case is, through the strong appearances against her at almost every step, has found it expedient to draw within herself and keep silence, just as the hunted deer withdraws to its cave, even if death awaits it there. No one has a right to construe my client's silence as a confession, or the result of a consciousness of guilt.

"The diamond was stolen in the interval between five and half-past seven in the afternoon. Of these two hours and a half my client spent only half an hour's time within the walls of Villa Ballarat, while many persons were present there during the whole time. It has been proved, says the public prosecutor, that no stranger could have gained admission there during that time; but can we be so sure of that? An agile man can easily climb over the railings—no one will deny that. The police examined the ground round about, and no trace was found, may

be said in objection. But we know that expert criminals are often very dexterous in destroying all traces after them; and no one will maintain that the police are so infallible that a trace cannot have escaped them.

"One need not be gifted with great acuteness in order to guess what is passing through the minds of the gentlemen of the jury at this moment: what can be the use of all this? The main proofs against the accused still remain unassailable. But let us look into some of these proofs which, according to the opinion of the public prosecutor, are so strong that they are even more reliable than a confession. The old man who bought the diamond has himself said that he bought it of the young girl whom I defend, and there can be no doubt about this, although he has not appeared in court as witness; we have the evidence of the head of the detective department with regard to it, and that must be sufficient. But—here is also a 'but,' just as there is a 'but' in all the so-called infallible circumstantial evidence against the accused—is, then, the word of an imbecile man in his second childhood to be fully depended upon—a man who immediately afterward is declared incapable of managing his own affairs; who is so infatuated with his mania that he, whose honesty is otherwise not for a moment to be doubted after a long life of spotless integrity, buys a diamond which he knows must have been stolen? Shall the evidence of such a man decide the fate of a human being? And besides, is this man's evidence quite impartial? We have heard, from the account of the chief of the detectives, that the old man tried to conceal the fact that he was in possession of the diamond; in his imbecility he is, however, conscious that he has done something wrong, and is, to a certain degree, cunning, and on his guard. What, then, is more probable than that he, who sees that he has been discovered, is wily enough to give an explanation which makes it probable that a servant would have the disposal of the diamond at her command? Who dares maintain that the old man spoke the truth on this occasion? It is, however, just as much, if not more probable, that he resorted to telling the first untruth that came into his head!

"And what has become of the five thousand kroners, which he says he has paid for the diamond?

"It has not been possible to ascertain, says my opponent; but on the whole he seems to lay little stress upon the circumstance.

"It seems to me that this circumstance—that no trace whatever has been discovered of the money—is quite an important one. We know that the most able detectives have been engaged in tracing it—even the fiancé of my client was arrested in Copenhagen in consequence thereof; both she and her mother have been watched most closely—but still no clue. Are not these circumstances important? Is there not more than one proof that the police have been on the wrong track, that the thief is not the one who has been arrested, and that they have been

investigating in a direction where there was nothing to look for?

"But it may be said that the principal proof still remains unshaken; the accused has, by a remarkable coincidence, been photographed in the act of committing the theft, that cannot be denied or explained away; yes—I venture to maintain there is no proof of the guilt of the accused in this. I admit that most probably it is the young girl who has been photographed on this film. The hat and the jacket which she wears were given to her by Miss Frick about six o'clock in the afternoon of the same day: this we know from the evidence; likewise that she wore the same clothes when she called on her mother between half-past six and seven. I admit there is a probability which approaches to certainty, that it is my client who, in the photograph here, is standing in front of Mr. Frick's cupboard in the so-called museum. One can also see that she is holding some object in her hand. Yes, I even go so far as to admit that she is most likely looking at the black diamond. But from this moment my conclusions cease to coincide with those of the public prosecutor.

"Why should it follow that she also took the diamond with her?

"What if my client, on passing through the garden and seeing the door open to the museum, goes inside, and out of curiosity has a look at the black diamond about which there has been so much talk among the people of the house while she was serving the coffee in the afternoon, and then puts it back again and passes out through the garden, on her way to her mother? What if she, later on, after hearing of the robbery, understands that she has been imprudent, and then does a still more imprudent thing by trying to conceal her visit to the museum, and finally, when almost crushed under the shame and fear of being arrested, acts as she afterward did?

"I ask any person of common sense, is there anything more improbable than that this young girl, who has always shown the most exemplary honesty, should commit this daring theft without any special motive? This young girl, who was not in need, and who in her master's house had found a home almost as if she were one of the family—this young girl who knew that if she were in want of money for any special object her young mistress would not deny her it, even if it were a considerable sum!

"Is this more probable than that her presence in the museum was due to an accidental circumstance of no significance, and that the theft has afterward been committed by some one else?"

The counsel for the defence was here interrupted in a manner which was no doubt flattering to him; from the audience came the sound of more than one hearty *Bravo!* while a hoarse voice, full of sincere conviction, exclaimed, "Ah! he's about right there."

Silence was soon obtained, and the counsel concluded his speech thus: "It is

an old experience of the court that the chain of evidence which seems strongest, and in which the links seem to fit exactly into each other, is in reality most often the weakest. I will ask the jury to bear this in mind. And I believe that I have at least shown you that in the chain of the public prosecutor which seemed to fit so beautifully there is not one link which can be called faultless.”

The counsel resumed his seat, and the public made an attempt to applaud him, but the judge quickly imposed silence, and the public prosecutor rose to reply.

He had followed the speech of the counsel for the defence with interest and approval, the latter no doubt arising from the same cause which had dictated the applause of the public—that is to say, admiration of the counsel’s ability to make something out of nothing, or of an inconvenient subject. At this point the public prosecutor nodded in a friendly way across to the counsel for the defence, who smiled in return.

He found, on the whole, his chain of evidence so little weakened by what the defence had brought forward, that he did not think it necessary to go through it again. He had such great confidence in the intelligence of the jury that he would take it for granted they would have remarked, without his pointing it out to them, that where he had produced facts, or probabilities which almost amounted to facts, the counsel for the defence had only set up possibilities, and even improbable possibilities—with this, he would leave the matter in the hands of the jury.

The counsel for the defence then proceeded to make his final speech.

The public prosecutor had himself admitted that there were possibilities that the theft had not been committed in the way the prosecution had asserted. It would be the duty of the jury to decide as to the probability or improbability of the possibilities. He would conclude by saying that when to these possibilities was added the stainless life of his client, and the good character she bore from all quarters—no one had brought forward anything to the contrary—as well as the circumstance that no one had been able to show any particular motive for the young girl’s suddenly committing a criminal act; and finally, that it had not been possible, in spite of the most energetic exertions of the police, to show that his client had been in possession of, or disposed of the money which was to have been the reward of the crime of which she was accused—then he did not doubt that the conscientious jury would not pronounce the fateful “Yes” to the question “Guilty?”

The counsel sat down, but no applause was heard this time from the public. All seemed to be convinced that his exertions had been in vain.

The time approached when the jurymen had to retire. All seemed to feel that their deliberations would be short, and the result an unanimous verdict of

guilty.

Of what avail could be the eloquence or the cunning subterfuges of a counsel, against proofs and facts as clear as those which the public prosecutor had produced?

The judge asked the accused if she had anything to say. Her counsel leaned toward her, and appeared to be urging something earnestly upon her; but she only shook her head, as before, and the young man sat down with an air of resignation.

CHAPTER II

THE PHOTOGRAPH CANNOT LIE

The public prosecutor had begun to read the questions which were to be laid before the jury, when he was interrupted by a noise from the back of the court. Many of the public rose from their seats in order to see better.

What could be the matter?

A messenger of the court had forced his way through the crowd to the counsel for the defence, and handed him a letter, saying a few words, which those nearest to him could hear. The messenger said, "You must read it at once, sir; it has to do with the case now before the court."

The counsel tore open the envelope, read, passed his hand across his forehead, and read the letter again.

He crushed the paper in his hand, stepped quickly forward, and as the public prosecutor had not resumed his reading, he addressed himself to the judge, saying, "I must ask that an hour's postponement be granted to my client; in that time I believe I can bring before you, gentlemen, evidence which will throw a new light upon the case."

* * * * *

An hour passed by, perhaps a little more, and the court was again sitting. The room was, if possible, even more crowded than before; no one had been willing to give up his seat, and there were new arrivals.

The silence which reigned showed the excitement that possessed everybody.

The counsel for the defence asked to be allowed to examine the chief of the detective staff once more.

The young officer stepped forward, and took his place in the witness box in his usual quiet manner, although astonishment was plainly written on his face.

The counsel: "You have already told us that when you paid a visit to Mr. Jurgens and so skilfully got him to give up the diamond, he then told you that he had bought it from the accused, Evelina Reierson. Isn't that so?"

"Yes."

Counsel: "Did he seem to be in any doubt as to whom he had bought the diamond from?"

The detective blushed at this question, but his answer was as unconstrained and calm as before.

"No, he gave me the impression that he was sure it was the accused."

Counsel: "Did he name any one else who could possibly have sold him the diamond?"

"At first he began, with some confused nonsense, to excuse himself, but it was of no significance to the case."

Counsel: "I must ask you, however, to give the name or the names which Mr. Jurgens mentioned in connection with the diamond."

One could see that the officer was angry at the importunate examination, and that he had to exert himself to the utmost, in order to answer calmly.

"Mr. Jurgens seemed at first to be somewhat frightened at the consequences of his transaction, and in order to excuse himself, he began with some nonsense about having bought the diamond from—from a person who is nearly related to Mr. Frick, and who was supposed to have received the diamond from him as a present."

Counsel: "What did you do to get him to speak the truth?"

The detective hesitated a moment, and grew redder still in the face. At last he answered firmly and distinctly:—

"He first mentioned Miss Frick as having sold him the diamond, and that she had said she had got it as a present from her uncle. This was as much as to say that the young lady, for whom I have—have the greatest respect, is a thief and a liar, as information of the robbery was given to the police by her uncle; and I then forgot myself for the moment and seized hold of the old man—but of course only for a moment!"

Counsel: "It was after you let go of him that he gave the name of Evelina Reierson?"

"Yes; but as you will understand—"

Counsel (interrupting): "I have for the present nothing further to ask you."

"Well, I never heard such—" exclaimed a powerful voice. It was old Frick

who rose, red as a turkey cock in the face; the judge himself had to call him to order.

Mr. Monk still stood in the same place, biting his lips. Miss Frick stared at him with an astonished expression. As yet she suspected nothing.

But the attention of the public was soon engrossed by a new witness whom the counsel for the defence brought forward. He was a tall, squarely-built man, with broad round shoulders, and black hair and beard; he was dressed in shiny, threadbare black clothes.

The examination was begun by the judge. The witness seemed quite unwilling to be examined.

"Your name?"

"Abraham Abrahamson."

"How old are you?"

"Fifty-three years old."

"What is your calling?"

"Pawnbroker and commission agent."

"Where do you live?"

"Bishop Street, No. 75."

"Do you know anything about the case which is before the jury to-day?"

"I have read about it in the papers."

"Have you had anything to do with any of the persons in the case, or have you in any other way obtained any information which may be of importance in this matter?"

"I know several persons here by sight"—the witness looked round the court with his sharp, dark eyes—"but I did not believe I could give any information which could be of use to the court, until I was sent for half an hour ago."

The judge concluded, and left the further examination to the counsel for the defence.

Counsel: "Do you know this young girl, Evelina Reierson?"

Witness: "She has been once or twice to my place, on business."

Counsel: "On what sort of business?"

Witness (unwillingly): "To pawn a few small things."

Counsel: "What sort of small things?"

Witness: "As far as I can remember, they were some rings and a pair of earrings."

Suddenly Miss Frick's voice was heard—not loud, but clear and distinct:—

"The rings and earrings she got from me. They were presents, and she could do as she liked with them."

The judge enjoined the young lady in a friendly but decided tone not to speak until she was questioned, and the young lady sat down, blushing.

Counsel: "Had you a visit from the young girl on the 10th of May last?"

Witness: "Yes, most likely."

Counsel: "Most likely? Be good enough to explain yourself more clearly; or does it mean that you remember nothing about that day?"

Witness: "Well, yes, I can well enough explain what I mean. I have nothing to hide—the law and the police I have always esteemed and respected"—here an ironical voice was heard exclaiming:—

"You are about right there, Abrahamson!" which was followed by loud laughter.

The witness, with a scornful glance at the corner where the interruption came from, continued: "No, I have nothing to hide. On the 10th of May a lady came to me and asked if I would lend her some money on some jewelry,—a lot of rings, brooches, and bracelets with precious stones in them. She had a veil over her face; but I thought I recognized the young girl whom you call Evelina Reiersen."

Counsel: "Was it not, then, the young girl who sits here?"

Witness: "I don't know."

Counsel: "Don't know?"

Witness: "If you will give me time, you shall hear. I said at once that I could not accept such valuable things, unless she could show she was authorized to pawn them. Then she answered that if we came to an understanding, she would prove she was the owner of the jewelry. I looked at the things, and said that if everything was all right, I could lend her two thousand kroners on them. She knew that the things were worth five thousand kroners, she said, and if I could give her four thousand, I could buy them of her. I must have time to examine them, I explained. But she would not let me. She seemed on the point of crying, and asked me for God's sake to give her four thousand kroners immediately; she would willingly give me a few more valuable things later on, or pay me something back. Then I thought the matter looked rather suspicious, and did not like to have anything more to do with her, so she left."

Counsel: "Didn't you try to find out if it was the girl, Evelina Reiersen, or not?"

Witness (after hesitating awhile before answering): "Yes, I did; for I am a law-abiding man, who likes to give the police a helping hand."

Counsel: "Yes, we know that, but what did you do?"

Witness: "I sent a boy in my office after her. He sat up behind the carriage—for she had come in a hired carriage which waited outside—and he saw her go into a house in Drammen Road."

