

Diplomatic—my dear dad, I happened to know one or two forsaken brutes marooned in our different embassies. Nothing like good enough."

Sir Aylmer said nothing, and his fingers began to toy with the trinkets on the table. Rejoicing to break up the family council so quickly, Deryk jumped up, pushed Hatherly's chair round, so that he could see, and prepared to explain. There were conventional ivory elephants, large and small, moonstone brooches and necklaces, filigree balls and ebony boxes, brass pots from Benares and trays from Morocco—an impetuous, youthful and indiscriminating collection.

"I've got a Buddha for you in the library," he told his father. "And one of my only two tiger skins for Hats. Genuine old mantilla, guaranteed to pass through a wedding ring; Yolande Stornaway can have that. I want to see Yolande again. . . . Rich blue silk kimono, as worn by all the best people in Formosa, that's for Sally Farwell; you said she was coming, didn't you? A few hundred yards of Teneriffe lace—not yet allocated. A sumptuously embroidered—"

"This is a beautiful thing, Deryk," interrupted Sir Aylmer.

The boy threw aside a crimson silk tea-gown and