Counsel: "Was it Mr. Frick's house?"

Witness: "Yes, so the boy said."

Counsel: "But you took it as a proof that it really was Evelina Reierson?"

Witness: "Yes, but I am not sure that it was she, after all, for she had a veil on, and then I don't know Evelina Reierson so very well."

Counsel: "How was the lady dressed?"

Witness: "She had on a green hat with a feather in it, and a jacket braided in front and at the back."

Counsel: "Do you remember this distinctly?"

Witness: "Yes, I am not so unaccustomed to using my eyes, and I thought it best to notice her dress, in case the police should ask me about the matter, later on."

Counsel: "What time was it when the lady visited you?"

Witness: "It must have been twenty minutes past five when she came, for she was with me a quarter of an hour, and when she left it was twenty-five minutes to six."

Counsel: "Was it also with regard to the possibility of inquiries from the police that you looked at the clock when the lady left you?"

Witness: "Yes."

Counsel: "You are quite certain about the time, then?"

Witness: "Yes, quite certain; I conferred with my clerk."

The case had proceeded thus far when a great commotion in the court caused the examination to be interrupted. It is superfluous to remark that the two last witnesses had made a deep impression upon all who were present at the hearing of this remarkable case, and the excitement among the audience rose as the examination progressed.

The pawnbroker's last words fell in complete silence, but only to be followed by murmurings and noise.

The alarm threatened to throw the court into confusion, when suddenly a cry was heard, "She is fainting!" A large crowd had gathered round Miss Frick, and old Frick was seen in the middle of it, gesticulating wildly, while the young girl leant back on the seat with a handkerchief over her face. Mr. Monk forced his way up to her, and with the consent of the judge conducted her out of the court.

The judge then proceeded to call for order. It did not take him long, for the threat to have the court cleared had immediate effect. No one wished to lose the last act of the drama.

The counsel for the defence did not wish to examine the pawnbroker any further. The public prosecutor had, in the meantime, nothing to comment upon, and the young counsel was called upon to proceed.

He began with thanking the court for giving him the postponement he had asked for,—a postponement which had enabled him not only to obtain valuable

evidence, but which had also given him positive means of proving his client's innocence of the robbery of the diamond. He continued:—

”If any one believes that my purpose in calling the witness Abrahamson, and in putting new questions to the chief of the detective force, was to throw the guilt of the robbery upon another, he is mistaken. It is certainly unavoidable that at the same time my client's innocence is brought to light, so at the same time the attention is led into another direction, and the ministers of justice have perhaps already found a new object in their search after the guilty person. But that is a matter which does not concern me. It only goes to prove that the young girl whose defence has been intrusted to me is innocent—that the circumstantial evidence which appeared so strong against her, on the contrary speaks in her favour when seen in the right light.

”The object of my last examination of the chief detective and the witness Abrahamson was only to show that mistakes can be made, and in this case have been made with regard to the identity of the accused. Mr. Jurgens said at first it was another person who had sold the diamond to him, and it was only after the chief detective had treated the old man in, let us call it, a less polite manner, that he mentioned the name of the accused. The witness Abrahamson believed he received a visit from the accused on the same day the diamond was stolen. It appeared, however, that the lady whom he supposed was his client was dressed in clothes which she only became possessed of later in the day. We have Miss Frick's sworn evidence to the effect that she herself wore the braided costume between five and six o'clock, and only made a present of these clothes to the accused at about six o'clock.

”It is, as I have already said, not my object to accuse any other person, and I will give up the inquiry as to whether it was Miss Frick herself who visited the pawnbroker that day; my object is only to show that if Mr. Jurgens has mistaken another woman for my client, Evelina Reiersen, it is not at any rate the first time that day that she was the object of a mistaken identity.

”What I have now adduced ought in itself to be sufficient to change the opinion of the jury, if they have hitherto considered my client to be guilty. But I am in the fortunate position of being able to prove that what has hitherto appeared to be the most weighty evidence against my client is, on the contrary, the clearest proof of her innocence. I refer here to the circumstance that the witness, Mr. Howell, has declared that he, at the time when the theft must have been committed, had seen the accused in front of the cupboard where the diamond was kept, and that he had even photographed her in this position. The photograph, in which all will recognize my client, is now here in court. When I say that I can prove that this circumstantial evidence is false, I mean that here, also, we have a case of mistaken identity, and I can prove that the person who is photographed

here (he took the photograph in his hand) is not, and cannot be, the accused. The proof is a simple one, although I must confess that only an accident has enabled me to produce it. (The young counsel here pulled out a large magnifying glass from his pocket, and handed it, together with the photograph, to the judge.) Will the court, and the gentlemen of the jury, and I would ask my colleague, the public prosecutor, to do the same, look at the photograph through the magnifying glass? You will then, gentlemen, see that the person who has been photographed wears a ring on the ring finger of the left hand.

"Will you next examine the hand of the accused? When she was a little girl, she broke the ring finger of her left hand in a fall. The bone did not set properly, so that there is now a protuberance, which prevents her from wearing a ring on that finger."

The counsel then raised the young girl's hand so that all could see it, to which she quietly submitted, but without lifting her eyes from the floor and without a change of expression on her waxen face.

"All will be able to convince themselves of the truth of this. I do not think that any declaration from a medical authority is necessary. And, gentlemen, let the magnifying glass show you yet another thing. You will at once see on the left of the lady's head an object on the shelf above. It is the little ivory elephant with the clock, of which mention has already been made in the course of evidence. The glass, gentlemen, will enable you not only to see the clock in the forehead of the elephant, but also to plainly discover the position of the hands. What time do the hands show? They show the time to be twenty minutes to six.

"Where was my client at that time? On this point we have full information from the evidence before us. She had not returned by this time. She only came in through the garden gate at five minutes to six. And she could not, under any circumstance, be dressed at twenty minutes to six in the jacket which she only received from Miss Frick at six o'clock, or shortly afterward!

"Gentlemen, when you have assured yourselves as to the correctness of what I have told you, you will perhaps remember what the witness, Mr. Rodin, the able photographer, said in court:—

"'The photograph cannot lie!'

"With the permission of the court, I will postpone any further remarks till the jury have convinced themselves that everything is as I have stated."

* * * * *

For the first minute or so neither the judge's voice nor his hammer was of any avail; he had to submit to the loud applause which the public bestowed upon the young counsel, who bowed and smiled like an actor who is called before the

curtain.

* * * * *

But the space of a newspaper is limited, and I must conclude my report as quickly as possible.

The examination of the photograph took some time, as the judge and the jury had personally to assure themselves as to what the photograph could tell. To all appearances, they seemed to be satisfied with their investigations under the magnifying glass.

Mr. Rodin and another well-known photographer, both of whom had been summoned as experts, declared with the greatest confidence that the evidence of the photograph could be relied upon, and when a medical witness declared that no ring of the usual dimension could be worn on the finger of the accused, the affair was settled.

The jury disappeared, only to return at once, and the voice of the foreman rang out clearly when he pronounced the words "Not guilty" to the question, "Guilty or not guilty?"

* * * * *

Thus ends the account of the proceedings in one of our modern judicial dramas. No one can doubt that we shall hear of an epilogue which will probably result in a tragedy.

Last night we received information that as soon as the proceedings in court were over, Miss Sigrid Frick was arrested, and charged with the theft of her uncle's diamond.

* * * * *

CHAPTER III IN THE DARK

I put the newspaper cutting on the table, and looked at my listeners. Clara sat with her chin resting on her folded hands, and her elbows on the table, staring

straight in front of her. Monk, who had again retired to the darkest corner of the room, now came forward. He was very pale, but his voice was calm as he said:—

”Now I will continue. You must pardon me, if the rest of my story seems dry and businesslike, but it is the only way I can persuade myself to speak of it at all. There is, however, not much more to tell.”

”Yes, but tell me, Monk,—was Sigrid—Miss Frick, I should say—”

It was Clara who spoke. She got up eagerly and went across to Monk.

”No, excuse me, Mrs. Viller, allow me to continue—in any case, for a little while. You have promised to hear me, in order, if possible, to advise and help me, so you must bear with my whim and not interrupt me just now. Later, I will answer anything that you want to ask me.”

Well, there are several things that happened in court, which the reporter did not mention; though I do not think that his report, together with what I have told you, has left you in the dark with regard to anything that could be of any help in the clearing up of the mystery in which the diamond robbery at old Frick’s ended.

There is only one thing which I must mention, since the reporter of the *Morning News* did not include it. When the judge summed up, he took the opportunity to censure the conduct of the police in the case. He referred, he said, to the detective’s conduct with regard to lawyer Jurgens. He was certainly convinced that it had never been his intention to exercise pressure on the old man, but that he had in a passion laid hands on him, a circumstance which, at the turn events had taken in the case, appeared in a very unfavourable light. The detective had also committed another error in not mentioning the incident when he gave evidence in court. The judge felt himself obliged to declare that this conduct might have aided the condemnation of an innocent person.

Any one can understand in what a painful situation I found myself. The worst of it was, that I was obliged to admit that the judge was right,—painfully right. Also, the way in which I had conducted the case had contributed, to a great extent, in throwing a terrible suspicion upon the one who was the dearest to me in the world. So far, I did not as yet foresee the result of the turn which the affair had taken, and which in itself was so surprising, that one hardly had time to reflect before the judgment was given.

I went home immediately, and tried to think over my position; but even then I saw only darkness around me. So I pulled myself together and went to the chief superintendent’s office. He still sat there, although it was rather late in the evening. He was very serious.

”I have already been informed of what has taken place in court,” he said; ”and it pains me greatly to hear what has happened. My purpose in speaking of this, is to spare you giving any account of it. Wait! I have one thing to tell you

before you answer—one thing which you ought to know as soon as possible. I have given orders for the arrest of Miss Frick.”

I had expected that some such thing must happen, and I succeeded in assuming an indifference which was anything but what I felt.

“I knew this must happen, sir,” I answered, “and I have no doubt what I ought to do; I have come to ask you to accept my resignation in the police service. My written application I have not as yet made out, but you shall have it to-morrow. I ask you to consider it as already in your hands.”

The superintendent looked at me in a friendly way, pressed my hand, and said:—

“I am sorry, more sorry than you can imagine; but I neither can, nor will, ask you to take back your resignation. What you have now said was just what I was prepared to hear from you.”

“Have you heard, sir, everything that took place in the court to-day?”

“Yes, I have obtained a verbatim report from the officer who was present the whole time.”

“And what is your opinion?”

“My opinion? I understand you do not refer any longer to yourself; you are thinking of the young girl whom I have been obliged to arrest,—well, what shall I say to you? If I say that no one but Miss Frick could have taken the diamond, then you will be angry with me; and if I say the contrary, you will think I am speaking against my conviction—isn’t that so?”

He was right, and I remained silent.

As I moved to go, the superintendent took my hand again.

“You have met with a great misfortune, Monk,—a little carelessness on your part, a bagatelle which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, would have resulted in nothing, has, by force of circumstances, driven you from a post which you have filled with much energy and ability. And if I am not mistaken, a greater misfortune has befallen, or, in any case is likely to befall, one whom you hold dear. With regard to the first, you are a man of energy, and it is hardly necessary to ask you not to lose courage; you have done nothing wrong, and the world is wide and generally repays one for one’s labour. As for the latter, I have also some advice. Wait patiently! I read plainly in your face what you intend doing—you will use all your strength and energy in trying to prove this lady’s innocence, against whom everything now seems to tell, and it is far from my intention to dissuade you in this—perhaps you will succeed. This much, experience has taught me,—that nothing is impossible. But should you not succeed—and who can tell? do not make the mistake of ruining your life for the sake of a woman—kinder to yourself and to her to break and have done with, it at once, before it shall be too late. Remember, too, that what is, is inevitable, and that one cannot build a

house of bricks which are already crumbled to dust; break with it, the earlier the better—before it is too late—and do not attempt to produce the impossible from a thing which has already proved to be dust. If I can ever help you, now or later, then come to me without hesitancy.”

These were my superior’s friendly and fatherly words. In the years which have passed by I have only spoken with him once since then upon this matter.

* * * * *

I was at that time twenty-seven years old, and when the next day dawned, my courage and energy had returned.

The superintendent was right when he had read in my face the determination to leave no stone unturned, in order to prove the innocence of my fiancée—for she was still my fiancée. But I was not to proceed far in the matter before I discovered that my position at the time—for I was no longer at the head of a large detective department of the police—made my work both difficult and unremunerative. It seemed as if an inexorable fate had decided that the drama, as it had begun, should be played out to the end, and that no human intervention would be tolerated.

”Didn’t you see Sigrid at once?” asks Clara, suddenly.

”No, it was impossible; I’ll tell you just how matters stood: the very next day all the papers in the town began to speak of the conduct of the police as it was called. Some even hinted that I should be prosecuted, as my concealment of the truth had almost led to an innocent person being convicted. This, however, soon passed over, as my resignation was accepted without delay. But the result was that in many places I was received with distrust, and that the superintendent, with whom I had corresponded about the matter, dared on no account to give me permission to see the young girl who was under arrest.”

I have here some notes from my diary, following from that time on; let me read them to you. It is not my habit to keep a diary; that kind of self-confession has never been to my taste, but at that time I did it from purely professional reasons—in order to have notes to help me in my work.

Monk pulled out a small thick note-book and began to turn over the leaves.

”Oh no, don’t,” said Clara, at the sight of it; ”put away the book. I would rather you told it to us instead.”

Monk could not help smiling. ”I shall not use the book for long, Mrs. Viller; but I think it is best to get to the end of the story—the sooner the better. And it will save me much time if I may be allowed to read a few pages.” So Clara gave her permission and Monk read:—

”*June 23.*—Not possible to obtain permission to see Sigrid.—Tried, therefore,

to see old Frick. Ill! couldn't see me—I don't believe much in that illness. In the afternoon went to see Evelina's counsel, and asked him about the letter which had been delivered to him in court at the time when he asked for postponement. He refused again to give me any information about the letter or its contents; he was bound to secrecy, he said. I think very much hangs on this letter; some one must have given the lawyer weapons to use, not only in defence of Evelina, but against Sigrid. Who can it be? What can the motive be, and what is the object?"

I then spoke to the court attendant. He had received the letter from a commissioner, with injunctions to deliver it to the counsel for the defence, without delay. I shall try to find the commissioner, but that will perhaps take some days—in the meantime, time flies.

June 25.—Now I have spent two days in looking for the commissioner. I began with No. 1, and only when I had got up to 87 did I find the right man. He had had the letter from a little newspaper boy outside the grand café. At last I got hold of the little newspaper boy. He had received it from a "gentleman," but whether the gentleman was old or young, fair or dark, he could not remember—in fact, nothing—and there I stand!

I tried again to see old Frick. He said he was not at home, but in the afternoon he sent me the following letter:—

HONOURED SIR,—I had better at once inform you that I do not consider we two can any longer have any pleasure in each other's acquaintance. Neither Einar nor Sigrid Frick will ever again set foot in my house, and your name will never be mentioned here.

Your part, Mr. Monk, in the latter month's events, I am not so sure about, and I do not intend to trouble myself about it any further.

It is sufficient for me to know that you have assisted in the attempt to conceal the criminal conduct of my brother's children. That there may be circumstances which render your conduct excusable, I know well enough; but at any rate, I do not see why we should meet or see each other again.

Yours truly, BARTHOLOMEW FRICK.

Monk looked up from his notes. "Since then I have never spoken to old Frick."

"But you surely tried to get some explanation from him?"

"I tried, yes; but it was easier said than done. Since that time he has scarcely spoken with any one, least of all with me. He is as obstinate as an old goat. But

let me proceed, for the sooner I get to the end of these miserable reminiscences the better.”

June 28.—I spent the day in keeping my eye on the actor, Evelina, and her mother—a difficult task now, since I have to manage without my trusted constable, and exclusively rely upon myself or some wretched hireling. Evelina never goes out; she is said to be ill. Her mother enjoys greatly the rôle of martyr on her daughter’s behalf. She is said to have received a considerable sum of money from old Frick. The actor continues his gay life. He seems to have a little money, but nothing extraordinary.

I have spoken with Mr. Howell. He behaves and speaks like a gentleman, but ... I have no belief in him. He expressed the greatest regret in having been mixed up in the case. Nothing could have persuaded him that it was not Evelina he had photographed in front of the cupboard with the diamond in her hand. (Yes, but what does that help, when the hands of the clock and the dress tell another story.) He was going to England in a few days he said, whatever the police might say or do. He would not appear in court; but they had, of course, his evidence from the last proceedings.

I asked what old Frick had to say against his nephew Einar. Mr. Howell said he could not understand; he had in vain tried to bring the old fellow round. Mr. Howell apparently speaks very openly; but I have learned nothing new from him. Does he know nothing? or does he conceal something?

July 5.—A whole week gone, and I have done nothing! The time draws near when the case will come again before the court, and every one seems to be of the opinion—though it is dreadful to have to write it down—that Sigrid will be found guilty.

I have written twice to Einar Frick in Hamburg, but have not received any reply, although by telegraphing to his hotel, I have found out that he has been there and has received my letters.

It seems as if I am beating my head against a stone wall.

I have been to the pawnbroker, Abrahamson. At first I only saw a hump-backed clerk, who stared at me with a derisive smile, but afterward Abrahamson himself appeared. He said he had told everything he knew in court, and had no time to talk with me. It is very different now from the time when I was chief of the detective force!

The day before yesterday an important thing happened. The actor Frederiksen left by the night train for Copenhagen. I couldn’t keep him back, and the police wouldn’t stop him; and now I suspect that with him has disappeared one of the few possible chances of getting the robbery cleared up.

July 6.—All the morning papers announce to-day in big type the news that Evelina Reiersen has committed suicide; she has hanged herself in her own room

in her mother's house. All agree that she committed suicide while insane. After her arrest she had several times betrayed signs of insanity, which at last resulted in this deplorable act—so say the reports. All the papers speak in regretful terms of the event, and the *Truthseeker* and several other papers are untiring in expatiating upon the responsibilities which the "real culprit" and the police must take upon themselves for what has happened.

I hardly understand how I, in the long run, am going to hold out, powerless as I am to do anything.

July 7.—I went to-day to Mrs. Reiersen's to see if I could possibly find out if the dead girl had left behind her any message or confession. As I had expected, however, I was received by the worthy dame with a shower of curses and abuse. It was impossible to do anything in that quarter.

Old Frick seems entirely overwhelmed by his niece's guilt, and does not allow her name to be mentioned. He has, however, engaged the best lawyer in Christiania as her counsel. Will that be of any use?

July 9.—Only three days before the court meets, and not a step more forward! Yes, I have done something. I have spoken with the lawyer who will take up Sigrid's case. He confided to me that Sigrid had informed him that it was really she who had visited the pawnbroker that afternoon, to get him to lend her money on her trinkets; but she refused to explain how she wanted to use the money. The lawyer had impressed upon her that it was absolutely necessary that she should explain herself on that point, but the young girl was obdurate.

What can this mean?

What use could Sigrid have for four thousand kroners? and why couldn't she explain what she wanted them for? This has given me much food for reflection.

In the meantime, I asked the lawyer if he had taken note of the fact that the pawnbroker's time by the clock had made it impossible that Miss Frick could be back at Villa Ballarat at the time when the photograph was taken. According to the pawnbroker's account, she drove from there twenty-five minutes to six, and the clock in the photograph showed it to be twenty minutes to six. The way from Bishop Road to Villa Ballarat cannot be covered in five minutes.

The lawyer promised to prove this—but what could Sigrid want with four thousand kroners? What could she have to hide?

Monk closed his note-book.

Yes, thus far go my notes, and the rest is quickly told.

Three days afterward the case came before the court. I was myself called as witness, but my recollections of that day are very indistinct. I felt as if I were

walking in my sleep or in the throes of a dreadful dream. If I had been the accused I should have acted calmly and with presence of mind, I am sure. But I was not accused, though guilty of having been the cause of bringing the young girl whom I loved more than my life before a court of justice, and having her accused of having committed a despicable theft from her benefactor. It was some time afterward that I, through reading the accounts in the paper, got some idea of what had taken place that day in the court.

Nearly all the witnesses who appeared against Evelina were also summoned on this occasion. The evidence threw no new light on the case, so I do not think it necessary to go more than is absolutely necessary into the events of that terrible day.

When I gave my explanation of my visit to Mr. Jurgens, the public attempted to assail me with terms of abuse and derision. The judge soon called them to order, but I was subjected to the most offensive glances while I told the story of my own folly.

Sigrid did not attempt to hide her visit to the pawnbroker, but refused to explain for what purpose she required the money. On the other hand, she absolutely denied having set foot in the museum between five and half-past seven.

The public prosecutor in his address especially laid stress upon the following:—

The accused had herself admitted that she, on the day of the robbery, had taken most unusual steps to become possessed of a large sum of money, but that she had not succeeded in this at the pawnbroker's. It was clear that it was of the greatest importance for her to obtain at least four thousand kroners that day, and that all other ways out of the difficulty seemed to be closed against her.

She was one of the few who could, without creating suspicion, go in and out of the museum where the diamond was kept.

Then there was the photograph taken by Mr. Howell of her standing with the diamond in her hand at twenty minutes to six that afternoon. That the photograph represented Miss Frick, although she denied having visited the museum during that time, there was no longer any doubt, after an examination with the magnifying glass.

Finally, there was the evidence of the late chief detective, that Mr. Jurgens at the beginning had declared he had bought the diamond of the accused. Only later had the old man, frightened by the detective's improper behaviour, changed his statement.

These were, in brief, the chief points in the public prosecutor's address, and it is not necessary to add that after the evidence and his speech, there was scarcely a person in the court who doubted but that Miss Frick was guilty.

The counsel for the accused had no other defence than the point which I

mentioned in my diary; but this he turned to account beyond all expectation. It appeared that the time when Miss Frick left the pawnbroker's could be substantiated to the minute, by the circumstance that the pawnbroker on this occasion had looked at his watch and asked his clerk if the time was not twenty-five minutes to six. The clerk had then leant out of the window, looked at the clock in the church tower, and answered in the affirmative.

The counsel had also examined the driver who had driven Miss Frick,—I have perhaps forgotten to tell you that meanwhile I had been able to trace this person,—and he could clearly remember that on this occasion he had driven at his usual pace, neither more quickly nor more slowly.

The counsel had, as experiments, taken several drives with the same horse and carriage, and had found that the distance was never made in less than fifteen minutes, when driving at the usual pace, and at a more rapid pace not less than ten minutes.

He had thereby shown, he said, that if Miss Frick was the lady who had left the pawnbroker's at twenty-five minutes to six—which was now an established fact—it could not be she who had been photographed with the diamond in her hand at twenty minutes to six! That the little clock in the elephant's head was right to the minute, had been proved by Mr. Frick's evidence.

The public prosecutor, in the reply, stated that it was a well-known fact that there was often a difference of several minutes in the clocks of the town.

The counsel maintained that such a great difference as would be necessary in such a case, at least ten minutes, was scarcely possible. Altogether, he utilized this circumstance to the utmost, and made his final appeal to the jury so impressive that when the jury retired, there was great uncertainty as to the result.

Here Mr. Monk opened his memorandum book and produced a newspaper cutting, from which he read the conclusion of the counsel's address:—

"It would be foolish of me to maintain that I have proven that my client is not guilty of the theft of which she is accused. But I have the right to ask: Is there any one who believes that the public prosecutor has proved her guilt? I have, at any rate, shown that in order that the assertion of the prosecution may hold good, the young lady must have been in two places at the same time. If she had been at the pawnbroker's at the time when all the evidence went to show she was there, then she cannot be the person who was photographed by Mr. Howell with the stolen diamond in her hand.

"I admit that there is weighty circumstantial evidence against the young lady; but have I not also shown that there is also weighty circumstantial evidence in contradiction? All will agree that this is an unusual case. This robbery, which has now been twice before the court, in the form of two different charges against

two different persons, will remain a mystery, whatever the verdict of the jury may be to-day.

"I venture to say, that whatever your judgment may be to-day, we shall to-morrow hear that half of the public approve of it, and the other half disapprove.

"The theft is, and will remain, a mystery.

"Any one who was present at the former trial, will remember that when the case was nearly concluded, in fact, just before the jury retired, there was scarcely a person in court who was not convinced that the case was as clear as any could be, and that the conscience of the jurymen would not be troubled in any way by pronouncing a verdict of 'Guilty.' But an hour or two afterward all were agreed that they might with just as easy a mind pronounce a verdict of 'Not guilty.' Might not the same thing happen to-day?"

"I am not so fortunate, it is true, as my colleague, who was the counsel for the defence on the first occasion. I have not, at any rate, succeeded in producing evidence which would compel the prosecution to drop the case,—but I have at least succeeded in showing that if the public prosecutor is correct in his statements, then my client must be a super-natural being!"

The counsel concluded with a passionate appeal to the jury on behalf of his client, and sat down.

"The jury consulted for three hours," continued Monk, and when they at last returned into court, their answer to the question of "Guilty or not guilty" was: "No! Not guilty."

A sigh of relief escaped simultaneously from Clara and myself, and Monk looked up with a strange melancholy smile.

"Yes, I understand. I felt just as you now feel when the verdict was made known. The first impression was one of infinite joy and relief; but it was not to last long. The verdict was received by the public with deep silence; and when Sigrid was liberated, and about to leave the court, she was received with hooting and hissing by the large crowd which in an incredibly short time had collected outside. Stones were thrown after her carriage, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the police got her safely away."

"How terrible!" said Clara. "How could any one have the heart to torture the poor girl any further. Did they believe then that she was guilty?"

"Guilty!" exclaimed Monk, with another melancholy smile. "I don't believe there were ten people in Christiania the next day who were not convinced that Sigrid Frick had stolen her uncle's diamond, and that there were dark pages in her life which were the cause of her being in need of money. Then, besides this, she was looked upon as the cause of Evelina's suicide."

The next day the papers contained accounts of what had happened the day before in the court, and the trial was the general topic of conversation. No one

seemed to doubt that Miss Frick was guilty. The suicide of Evelina had especially tended to inflame the minds of the public. Most people were convinced that the cause of the suicide was, as I have already mentioned, the treatment to which she had been exposed while being accused of a crime of which she was innocent.

In one paper appeared a furious leader with the heading: "Is there one law for the rich, and another for the poor?" It dwelt at some length upon the position of the poor young girl in the service of the rich young lady. How the rich lady had stolen the diamond in order to use the money for—well, I will not repeat the words;—how the poor girl was arrested by the police, driven out of her wits, and eventually to suicide. How the police, who apparently seemed to be on a friendly footing with the rich lady, tried to screen her guilt, and how riches had eventually succeeded in getting the wealthy criminal acquitted.

The result of this article was that a large mob proceeded next day to Frick's villa, in the belief that Sigrid was still there, and broke all the windows, hooting and hissing all the time.

Old Frick naturally became furious, and, armed with his revolver and his sabre, he single-handedly attacked the mob which surrounded the house.

He was no doubt under the impression that he was followed by a force consisting of the coachman and the gardener; but these cautious warriors did not follow him further than the gate.

Fortunately, old Frick had forgotten to load his revolver, so no great mischief was done. He was at once surrounded and forced up against his railings. He managed, however, to use his sword, if not with dexterity, at least with such fury that it took some time before any one ventured to come near him.

He had succeeded in wounding several half-tipsy roughs, who attempted to close with him, when finally an ingenious young cattle driver caught up a garden seat and rushed at him, using this as a shield. Old Frick's sword got jammed in the seat; he was disarmed, and struck on the head with an empty bottle, and thrown to the ground. Some mounted police at last appeared on the scene, charged the crowd, and saved the old man, after which the mob dispersed quietly.

The blow which old Frick received on his head resulted in concussion of the brain. For several days he lingered between life and death, and has, since that time, owing to paralysis in his legs, not been able to leave his chair without assistance.

CHAPTER IV

MONK'S EXAMINATION

I haven't much more to tell you now, (continued Monk). A few days afterward, Sigrid left to join her brother in Hamburg, whence they both sailed for America, and I have not seen either of them since. With regard to the life I have led these last few years, you, Frederick, know about as much as I do myself. If I have not left the country, it was because an irresistible impulse forced me to haunt the place where my happiness and my expectations had been overthrown, and to try again and again to clear up the mystery which had destroyed the happiness of so many.

My profession of private detective has provided me with sufficient means, both in finances and other respects, to continue my attempts—attempts which up to now have unfortunately brought no results whatever.

At first I had many difficulties to contend against, before I could attain to the position I now occupy. The part I played in the diamond case had made me unpopular with the public, and all my friends advised me to leave the country.

Still, the public does not remain of the same opinion from one day to another. The feeling against me gradually subsided. I fancy people had an idea that a hard and entirely undeserved fate had befallen me and others concerned in this matter. I was fortunate in being able to clear up one or two mysterious affairs, and now, in short, I can no longer complain of want of sympathy from the public.

I have nothing more to add than that I still consider it the object of my life to unravel this mysterious affair. I have not followed the superintendent's advice, and I intend continuing as I have begun, if necessary, to the end of my days. All the people who have played a part in the events which I have told you of, I keep well under my surveillance, either personally, or through my agents. Sometimes I feel as if I could give up everything in despair, for, as I have told you, up till now I have no result to show. Then again my common sense and my experience—not my presentiments—tell me that the solution must come in time, perhaps before I expect it.

"But why have you decided so suddenly to go to America?" This time it was I who spoke.

"Some days ago," he replied, "I received the notice of Einar Frick's death. I shall once again speak to Sigrid. I have certain things to ask her about; perhaps she will now answer me."

We were all silent. Monk went over to the bookcase and began to put some books to rights which were disarranged on the shelf.

Clara got up and crossed over to him, but he did not turn round, although he must have heard her steps. He did not even look when she laid her hand on his shoulder.

"But even now, you have not told us everything!"

"Yes, everything that can be of interest to others."

"No, you are wrong, Monk," said my wife, in a friendly tone, not removing her hand from his shoulder. "Did you not ask us to help you?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well, and however strange it may seem, yet I believe that one of these little mice can this time help the lion. But you must first tell us everything. When Miss Frick left, why didn't you go with her? Perhaps you thought then that she had stolen the diamond?"

"No, I didn't—but—well, how can I explain myself; you will not understand me—I believe in her, and yet there are moments when—"

"You men are a miserable lot of creatures when it comes to a question of trust," said Clara, with unctiousness. "You, Monk, and very likely you, Frederick, would do the same. You do not hesitate to assure a woman that you respect and love her above everything in the world; but if only there comes a wretched photograph, or some accidental coincidence, then you believe the same woman to be capable of committing the lowest and most degrading of crimes. Yes, I speak not so much with regard to the robbery, as that she, if she were guilty, allowed another to suffer in her place! Let me tell you what passed between you and Sigrid, and then you shall tell me if I am right?"

Monk only nodded, with his face half turned away, and my wife continued in a severe tone:—

"You went to Sigrid and assured her that you believed in her innocence, in spite of all, and you proposed that you should get married at once and go abroad!"

Monk nodded again.

"But she answered that she read doubt at the bottom of your heart, and that it was better that you should both part; isn't that so?"

"Yes," answered Monk, turning round to us—he was dreadfully pale—"I tried hard to get her to tell me why she had attempted that day to get money at the pawnbroker's. If it could clear the matter and prove my innocence, she said, then she would do it; but as the affair stands, it would not serve any purpose, and only bring disgrace upon another.

"It was to get your brother out of some difficulty," I urged.

"It is of no use talking about it," she said. "It will not take away the doubt from your heart. Even if you fancy it gone, it will come again and again; and do you think we can get away from people's talk and malice? No, the world is too small for that! And if we got married, and had children, could we be sure that

they would never get to know of their mother's past? I have also a duty to fulfil to my brother; and in that you could not take part. To you he would always be the one who had poisoned our life.'

"Such were her words, as near as possible. I felt I had only empty and meaningless words to say in reply to them, and so we parted."

"There, didn't I tell you so!" exclaimed Clara. "It is your own doubt which is the cause of your weakness. That is the reason you have not been able to penetrate the darkness."

"I think you are wrong there, Mrs. Viller," answered Monk, gently, "but the work has been too much for my strength. I fancy it would have been too much for any man. Mention anything I ought to have done, and I think I can answer you that it has already been tried."

"Don't be angry," were Clara's next words, and this time they were as gentle as Monk's own. "I know you have as much feeling as you have common sense, and perhaps more feeling than most people; but with you men, reason always comes off victorious in the end. You cannot alter your natures, I suppose. Now we must see how we can help Monk, Frederick, as he can't help himself; isn't that so?"

"Yes," I answered as cheerfully as I possibly could; "it would be strange if we three, when we have put our heads together, should not be able to clear up the mystery. You have here what you hitherto have lacked, Monk—the experience of an expert in many branches, as represented by me, and a woman's intuition and instinct, as represented by Clara. But as a preliminary, Monk will have to be examined. Have you anything to ask Monk, Clara? You shall be the first, then my turn comes."

"Yes, I must begin," answered Clara, looking in a very friendly manner at Monk, as if to appease him if she had wounded him with her remarks. "Tell me, was not the Englishman, Howell, as he was called, in love with Sigrid? Didn't he pay his attentions to her, and wasn't he rejected?"

Monk began to smile. "I fancy he did try a little at first, but he soon saw that I had forestalled him, and so, with a good grace I'll admit, he left the field clear. If he had made any definite advances, I think Sigrid would have told me."

"Are you quite sure about that?" answered Clara, with an air of superiority. "One is not of course father confessor to one's fiancée. But can you tell me any other reason why he should hate both of you?"

"Are you sure he hated us?"

"Yes, I am quite sure about it; he is the cause of the whole mischief. The photograph was of course nothing but humbug."

Monk smiled resignedly. "The photograph was only too genuine."

"And then there was that wretched actor," continued Clara; "he left, I un-

derstand, just before Evelina committed suicide. Have you heard anything of him since? It was of course on his account that the young girl killed herself. I believe he first of all got her to steal the diamond, and then left her. That was the reason of the poor girl committing suicide."

"I also thought of that," was Monk's answer, "and I had him watched after he left Christiania. He went first to Gothenburg and later to Copenhagen. But it is not probable that the money which Jurgens paid for the diamond has at any time been in his hands. He lived the whole time from hand to mouth, and often in the greatest misery."

"Are you quite certain of this?" I asked. "If the actor didn't get the money, all my theories are upset."

"Yes, isn't that so?" said Monk, smiling again, in the same resigned way. "And you would have had the same experience, not only in one, but in ten points of the case, if you had weighed them and turned them over in your head as long as I have done."

"But there must be one theory which is right," I exclaimed. "Some one must have stolen the diamond!"

"Yes, that's the dreadful part of it all!" groaned Monk. "There is only one theory which can be applied to all that has happened in this dreadful affair, and that is—" here his voice sank almost to a whisper,— "and that is, that—that Sigrid took the diamond to help her brother, was photographed by Mr. Howell, and then sold the diamond to Mr. Jurgens. No, don't say what you want to say, Mrs. Viller. Rather bear in mind that it is my fixed determination, in a few days to go to America, and again offer Sigrid my hand. Can I better show my faith in her?"

Clara did not answer.

"Where is the actor now?" I asked.

"He died in delirium tremens, in a public hospital in Denmark. I had an agent there for some time, who tried to get something out of him, but it was of no use. The agent was under the impression that the actor knew nothing of the diamond robbery,—nothing of any importance to us, at least."

"And Mrs. Reierson—have you tried her?"

"By all possible means, through a third person. She will not see me. If I show myself to her, she swears and curses me for having brought about her daughter's death. Old Frick gives her a yearly pension; but as she has completely given herself over to drink, it does not last very long, and between each quarterly payment she lives in the greatest destitution."

"And Mr. Howell?"

"I have not lost sight of him, although it is often difficult enough to keep an eye on him. He leads the life of so many rich Englishmen. He spends the season in London, the autumn in the country, and the rest of the year in travelling. He has

a yacht, and has several times visited Norway in the summer. He has, however, been only three or four times in Christiania all these years, and then only for a short time. He has on these occasions stayed at Villa Ballarat with old Frick. My agent in England informs me that he is well known as a gambler and as a man who spends more money than he can afford. He has for many years paid frequent visits to a country house in Yorkshire,—Ashton Hall,—belonging to a rich gentleman, Mr. Ashton. They say it will end in his marrying the gentleman's eldest daughter, a lady who is no longer young. The reason for this long courtship no one can explain. They think he'll not swallow the bitter pill until he is obliged. Here, people believe that he will inherit old Frick's money. Very likely that is the reason he goes on courting so long. Very likely, too, the old man's death might put him on his legs again, and save him from marrying the lady in Yorkshire."

"You seem no longer to like the Englishman!"

"I have never liked him particularly, and, as I have told you earlier, his conduct frequently appeared to me to be suspicious. Yet I cannot very well account for the reason of my distrust for him. I have an idea that he played a part in the drama, which I do not comprehend. I believe your wife's instinct tells her the same."

"*Instinct!*" repeated Clara, witheringly. "We women must always hear, when we in some way or other hit upon a right solution, that it is our instinct which has come to our aid—never a word is said about logical deduction! Look here, Mr. Monk. What I mean to say is, that I am sure that Mr. Howell tampered with the photograph in order to ruin Sigrid. This result I arrive at from the following reasoning. If the photograph is to be relied upon, Sigrid must have had the diamond in her hand that day; but she denied this absolutely. No, don't try to avoid it, Monk! You are afraid to tell me that now I am illogical—isn't that what you call it?—like all women, and so you won't even look at me. But I haven't finished yet. Suppose Sigrid could and would tell a lie, what could have been easier for her than to admit she had that afternoon been into the museum, had taken out the diamond and looked at it for a moment, and then put it back in its place again? No one could have said a word against this explanation as to how the photograph was taken. No! Sigrid was not a fool; and you must admit that if she wanted to tell a lie, she would not do it in such a foolish way. Admit that I am right, Monk! All probabilities go to prove that Sigrid spoke the truth. She had not set foot in Mr. Frick's museum that day between five and half-past seven, and—the photograph was tampered with."

Monk could not help smiling; but it was the same smile—the hopeless smile with which the giant who has in vain attempted to lift a burden watches the dwarf endeavouring to lift it for him.

He went across to a small iron safe in the corner of the room, and came

back at once with a little object which he laid on the table before us. It was a small photograph placed between glass plates, which were held together by india-rubber bands.

"This is the photograph."

Both Clara and I stretched out our hands at the same moment, and Monk laid it on the table between us, together with an oblong magnifying glass of unusual size.

"Now you can look at it for yourselves. What cannot be seen with the naked eye can be easily discerned through the magnifying glass."

Clara and I used it in turn.

"I have to thank my old friend, the chief superintendent, that I am in possession of the photograph," continued Monk.

"At my earnest request he gave it up to me, but not till two years after the trial. He made me promise, however, that I should keep it in a fire-proof safe, and take the greatest care of it. Heavens! it was hardly necessary to request me to do that."

The photograph answered to the brief description which Monk had already given of it. It was three or four inches in height, but very narrow, so much so that little was to be seen but the girlish figure in front of the open cupboard with the shelves. These shelves were filled with all sorts of curiosities, which appeared most distinctly on the plate. On the whole, the photograph was unusually clear and distinct.

"Look at the girl's left hand," said Monk.

I held the magnifying glass over the photograph. "Yes, I see, she has a ring on the ring finger."

"Yes; and the finger is quite normal—not at all deformed."

"No, it is quite well shaped."

"You see the little elephant on the shelf over the cupboard, and the clock in its forehead? What time does it show?"

"Let me see! It is twenty-one minutes to six. The figures are not easy to distinguish, but the position of the hands is plain enough."

"Yes, although the elephant is scarcely three inches high, that and the other small things on the shelf over the cupboard are the masterpieces of an ivory carver in Naples. Do you see, for example, a little copy of Venus de Milo at the side of it?"

"Yes, I see it. But tell me, Monk, who does the girl in the photograph resemble, Miss Frick or Evelina?"

"Oh, Evelina! I was, of course, accustomed to see Sigrid in that costume—the braided jacket and the little hat with the bird's wing on it—so at first glance I might have doubted; but after a more careful inspection I should never have

hesitated in saying that it was Evelina,—she and no one else, if only this question of the finger hadn't cropped up."

"The photograph was examined, wasn't it?"

"If any photograph in this world has been examined, this is the one. As you may remember, the photographer Rodin and another expert gave their opinion upon it at the first trial. Later on it was examined at the physical laboratory of the university. All were of one mind in saying that no attempt had been made either to tamper with or to make any alteration in it,—neither by retouching nor by any other means."

While I continued to converse with Monk, Clara took possession of the picture. I handed her the magnifying glass, but she pushed it aside, and continued studying the photograph without once looking up.

"You must be quite tired," I said to Monk, "with all our questioning, but if it will not be too tedious to you to answer me, I should like to examine you a little."

"On the contrary, I would prefer nothing better than listening to your remarks. What I wish is to get out of this vicious circle in which my thoughts have run during the last six years."

"Have you any guarantee that this photograph was taken that afternoon—the 10th of May—between five and half-past seven?"

"Yes, only too positive proof; but the report in the *Morning News* is perhaps not sufficiently clear. The facts are these: The snap-shot apparatus used by Mr. Howell had a roll of prepared paper sufficient to take ten photographs. I suppose you have seen these apparatus. For every new picture you want to take you turn a little screw outside, which is connected with the roller, until a new number appears on the indicator. When all the paper on the roll has been used, it is taken out, in order to get the pictures developed, and a new roll is inserted. On the back of this photograph you will find number ten printed. Number nine, which was also produced in court, was a group which Mr. Howell had taken in the museum before Jurgens left. The next, that is to say, number ten, must therefore have been taken in the interval before the roll was handed over to the photographer,—in other words, between five and seven o'clock. You will at once see that even if Mr. Howell had wanted to deceive us, it would not have been possible."

"Yes, I fear, it is only too true. I have now nothing else to ask, except whether the hands of the watch in the elephant's forehead might not have been moved backward, or forward, by some one, either accidentally or purposely?"

"You ask the same question which I have been asking myself for many years. What we do know is that the watch was right at five o'clock, and again at half-past seven. It is impossible that it could have been altered in the meantime. It appears that the glass which covers the dial is not movable. If the watch has to be regulated, the whole of the clockwork must be exposed by removing a small

metal plate under the stomach of the elephant. On examining the elephant, two days after Evelina's acquittal, it was found that there were no marks whatever to be found in the thin layer of dust which had settled in the joint between the ivory and this plate."

"But then we have the question of the time to settle," I said. "It proves that Miss Frick could not have returned from the pawnbroker at the time which the watch in the photograph shows. As far as I understand you, it was this circumstance alone which saved her at the trial."

"I'll tell you exactly what I think. It was that fact which saved her as far as it gave the jury a pretext to answer 'No' to the question whether she was guilty or not—or, more correctly, an excuse for not answering 'Yes' to it. I do not believe there was a person in the court who, in their heart of hearts, did not believe that Sigrid was guilty. But her counsel very cleverly laid stress on the obscurity which enveloped the whole matter, and the possibility that they might give an unjust verdict and that the truth afterward might transpire. They, or, more correctly, five of them, chose, therefore, so the rumour goes, and I think it is correct, to answer 'No,' as the discrepancy with regard to the time gave them the opportunity to do. You understand what I mean?"

"Yes, I understand; but what is your personal opinion with regard to the discrepancy in the time?"

"Well, for my own part, I cannot deny that those who believed in Sigrid's guilt were right in saying: Supposing that the driver had driven rather more quickly than ordinarily, then the discrepancy in the time would not be greater than five minutes. It might easily happen that this difference in the time was due to the fact that the clocks in the different parts of the town did not tally."

"May I take the photograph home with me?"

It was Clara who interrupted us. She had sat staring hard at the picture, and now she stood before Monk with it hidden in her hand.

Monk reflected a moment.

"If you will promise me to keep it in Frederick's safe when you have not got it in your hand."

"I promise everything," was Clara's answer; "and among other things, that the photograph has been tampered with!!!"

There was such conviction in my wife's voice that Monk's cheeks flushed with excitement. This time I saw nothing of the hopeless smile. He did not have a chance of replying, however, for Clara began hurriedly to put on her hat and cape.

"Come now, Frederick, it is past three in the morning, and to-morrow we have still another day's work."

"Goodnight, Monk."

"Goodnight."

"Stop a minute; two things I must ask you before we go. Where does Mrs. Reiersen live?"

"She lives in her old den in Russelök Street, No. 44."

"Where could one find the clothes which Evelina had on that day when the robbery was committed? I mean the hat and jacket which she wears in the photograph."

"Very probably Mrs. Reiersen still has them, if she hasn't sold them. They were produced in court, but were later on naturally given back to the unhappy girl's mother. But why do you ask about them? You know, of course, that—"

"That is my business for the present; good night, once more."

The last conversation was carried on between Clara and Monk. I listened to them in astonishment. What in all the world did Clara mean by these questions?

As we wandered homeward in the moonlight, with Clara on my arm, I tried to find out what her purpose had been with regard to her last questions to Monk.

"You surely don't intend to visit Mrs. Reiersen?"

"I don't intend to tell you," was the reply; "but even if I do, what harm is there in that?"

"No, of course there's no harm; but according to Monk's description, there was nothing very prepossessing about Mrs. Reiersen six years ago, and in the course of these years she is not likely to have changed for the better."

"Don't let us talk about it any more. Remember I have been to less prepossessing houses before in my life, on mysterious errands. Do you remember that time when I paid my fruitless visit to the pawnbroker, and, in my despair, had to go to Monk?"

"Yes, you were lucky that time," I answered gayly. "If you hadn't gone that day to Monk, you would never have met me, and then perhaps you would never have been married."

"Of course I do not want to keep any secrets from you, either big or small," said Clara. "It is my intention to go to Mrs. Reiersen to-morrow morning. But you shall not go with me; first, because I consider it will serve my purpose better if I go alone. Men are such blunderers, you know. She is naturally suspicious about men, and would perhaps recognize you as a friend of Monk's, and secondly, I am very anxious to carry out my little plan all by myself. Fancy, if I can help him, as

he once helped me,—wouldn't that be a triumph!"

CHAPTER V

THE MOST IMPORTANT CHAPTER IN THE BOOK.

CLARA ACTS THE DETECTIVE

"It's time to get up, sir. Missus said as 'ow I must get you up by half-past nine."

I looked up in astonishment. In the doorway stood our red-faced country servant girl nodding good-humouredly at me.

"Where is your mistress gone?"

"Missus went out at half-past eight, and said as 'ow I must wake you up and have the breakfast ready by ten o'clock."

There was no mistaking this order, so I hurried up, a little ashamed at having slept so long.

No sooner was I dressed, than there was a ring at the front doorbell, and in stepped Monk with a very serious face.

He was not one of those who are much affected by one or even two nights of sleeplessness, but to-day he looked unusually tired and weary.

"I'm afraid you haven't had a good night. It was dreadfully late when we left you; we shouldn't have kept you up so long!"

"It was rather I who kept both of you up so late. But where is your wife gone?"

"Clara went out at half-past eight, the girl says; but she is sure to be home soon. Why do you ask?"

"She telephoned to me a quarter of an hour ago. She told me to come here at once, as she had something of importance to tell me."

"She must have telephoned from some place in town," I answered, somewhat surprised.

"Your wife made some very sensible remarks about the photograph, yesterday," said Monk, hesitatingly. "Has she said anything more on the subject?"

"Hullo, Monk," I answered, laughing; "so you've come to consult Clara Viller, the private detective!"

Monk hadn't time to answer, for in came the very person we spoke of. Her cheeks were rosy with the sharp morning air. In her hand she carried an untidy, badly packed, brown paper parcel.

"Please excuse me, Mr. Monk, for keeping you waiting; but I was obliged to call in at the charcuterie establishment and get something tasty for Frederick's breakfast. Such a gourmand as he is! For you, I have got something else. But take a seat at the table and have a cup of coffee; I will just run and slip off my things—I shan't be gone a minute."

She vanished from the room just as suddenly as she had appeared.

Monk and I sat down at the breakfast table, and Clara soon joined us. Both she and I did good justice to the viands, but Monk only played with his knife and fork.

When we were finished, Clara asked me for the key to the safe in my office.

She returned with the photograph and the magnifying glass, and laid them beside Monk on the table. Monk and I looked at her in astonishment. She also placed the brown paper parcel near.

"Yesterday I promised to show you that the photograph had been tampered with. I could have done it at the time, but I was anxious to refute all the objections which I knew you and Frederick would bring forward, and that is why I waited until to-day. The matter is soon settled; the lady who stands in the photograph has on a little hat with a feather in it. On which side is the feather?"

Monk glanced at the photograph. "On the right side!"

"Yes, quite so; now do you think that any lady wears feathers on the right side of her hat?"

"No,—now I come to think of it, ladies usually wear feathers on the left side of their hats," Monk said, looking uncertainly at us both.

"*Usually*, do you say? Not at all! No lady ever wears feathers on the right side."

"There may be something in what you say, Mrs. Viller," Monk's voice was still somewhat uncertain; "but this is of course only the little wing of a woodcock, and Evelina—Miss Frick—I mean the lady in the photograph—might for once have placed it on the other side."

"Not to mention," I added, "that the lady in a hurry might have put on the hat the wrong way."

"That is exactly the argument I expected!" shouted Clara, triumphantly. "That's just the way men argue; but see here! Here is the selfsame hat which Evelina and Sigrid wore that day the diamond was stolen. Now you can see for yourselves!"

She tore the paper off the parcel and drew out a little green felt hat with a brown wing in it, and showed it to Monk.

Monk jumped up and clutched the hat greedily. His hands trembled with excitement.

"I have bought it from Mrs. Reierson to-day," continued Clara. "I pretended

that a rich English lady was collecting curiosities from celebrated trials. As it was fortunately rather far on in the quarter, I could see that Mrs. Reiersen was apparently in great need of money. She was even sober."

Monk sat with the hat in his hand, staring at it; I went up to him.

"The feather is sewn fast," he muttered, "and there are no signs that it has ever been fixed on the other side."

"But what if she had put on the hat the wrong way?"

Clara laughed heartily.

"Here, you shall see for yourselves!" She snatched the hat out of Monk's hand and set it on her own head.

I collapsed.

The feather slanted backward as it did in the photograph when the hat was put on properly. But if it was turned back to front, as Clara now had it, it slanted forward in a ridiculous manner.

There could be no mistake—the photograph had been tampered with!

"Are you both convinced?" exclaimed Clara.

"Yes," I answered, "it is all fraud and trickery."

"This is a very strange affair," said Monk, and began again to examine the hat which Clara had put in front of him.

In the meantime I took the photograph and the magnifying glass and began again to examine it. Perhaps there's something else to discover, I thought to myself.

Suddenly I laid down the magnifying glass and leant back in my chair, roaring with laughter. The other two thought, no doubt, that I had gone mad.

"That's a bit too much!" I exclaimed. "The person who has got up this photograph must have been audacity or ignorance personified; just imagine that such a thing as this hasn't been found out before! Look at Venus de Milo! ha, ha, ha, ... ha! Do you know the Venus de Milo, Monk?"

"Do you mean the little copy in ivory which stands in Frick's museum, and which has come out in the photograph you have there?" Monk's voice was gentle enough; but I saw by his face that he was full of excitement and expectation.

"Let me see!" Clara rushed forward and snatched the photograph and the magnifying glass out of my hand.

"What is the matter, then, with this Venus? As far as I can see by the photograph the little ivory copy must be quite a work of art, but I can't see anything remarkable about it."

"No, because she has got no hat or clothes on her. But look here—" I turned round to Monk—"how many arms has Venus de Milo?"

"Only half an arm on the right side, and none on the left."

"But this one has half an arm on the left side and nothing on the right. I

can't understand it," remarked Clara. She had kept hold of the picture, but now passed it on to Monk, and looked at me sceptically.

"There, you can see!" I said triumphantly. "When a woman has fixed a feather on the wrong side of her hat, you can detect it at once; but when a woman has her only arm placed on the left side, instead of the right, then you don't notice it. But what is the matter with Monk?"

He had been looking at the picture for a moment through the magnifying glass, when he suddenly let both fall and jumped up from his seat. He placed one hand over his eyes, and kept it there for some time. Then he let it fall and stared into space, muttering: "What a fool and an idiot I have been! I pretend to be a detective! I am blind—completely blind! I tried to judge others, and yet have not been able to see before my own nose! I am not worth the dust I eat!"

"Hold hard!" I shouted, laughing, "you don't seem to eat much dust; you live plainly, we may say, but well. I suppose you mean the dust beneath your feet."

To my astonishment, Monk still remained standing and staring into space, while he repeated:—

"The dust beneath my feet."

I often think of that scene, and how strangely we may act when the brain is really at work. Monk afterward told me that he hadn't the faintest idea what words he had uttered at the time, but that during the few seconds which elapsed, the whole story of the affair which had taken up so many years of his life again passed through his brain—not in its old guise, but in quite a new form; in a new light, which helped him to see clearly through the veil of mystery which had hitherto enveloped the thing.

But suffice it to say that Monk soon became himself again, or, better still, an improved edition of the depressed and resigned man we had seen for the last few days. His eyes sparkled and his lips trembled with joyous emotion, as he stood before Clara and me, and alternately shook our hands.

"All is clear now! I can prove that Sigrid is innocent. It is as clear as the day; and I can also prove who the scoundrel is"—here a dark shadow overspread his face—"who is the author of all this wretched treachery."

"But how?"

"It is soon explained," answered Monk. "Tell me, why was it that Evelina was acquitted? Because it was proved that she could not be the person who appeared in the photograph—do you remember?"

"Yes, of course! First of all, because the person in the photograph has a ring on the third finger of the left hand, while Evelina, on account of an injury to her finger when a child, could not get a ring on this finger."

"Yes, quite right; and then?"

"Then the photograph showed the time to be twenty-one minutes to six; and at the time, it was proved that Evelina was at her mother's."

"Quite so; but in the photograph, as you and your wife have shown me, a feather appears on the right side of the hat, although it should appear on the left, and the Venus de Milo has an arm on the side where there should be none—but no arm where there ought to be one. If, then, the person in the photograph in the same way has also her left arm where her right should be, and vice versa, then the great point raised by the prosecution falls to the ground. Isn't that so? It is her right-hand finger which bears the ring."

"Yes, you are right; but the time? The clock in the elephant's forehead?"

Instead of answering, Monk went over to a little alarm clock which stood on the writing table.

He first set to work to move the hands, carefully shielding the dial from us; then he signed to us to follow him, and he led the way over to a long mirror at the other end of the room. He placed Clara and me in front of the mirror, he himself standing behind us, holding up the clock.

"Look in the mirror now, and tell me what the time is."

"Twenty-one minutes to six," answered Clara and I at the same moment.

"Now turn round and look at the clock—well, what do you say now? It is twenty-one minutes past six, isn't it?"

It was now Clara's and my turn to make our deductions. "You mean, then, that the picture is altogether a fraud? It is just as if everything had been turned about, so that left becomes right and right becomes wrong."

"I mean," answered Monk, briskly, "that the photograph itself is all right, and the person who is in the photograph is Evelina Reiersen. At the moment when she was photographed, she wore a feather on the left side of her hat, in her left hand she held the diamond, and on the right hand she wore a ring. The time was twenty-one minutes past six."

"But how—?"

"I'll soon tell you. The whole secret lies in the fact that *the photograph was taken from a reflection in a mirror!*"

"In a mirror?"

"Yes, in a mirror."

"You are right! That explains all!"

"Yes, all; and even a little more which, perhaps, you have not thought of. Thank heaven the scales have fallen from my eyes, and I can see once more!"

"This is no time for Biblical language, my dear Monk; let us hear what you mean by 'even a little more.'"

"You are right! Well, we have got so far that we know the picture has been taken in a mirror; but in what mirror?"

"Well, that is for you to find out; both Clara and I have done our duty."

"You certainly have; and I shall manage the rest—at least I hope so. On the wall just opposite the cupboard in the museum—the one which appears here in the photograph—there is, right enough, a mirror, a tolerably large one, and it is in that mirror that the photograph was taken."

"But then, the person who took it must have stood right beside Evelina, and he could not very well have avoided being included in the photograph." It was Clara who made this remark.

"You are quite right, Mrs. Viller; but he stood so much to one side that he did not come within the frame of the mirror. To prevent the frame from showing in the photograph, he has clipped it on both sides. That is why the picture is so narrow."

"This is all very well," I felt compelled to remark, "but there is one thing which upsets the whole of your fine theory. Is it at all likely that Evelina would allow any one to stand beside her and photograph her in the mirror, while she was about to steal a diamond, or, more correctly, would she choose the moment to steal the diamond while she was being photographed?"

"Yes, it was just that point which I found to be the most difficult, a little while ago, when I was building up my theory, so to speak; but I have happily solved that question, and the solution opens up a still larger vista to us."

"When you were building up your theory, you say? Do you mean those seconds a little while ago, when you stood with staring eyes, and muttering something about eating dust?"

"It is possible that I behaved rather strangely," laughed Monk; "and I haven't an idea how long I was away from this world. But even if it was for only a few seconds, they were, at any rate, more than sufficient to reveal to me what had really taken place behind the scenes, and which I, until now, have been quite deceived about. Just listen! If you remember my description of the little house in Frick's garden, of which the museum was a part, you will remember that from the museum there is a door leading to the fire-proof room. This door is just at the side of the cupboard which we have referred to so often. The only way in which one could, by aid of the mirror, photograph a person without being noticed in front of the cupboard, would be by standing inside the fire-proof room, leaving the door of the museum ajar."

"Do you mean that the Englishman had been inside old Frick's fire-proof room? The door of that surely wouldn't be open?"

"No, it is a strong iron door of which old Frick had the key; but for a clever man, whose time was his own, it would not be a difficult matter to procure a false key. You remember that Howell had had the entrée to the museum whenever he liked, for many months."

"But what business had the Englishman in there? He must have been a great scoundrel; and there is no reason why he should not help himself to what he could find. But perhaps there was not much cash there, and besides, you have not said anything about old Frick being robbed of any."

"You are right. I cannot yet quite see what he wanted in old Frick's fire-proof room. But one thing you can be certain of, and that is, that he was there for no good. In some way or other we must get old Frick's permission to visit the room, as you call it. I fancy that is where we shall find the key to the mystery. But how shall we be able to see him? He won't receive me, and I am afraid he will have heard of our friendship, and so refuse to see you, Frederick."

"I shall manage to see old Frick," said Clara, "and get you admitted, as well. But I am ashamed of you, Monk! Have you quite forgotten Sigrid?"

"Forgotten Sigrid!" answered Monk, blushing like a peony.

"Yes, forgotten her, I say. What was the exact time by the clock when the photograph was taken in the mirror?"

"It must have been twenty minutes past six."

"And the whole of the time between six and seven Sigrid sat with her uncle, drinking tea with him. Wasn't that so?"

"Yes."

"Then her innocence is proved, whether the Englishman had been inside old Frick's fire-proof room, or not. Why don't you telegraph to Sigrid at once? Why haven't you done so half an hour ago? Rather than marry a detective, I would see myself—"

Monk tried to answer this terrible volley, but was scornfully sent about his business.

So it was arranged that Clara should go to old Frick, and as soon as Monk and I had telegraphed to New York, we were to go to Villa Ballarat and wait outside till Clara gave a signal that the siege was raised.

CHAPTER VI

OLD FRICK AGAIN

As Monk had told us, old Frick had been for many years lame, and a prisoner to his invalid chair.

Imagine, then, Monk's and my surprise when we, on entering Villa Ballarat,

after having been sent for from our post outside, found the master of the house standing in the middle of the room, and Clara sitting smiling in a chair.

It is not necessary to describe the meeting between him and Clara, although my wife, at the time, gave a full account of it.

Suffice it to say that she boldly entered the lion's den and, without much ceremony, began upbraiding old Frick with his hard treatment of his brother's children.

"If your nephew has erred," she said, "he was young at the time, and in bad company—that I can vouch for." She was thinking, no doubt, of Mr. Howell. "As far as your niece is concerned, you have judged her, as the whole world has judged her, on suspicion, without taking into consideration her character."

Old Frick had got red in the face at these words, and his arms and legs had begun twitching violently.

Clara was a little afraid the old man would have a fit, but remembering the old saying, "Joy does not kill," she continued, quite undisturbed: "Something has, however, happened, which you have not deserved, Mr. Frick. Monk and two friends, my husband and myself, have discovered, as we shall prove, that she has had nothing whatever to do with the disappearance of the diamond; it is the scoundrel Mr. Howell who is at the bottom of it all. In fact, in a short time you may have your niece back again, and for the remainder of your life you'll have an opportunity of making amends for your mistake."

There is no doubt Clara was most successful in her appeal; for instead of old Frick having a fit, he suddenly rose from his chair, stumbled across to Clara, and in a trembling voice asked her for a fuller explanation. The excitement had cured his lameness; and though he never entirely regained the full use of his legs, yet from that moment he was, at any rate, able to move about by himself.

I shall not dwell on the meeting between old Frick and Monk and myself. Many minutes had not elapsed before we seemed to have known each other for many years. He had gained a respect for Clara which, I think, will last to the end of his life.

Only the most necessary explanations were given,—happily Monk was a man who expressed himself briefly and clearly,—and so it was decided to adjourn to the museum in the garden. Old Frick took with him a large bunch of keys which lay on the table beside his invalid chair, at which he now cast a scornful glance, as well as at the servant who came forward to wheel his master. There was no necessity for more witnesses, so the servant, greatly to his surprise, was dismissed, and with Frick leaning upon Monk's and my arm, we set out for the museum.

It was with very mixed feelings that Clara and I saw the scene of the events which had for three days entirely engrossed our thoughts. I do not doubt that

Monk and old Frick were just as much affected, even if their feelings were of quite another kind.

We entered the pavilion in the garden and proceeded through the museum. Everything was in exactly the same state, old Frick and Monk said, as it was six years before.

Old Frick pulled out a key and opened the door into the fire-proof room.

As if by a tacit understanding Clara went across and stood in front of the cupboard in which the black tortoise glistened—which was opened by old Frick—while we others went into the room and pulled the door almost to, after us. There, sure enough, through the opening, our gaze involuntarily fell on the large mirror just opposite, and in the glass we saw the reflection of the cupboard and the shelf above it, with the little elephant and the Venus de Milo, and Clara's figure with her back to us.

"Confound it all!" shouted old Frick, "it is just as Monk says. The rascal has been standing in here and photographing her!"

Clara said she must also see it; she went into the room, while I took her place.

But Monk did not allow us to lose any more time.

"Have you missed anything from the fire-proof room, Mr. Frick?" he asked. "The Englishman must have had some reason for providing himself with a key to fit it."

"No," answered old Frick, after having considered a moment, "I keep nothing in here but documents and papers, which only concern me. Money I always kept in the iron safe in the office."

"There are two iron safes here," said Monk.

"Yes," answered old Frick, "in the larger safe I keep family papers, etc., which are of no value to any one. In the small one over there—which is of course nothing but an iron box, but is provided with an unusually ingenious lock—I keep my will, and a list of what I possess."

The large safe was opened, and a lamp was brought in from the museum. The safe, with its contents, was carefully examined, but nothing unusual could be discovered.

"Now comes the turn of the box," said Monk. "Will you help me to bring it out into the museum, Frederick?"

Although the whole thing was not more than sixteen or twenty inches square, it was so massive that we had to use all our strength to move it out into the daylight.

It was a handsome steel box, the four sides and the lid being ornamented with chased arabesques.

Old Frick brought out a key of unusual shape.

"Wait a bit, Mr. Frick," said Monk, holding up his arm; "when was the last time this box was opened?"

"Six years ago," said Frick, slowly, "when I altered my will—God be praised that I can alter it yet once again!"

"Did Mr. Howell know anything about the will?"

"Yes, of course. I made him my heir to all which does not go to charities, and legacies, and suchlike. It is about £30,000. At first I had divided it equally between Sigrid, Einar, and him, but then—then—well I don't think it necessary to explain the rest; but then came this business, and I struck Sigrid's and Einar's names out."

"And he knew where you kept it?"

"Yes; a day or two before he left, I read it to him, here in the museum, and put it in the box, while he was looking."

Monk was all the time examining the box most carefully, and some time passed before he spoke.

"I thought as much!" he exclaimed, with his old genial smile. "Look here!"

We stooped down to see the better. He had turned the box over so that the side which had stood against the wall in the fire-proof room was uppermost. A number of artistically interwoven spirals were chased in the steel. With a penknife he scraped away the rust and dirt from one of them,—it was about five or six inches in diameter. A number of small, round spots could then be seen. He took a pin, placed its point on one of the spots, and pressed it, when, to our great surprise, the needle appeared to sink into the steel.

"Is there a hammer here?" He looked around, and his eye rested on an old axe from the bronze age. "That will do."

A strong blow in the centre of the circle—and to our great astonishment the round steel dial disappeared into the box.

"Well, hang it all!" shouted old Frick; "but how in all the world—?"

"It is simple enough, but none the less ingeniously done," answered Monk, dryly. "Mr. Howell couldn't manage the lock, and so he bored a number of small holes in one of the spirals, and afterward, with a watch-saw, he sawed through the space between them. He has shown himself to be a clever craftsman—that can't be denied. When he had done what he wanted to do with the contents, he replaced the piece, filled the holes with putty, and smeared them over with rust and dirt."

"Then he must have stolen the deeds!" said old Frick, pressing forward and putting his big fist through the hole in the box. "No; here are both the envelopes, at any rate!"

He managed, though perhaps with some difficulty, in dragging out two envelopes—one was very thick, the other somewhat thinner.

"No, here is the will," he muttered, pointing to the thin packet, "and here are the deeds. Both with my seal unbroken."

"A seal is easily broken and put right again," answered Monk; "but tell me one thing before we examine the packets. Has any one else except Mr. Howell seen the will and list of your possessions?"

"No," exclaimed old Frick, with decision; "lawyers have only been sent into the world by the devil, to do mischief. I wouldn't have anything to do with them. I went to the sheriff and got him to draw up the formula for me, and then I wrote the will myself. Howell knew that, as well, confound him! That such a father should have such a son!" he muttered, in quite another tone of voice.

"Well, let us open the packets, then," said Monk; "we shall perhaps find more traces of Mr. Howell's fingers."

The small packet was opened, and we all leant over to look at the will.

It was drawn in the usual legal form, and told briefly that Frick bequeathed his curiosities and collections to the state, all his movable property—ready money, bank shares, etc., etc.,—to Mr. Reginald Howell; house property, mortgages, etc., to the university, the Royal Society for Science, and other institutions.

Everything was fully specified, and the sums either given exact, or reference was made to a list appended.

"Well, everything here seems all right; it is exactly as I wrote it myself. The coachman and gardener have signed as witnesses. I gave them each five thousand kroners cash, to avoid including them among the legatees."

"Are you quite sure, Mr. Frick?" said Monk, as he leant over the paper. "Here is a figure which looks as if it had been erased."

"Let me see! Yes—what the devil is this? My house, property, shares, etc.," he read, "which, according to the list, amount to about 1,000,000 kroners,—but, bless me! I possess nearer 1,900,000, which is nearly the double, and that was what I wrote—"

"There you are! We shall get at it, little by little," said Monk, with his most genial smile. I hadn't seen him in such a good humour for a long time.

"But I don't understand," grumbled old Frick. "What motive can he have in making me out to be poorer than I am? He doesn't get the 900,000 kroners which have been erased!"

"Let us look at the list and the mortgages," answered Monk, just as genially. "We shall be sure to find the solution."

The other envelope was opened.

I read out the list, and old Frick opened the mortgages and deeds in the order I read:—

"No. 177 Drammen Road, 'deed.'"

"Yes, here it is."

"Karl Johans Street, 77, 'deed."

"Yes, that's all right."

Etc., etc.

"Mortgages to the amount of 27,000 kroners, in the farm Hoff, in Hedemarken."

"Yes, here it is."

And so we went on.

"It was a long business," I said; "but we've come to the end at last."

"End!" shouted old Frick. "But it hasn't come to an end! The plum is always at the bottom, and a fine plum it is too!"

"What do you mean? There's nothing more on the list."

Old Frick fumbled about in the empty envelope.

"And nothing more here, either! He has stolen the mortgage deed in Ashton Abbey, and—" Old Frick tore the list out of my hand. "Just look here! Confound him! If he hasn't cut off the bottom part of the list, so that the last item is missing! But bless me, if I can understand what satisfaction he can get out of this mortgage."

"Nor I," I muttered; "mortgages are not papers payable to bearer, so any one can make them into ready money. You need only write to England to get a new copy of the mortgage."

"Monk knows very well what it all means," exclaimed Clara; "he is only raising our curiosity. If I had known that you would so soon begin with your superior detective ways, I wouldn't have helped you so quickly with the photograph,—that you may be quite sure about."

She glanced with comic exasperation at Monk, who, in return, only smiled pleasantly.

"I must admit that at this moment all is clear to me; but the last knot has only been unloosened two minutes ago. Tell me, Mr. Frick, what mortgage is it that you now speak of, and what was the amount of it?"

"Don't you remember," answered Frick, testily, "I once told you of an old rascal, Davis by name, and how I was lucky enough at last to get at him and make him pay me my share of the money which he had stolen?"

"Yes, of course I remember."

"Yes; and I, also."

"And I, also."

Old Frick looked at Clara and me in astonishment.

"I have told them all about the affair," remarked Monk. "Let us just hear some more about Mr. Davis."

"Well, there isn't much more to say about it. He was to pay me £50,000, but he had no ready money, as he had invested all his funds in a large estate, and was

quite willing to take a mortgage on it. It suited me just as well as ready money, for the estate was worth more than double that. This is the mortgage which has been stolen and cut off the list."

"Well, then, the total sum of 1,000,000 kroners would be right, instead of 1,900,000 kroners," said Monk; "for £50,000 is just 900,000 kroners."

"Yes, that is true; but he can't do much with it. As Mr. Viller says, he can't sell the mortgage without my signature."

"Did any one know you were in possession of that mortgage?" asked Monk.

"No, no one in this country: those rascally lawyers I have always kept at a distance, and no one has had a chance of meddling with my papers."

"No one except Mr. Howell," was Monk's dry reply. "But listen here, my friends! I will put a question to you. But excuse me, Mr. Frick, if I first ask you to answer me. If all this had not happened to-day, do you think you would ever have opened these envelopes again?"

"No," said old Frick, decidedly; "when my last hours approached, I might perhaps have had the iron box opened to see that the envelopes were there and the seals in order, but nothing more. I should have been satisfied that all was as it should be."

"Very well. Now let me put my question to you two. If Mr. Frick had died without having discovered the theft of this mortgage, no one, of course, would have known of the existence of such a mortgage, and the owner of Ashton Abbey would not be obliged to pay any interest. Wouldn't that be a clear saving for Davis, or his heirs, of about £2500 a year?"

"By Jove, so it would!" exclaimed old Frick; "but why young Howell should help Davis to £2500 a year, I cannot understand. He may be a big rascal,—that I now can very easily see, although his father was the best man under the sun,—but he isn't exactly stupid."

"All the same, he resembles his father in that—"

"Stop!" I cried. "Now I can see it all. Ashton Abbey! Ashton Abbey! Now I understand! Young Howell must be the son of old Davis!"

"Yes, that is also my opinion," answered Monk, not at all offended that I had taken the word out of his mouth. "He must have travelled from Australia with the real young Howell. All must have lost their lives except young Davis, who must have possessed himself of young Howell's papers, and later on, played his rôle in the old world. That, I think, explains all."

"Yes, he is the son of old Davis, there's no mistake about that!" exclaimed Frick in great spirits. "Upon my soul it was the best discovery of all, for now I need not mourn that my old friend had such a son. But what was it you said about Ashton Hall? It is the neighbouring estate to Ashton Abbey. Once they were both one estate."

"Monk told us earlier to-day that his agent had informed him that Mr. Howell, or rather Davis junior, often visited that estate. It was, of course, in order to confer with his worthy father, old Davis. I suppose that was what set you on the track, Monk."

"Just so!"

CHAPTER VII

THE YACHT "DEERHOUND"

Monk kept his word. The following Friday he sailed for America; but our hope that he would soon return was not fulfilled.

When he arrived in New York he found Sigrid laid up with a dangerous illness. Sorrow, and over-exertion in nursing her brother, had completely prostrated her. I believe Monk's telegram, which we sent directly the discovery about the photograph was made, saved her life.

She had made great progress toward recovery by the time Monk arrived, but she was still exceedingly weak.

It was a month afterward before they were able to get married; but the crossing over the Atlantic was not to be thought of during the stormy winter months.

At last, in the beginning of May, we heard from them. They had sailed. And fourteen days afterward we welcomed them in Christiania.

The lady we saw on Monk's arm on the steamer's deck was remarkably pretty, and looked exceedingly happy; although sorrow and trouble had imparted a sad and serious expression to her face, which is never likely to leave it.

Before the gangway could be properly adjusted, Clara had jumped on board and taken her in her arms, a proceeding which seemed to both to be the most natural thing in the world, although they had never seen each other before.

Old Frick hobbled restlessly about on the quay, like a large dog which has done something wrong, and is not quite sure whether it will be forgiven or no.

He could not speak a word when his niece clasped her arm round his neck and sprinkled his white hair with joyous tears. But his eloquence was the greater, when we were all gathered in the evening at Villa Ballarat. It was there that the newly married couple were to stay for the present.

* * * * *

About a week after their return home, Monk came to me with a face more serious than usual. "I have still a duty to fulfil in the matter of the black tortoise," he said. "You won't come with me to Stavanger to-morrow, I suppose? I hope to meet Mr. Howell there, or more correctly speaking, Mr. Davis, junior."

"Monk, Monk!" I exclaimed threateningly. "Is the detective on the warpath again? Will you desert your wife already?"

Monk blushed slightly.

"No, this time it is not the detective. But it is my duty to justice and to my wife to get at the bottom of the diamond affair. Remember that more than half of what we believe we have discovered is only the fruits of guesswork and putting two and two together."

"You are right. I shall come with you. May I ask how you intend to proceed in the matter against the Englishman? There are not, I suppose, sufficient proofs to get a warrant of arrest?"

"No, I am afraid not; and I haven't got my plans quite ready yet. But I fancy we must content ourselves with compelling him to give us a complete proof of Sigrid's innocence, and letting him off from any further unpleasantness. It is hard; but Sigrid is now very nervous, and shudders at the thought of appearing before the court, and all that kind of thing, you know."

"Well, let us start to-morrow evening on the west coast steamer. I shall be ready. But are you sure to meet him there?"

"Yes, my agent in London writes that he has already sailed from England in his yacht *Deerhound*, and is bound for the Ryfylke fjord to fish for salmon, but in Stavanger he'll await a party which will arrive here by the mail steamer in a few days."

* * * * *

It was on a morning in the beginning of June that the steamer glided into Stavanger harbour. We had had rain and southerly wind the whole way, and the night outside Jædren had been anything but pleasant, although neither Monk nor I suffered from seasickness.

Toward the morning, the wind sprung around to the north, and drove rain, fog, and clouds in front of it, out into the North Sea. The sun shone on the small rippling billows, which merrily splashed against the gaudily painted coasting vessels and warehouses in the harbour.

Among the ships in the harbour, there were two which attracted our attention. One was a pretty English cutter—her blue flag flying at her stern. She had

only one mast, although her tonnage must have been about fifty; but the lofty lower mast and the big boom betrayed that she, on this one mast, could carry a sail, the mainsheet of which would be no easy matter to haul in, when the wind had filled it. She seemed to have a numerous crew in proportion to her size—for six or eight men were seen busily engaged in hoisting the wet sails to be dried. She was riding by one of her anchors, and had boats hanging on their davits; while only a small jolly-boat was lying at her stern.

The other ship was painted light grey, and had a large yellow funnel. The Norwegian naval flag waved at the stern, and on the bow could be seen the name, "Viking."

"We are in luck!" exclaimed Monk. "There is the gunboat, *Viking*. The commander on board is Captain Holst; you know him, of course, Trygve Holst?"

"Yes, I know him; but how can he help? Surely you don't want to get him to sink the Englishman?"

"Not exactly that; but none the less he will be of use to us."

Monk had again taken the lead. I had sunk down into my modest rôle of historian, and allowed him to have his way.

Our first business, after leaving the steamer, was to visit the gunboat and pay our respects to the officers.

Monk went below into the captain's cabin, where they spent a quarter of an hour together.

I knew they were good friends of old, and I could very well understand he wished to be alone with his friend and inform him of the turn events had taken.

Then we went on land, and gave ourselves good time to visit the remarkable cathedral and one or two other places of interest.

"Shall we visit Mr. Howell now?" I asked.

"Yes, but not before twelve o'clock," was Monk's reply.

"Why not?"

"Isn't it a fact that you love a bit of excitement?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then you had better not ask any further questions, and you will probably have plenty of it."

At last it was twelve o'clock, and a one-eyed, weather-beaten boatman rowed us out to the yacht. Aft the mast stood a tall, handsome man, with a heavy black mustache.

Monk was the first to go on board. He went right up to the owner of the yacht—for it was he. I followed behind.

Mr. Howell—we must still call him so—did not appear particularly pleased at the visit. He stepped back involuntarily, and his face became dark, but only for a moment; then he smiled and exclaimed in good Norwegian:—

"What a surprise! Have I at last the pleasure of seeing you, after so many years, Mr. Monk?"

"Yes, the world contains many surprises, Mr. Howell," was Monk's dry reply, while he did not appear to notice the hand which the Englishman stretched out to him. "Allow me to present an engineer friend, Mr. Frederick Viller, Mr. Howell."

The Englishman bowed stiffly, and gave me a searching look. "Engineer?" he repeated inquiringly. In his own mind he no doubt added, "Probably a police official."

"Yes, an engineer. Here in Norway we must all be something, we cannot only be gentlemen."

The Englishman did not seem to appreciate Monk's humour. He frowned, and made no reply.

"We have a few words to say to you," said Monk, quietly; "will it be convenient to take us down to your cabin?" He cast a glance full of significance at the two sailors who were busy near us.

The Englishman seemed to consider for a moment. He looked out over the sea and up at the rigging; then he put a little silver whistle to his mouth, and a man who appeared to be the steward appeared.

"Show these gentlemen down into the saloon—I am coming directly. I have just a word or two to say to the captain. He has to keep a lookout for the English steamer, and to fetch my party on board here."

His expression appeared to me to be somewhat strained and peculiar, and I cast a questioning glance at Monk; but as he seemed to be quite unconcerned, I had nothing else to do but to follow him and the steward below.

We went first along a corridor with two cabins on each side, then through a small saloon, which took up the whole width of the yacht, and then into a smaller one with a cabin on each side. The place was lighted by a skylight of opaque glass.

This was apparently the owner's private cabin. The size of the yacht did not admit of any large dimensions, but the cabin was luxuriously fitted, and four or five people could sit down in it very comfortably.

The owner of the yacht came down soon after; his face wore a friendly smile.

"May I offer you anything to drink, gentlemen? Shall I get my steward to make you a cocktail? I can assure you, he is a master of the art. Or would you prefer a glass of champagne?"

We refused any refreshments, and the Englishman smiled resignedly.

"We shall not keep you long," began Monk, looking the Englishman in the face. "It will rest with yourself whether the proceedings are long or short."

"You have, perhaps, come to bring me a greeting from dear old Mr. Frick, his charming niece, or the gay Einar?"

"Yes, I have come with greetings from them all, but—"

"Have a cigar?" The Englishman rose, took a box from a shelf, and handed it to us. "Not even a cigar? Then you will, at any rate, allow me to light one. Tell me, you who are Norwegians, and who understand the weather here, do you think we shall have good weather for the next few days? I and my friends think of going to the Ryfylke fjord, and—"

"It will be all the worse for yourself if you waste time," said Monk, in a sharp and threatening voice. "You had better listen to what I have to say, and answer quickly."

"Ho, ho! Have you come on board to threaten me? You, Mr. Viller, who seem to be a gentleman, ought to tell your friend that he should not make himself unpleasant to an Englishman on board his own yacht."

I wisely left it to Monk to answer for himself, and only glanced contemptuously at him; the thought of what he had done filled me with disgust. I would rather have taken him by the neck and given him a good thrashing.

"You can't get away from us, Mr. Howell," continued Monk, undisturbed. "We are come to settle an account with you, and we don't intend to leave here before it is done."

A peculiar smile passed over Howell's face at Monk's last words.

"Go on, then," he said. "I must, at any rate, know what it is all about. I don't know that I have any business with Mr. Monk, the private detective,—for you are, I understand, no longer in the service of the police."

"What I am or am not has nothing to do with the case. You remember the diamond robbery at Mr. Frick's, in Christiania, six years ago? Well, by a shameful deception, you succeeded in throwing suspicion on Miss Frick. She is now my wife—"

The Englishman interrupted with a long, low whistle. Monk's face crimsoned, and for the moment I thought he would have thrown himself upon the rascal; but he continued quietly: "No, it is not necessary for you to fumble about in your drawer for the revolver. I am not so stupid as to give you an opportunity of shooting me in self-defence. It would suit you too well."

The Englishman uttered a horrible oath, and we heard a heavy object fall back into the drawer.

"Go on with your business, then," he shouted; "but I shall teach you what it costs to insult me on board my own yacht. Do you hear? Go on!"

I got the impression that his noisy anger was to a great extent assumed, and while Monk continued, he seemed to be listening to something quite different.

"We demand of you," said Monk, "that you give a full account of the decep-

tion which was practised on the occasion which I refer to and that you enable me to prove my wife's innocence."

"Yes, I'll give you a full account,—you may take your oath on that, you wretched police spy, trying to threaten a gentleman! You haven't yet mentioned how much money you intend to blackmail me for."

He got up and struck the table so that the cigar boxes and ash trays jumped about.

"Why do you make all this noise?"

"Noise? May I not do what I like on board my own yacht? Wait a bit, and you'll see something which will perhaps astonish you."

The Englishman laughed triumphantly, and got up.

I also got up. I had a suspicion that our host, if I may call him so, was evilly disposed toward us. I had for some time felt that the ship was in motion; first, I thought it was the effect of the small waves which the passing steamers caused; but the last few minutes made it clear to me that the yacht was steadily leaning over on one side, and when both the Englishman and I got up, we could clearly hear the rippling sound that water makes when it is being forced aside by a ship in motion. "What do you think now, gentlemen?" The Englishman threw open the door to the cabin on the starboard side, opened the port-hole, and pointed out.

It was as I had suspected. The yacht had got under way, and was sailing out of the harbour to eastward, between the islands, as the wind did not admit of steering in a northerly direction. We were already about a quarter of a mile away from the anchorage.

"On our next tack we shall clear Tungendess," continued Mr. Howell, "and then you know for yourselves how far it is out to sea."

I looked at Monk, and I must confess my heart beat quicker than usual; but Monk smiled back in a manner which plainly said that nothing unexpected had happened.

Presently a great whining sound cut through the air and forced its way through the open porthole in the cabin. Monk, with a friendly nod to the Englishman, asked:—

"What do you think that is?"

"It is the grey gunboat, which is trying her steam whistle; but I promise we shall not be long troubled by her infernal noise; the wind freshens."

The Englishman threw himself comfortably into a chair.

"This won't do any longer, Mr. Howell," said Monk, and this time his voice was again sharp and stern. "I suspected you would try and play us this trick, and so make your position worse, and so I allowed you to try it."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Be silent, and listen to me. It is time we came to the serious part of the business. The noise we heard comes, as you say, from the gunboat, and it was the signal which to me means that at this moment she is getting under way and making for this yacht. When she is alongside us, she will, by persuasion or force, compel you to turn back to Stavanger harbour. With this wind the yacht makes five or six knots, while the gunboat makes sixteen; so you can calculate for yourself how long it will take before she is alongside us."

It was a study to watch the Englishman's face as Monk spoke; it became pale and green with anger and disappointment. But he still tried to hold the position.

"Do you mean to tell me that a Norwegian gunboat dares stop an English yacht which has done nothing unlawful? It will cost the captain his position, if no more; you know that, as well as I do."

"This morning, at nine o'clock," answered Monk, quietly, "I was on board the gunboat, and after having stated my case, the captain gave orders to fire up. At twelve the steam would be up, and until then I postponed my visit to your yacht. I informed the captain that I had business on board here, but that it was not improbable we might be exposed to violent treatment. It was arranged that if we did not leave the yacht within two hours, the captain was to send a boat and fetch us; and if the yacht weighed anchor without our having left, the gunboat was to follow and compel the yacht to return. Do you think the captain, will hesitate at stopping the yacht, when he knows that two Norwegian subjects are retained on board by force? Give orders to tack about, and let the yacht again anchor, and the gunboat will not trouble us. That's the only way in which you can avoid a scandal. Do you understand me?"

The Englishman did not at first answer a word, but he made a wry face. After a short pause he violently pulled a bell rope, which hung beside his chair, and the captain of the yacht entered, with his gold-braided cap in hand.

"Let her tack about again and anchor where she was lying, Captain Watkins. These gentlemen have forgotten something: we must put off our little cruise till to-morrow."

"I am glad to see you have come back to your senses, Mr. Howell; you know your attempt to carry me and my friend away has made your case still worse. I will openly admit that I have no warrant of arrest against you, but the result of this little escapade will be that neither the captain of the gunboat nor the police will hesitate in detaining you here until such a warrant can be obtained from Christiania."

"What do you demand of me?"

"I have told you once before—a clear and concise account of all you know about the diamond robbery in Mr. Frick's house six years ago."

There was again a pause for some seconds. The Englishman then threw his cigar on the floor with an oath. "You can put the questions, and I will answer. But it must be also understood that you take no proceedings against me for any part in the case."

"It is very wise of you to make that condition. You have deceived the court, and committed perjury. It would cost you many years of your liberty if the arm of the law reached you. But we undertake not to proceed against you, if you will provide us with proof that Miss Frick, as she was then, had nothing to do with the robbery."

"Very well, I am willing. Ask, and I will reply."

"Who was it you photographed in the museum in front of the cupboard with the black diamond in her hand? I mean the photograph which you later on handed over to the court."

"It was the maid,—Evelina Reiersen; wasn't that her name?"

"And you saw that she took the diamond and went away with it?"

"Yes."

"Was it quite accidentally that you happened to take the photograph? It was taken from the reflection in a mirror, was it not?"

"Yes, it was taken in a mirror. I came quite by accident into the museum, and she was so taken up with examining the diamond, that she did not notice my presence until I had already photographed her. I knew she was doing something wrong, and thought there would be no harm in photographing her."

"Why did you turn toward the glass, instead of taking the photograph direct? You stood behind her, did you not?"

"Well, yes," said the Englishman, looking suspiciously at Monk, whose face was immovable. "Yes, I did. It was by mere chance I turned my apparatus toward the glass."

"How did the diabolical idea enter your head to make use of the photograph as evidence against Miss Frick?"

"Diabolical or not diabolical, she had offended me, no matter how, and I revenged myself. I had never taken a photograph in a mirror before, and so I examined the picture with the magnifying glass. You know how interested I am in snap-shots."

"Oh, yes; and then you observed all that about the clock—the right and left hands, and all the rest of it?"

"Exactly; it occurred to me that it might turn out unpleasant enough for Miss Frick. So I waited till the case came before the court, and then I sent a note to the counsel for the defence, which told him how he could get his client off."

"How did you know Miss Frick had been to the pawnbroker's? Speak out; for the sooner this is over, the better."

"Well, I knew young Frick had got into difficulties—the young greenhorn would insist on playing high with me and my friends—and I knew, too, that he had written his uncle's name on a bill for four thousand kroners."

"And you did not help him? It would have been an easy matter for you."

"That's nothing to do with the matter. The sooner we are finished, the better. Wasn't that what you said? Well, he wrote from Hamburg to his sister, and begged her to pay in the four thousand kroners to a well-known bill-discounter. That is why she tried to raise money on her jewels. That failed, and so the bill-discounter applied to old Frick, who, without saying a word, paid the bill. He guessed at once that his nephew had forged his name."

"How did you get to know all this?"

"Well, that's nothing to do with the matter. It is enough for you to know that I had my interests to look after, and that one always finds helpers when one has got money."

"And then what about your relation with Evelina? How do you explain that?"

"To hell with you and your questions! Is it necessary for you to know any more? Well, never mind! I got to know of her relations with the actor; I surprised them once in the garden at Ballarat. After the arrest I sent her a letter wherein I professed deep sympathy with her case, and told her if she would deny everything and keep silent I would do my best to get her acquitted so that she could marry her lover.

"It was, then, to get money for him that she stole the diamond?"

"The actor, as you may guess, had seduced her, but refused to marry her unless she would provide money so that they could leave the country. He made a fool of her twice. I fancy, however, it was more for the sake of giving the child a father, than anything else, that made her so anxious to marry that fellow."

"He got the five thousand kroners, then? What did he do with them?"

"He succeeded in depositing them with a friend in Gothenburg, before he was arrested; but when he came there again his friend had vanished. In any case, he wrote to that effect, when he afterward tried to get money out of me. I told him, of course, to go to the devil."

"Will you write down what you have told us, and put your name to it? Remember, we must have a positive proof of my wife's innocence. That was the condition upon which we were to let you go, without mixing up the police in the matter."

We heard the noise and trample of feet on the deck, and the rattling of the chain cable when the anchor fell.

We were again in Stavanger harbour. Soon after a grating sound, was heard alongside the yacht, and the sound of many oars which were shipped.

"There is the boat from the gunboat," exclaimed Monk. "You have not much time for considering."

"You shall have the proof. I have something which is just as good as a written declaration."

"Wait a bit," said Monk, quickly. "I must go up on deck and tell the boat to wait. If the quartermaster does not see we are safe, he will no doubt search the yacht. If I know my good friend, Captain Holst, rightly, he must have already given some such order."

Monk went up on deck.

"Your friend, the detective, seems to think he is a devil of a fellow, since he has got the better of me this time," grumbled the Englishman, when we were alone; "but we shall meet again sometime, perhaps, when we are more equally placed, and then I shall pay him out."

"Monk knows well enough how to take care of himself," I answered reluctantly. I felt disgusted with the cold-blooded scoundrel. "You ought rather to hope you will never see him again."

The subject of our conversation appeared again at this moment.

"Now, Mr. Howell, where is the proof you speak of? You will no doubt agree that the sooner this interview comes to an end, the better."

The Englishman opened a cupboard, rummaged awhile in a drawer, and came back to the table with something which looked like a folded letter in his hand.

"Everything may be of use in time—that is the reason I did not burn it. Here is a letter from Evelina, written the same day she hanged herself. It will be more than sufficient for you. But it's understood that no difficulty will be placed in my way to leave, if I give up the letter?"

"You have our word of honour that no information will be given to the police, and that nothing shall hinder your departure if you furnish us with sufficient proofs of my wife's innocence."

The Englishman threw the letter across the table. Monk opened it and read it aloud:—

DEAR MR. HOWELL,—You are the only one who has shown any kindness to me in my misfortune, but all your kindness is wasted on a creature who is doomed to destruction. You warned me, long ago, against the wretch whom I believed in so blindly, but more than that was necessary to open my eyes.

He first persuaded me to steal in order to find the means for our marriage, and then he deserted me with the fruits of my crime. All the same, I was glad of your offer to get me acquitted, and thus enable me to marry the man I loved, not

so much for my own sake, as for—

Then he deceived me again. I know that yesterday he left the country, and at the same time I learnt that my benefactress, Miss Frick, is accused of the crime which I have committed.

I know of course you will not let her suffer—you, who are her friend, and that of her family. But how can you prove her innocence without revealing that you deceived the court in order to help me, a poor girl whom you pitied?

I do not understand much of this kind of thing; but I see that my life is useless, and that there is one way in which I can prove Miss Frick's innocence without being imprisoned myself.

When you get to hear I am no longer alive, then cut off the lowest slip of this letter and send it to the authorities. I cannot rely on my mother. She has a suspicion it was I who took the diamond, and worries me every day to tell her what has become of the money.

At the bottom was written in large, but irregular letters:—

I and no one else stole Mr. Frick's diamond, and sold it to Mr. Jurgens for five thousand kroners. I, and no one else, shall suffer for my crime!

EVELINA REIERSON.

June, 18—.

I could not control myself any longer. "You are the greatest scoundrel that ever walked in shoes, Mr. Howell, or Davis, or whatever you call yourself!" I shouted, and rushed at him. I believe I should have knocked him down, if Monk had not quickly intervened.

It was hardly necessary, however, to strike him, for at my words he staggered back, as if stupefied, and leant against the wall.

Monk was the first to speak.

"You may thank my friend you have been warned, Mr. Davis; otherwise it had been my intention to let you find out for yourself that your forgeries and frauds have been discovered."

The Englishman was deadly pale. He opened a cupboard with trembling hands, took out a bottle, and poured himself out a large glass of cognac.

"Have you anything more to say to him? If not, let us go; I can no longer

stand the sight of the scoundrel.”

”All right,” answered Monk, and we went quickly up the cabin stairs and into the long-boat which awaited us.

”You weren’t going to tell him, then, that all his rascality had been discovered?”

”No, I wanted him to fall into the hands of the English police. But now he’ll take good care not to put his foot on English soil any more.”

”You ought to have warned me beforehand.”

”It is not worth bothering about. For the rest of his life he will be a wretched exile, without money and without friends; I know he has already ruined his father, old Davis. He possesses nothing now but his yacht. It was by the skin of his teeth that he got away from his creditors in England this time.”

* * * * *

Some months later, the following paragraph appeared in the paper:—

ANOTHER VICTIM TO THE DEMON OF GAMBLING

The well-known yacht *Deerhound*, which last year won the queen’s cup at the Cowes regatta, has just arrived at Monaco. The owner, a certain Mr. Howell, sold the yacht, as he had lost all his money at the tables. He afterward continued to play, with the result that this morning he was found in the park with a bullet-hole in his head and a discharged pistol in his hand.

* * * * *

It was full summer, and the fruit trees stood white with blossoms, in the garden of Villa Ballarat.

A party of five people sat in the cool shade of the museum, while the warm summer air blew in at the open door.

”The hand of justice reached him sooner than we had expected,” said I, when Monk had read these lines aloud.

”Peace be with his bones!” said old Frick, with unction. ”Old Davis was a big scoundrel; but upon my soul, I think the son was worse.”

”But what are you going to do now?” said Clara. ”Cannot the matter be taken up again? I think it would be a great shame if the world did not get to know of all that has taken place; especially those who at the time threw stones at Sigrid.”

"No one was found guilty," said Monk; "and I do not believe we could get the matter taken up again, except—" Here Monk glanced at his wife.

"All the people whose opinion I value," answered Mrs. Monk, softly, "know my story as well as I know it myself, and I shudder at the thought of appearing again in court."

"I have an idea," I exclaimed, "which solves the difficulty. I will write a novel about old Frick's diamond! The whole town will read it, of course. And then everybody will know about the affair."

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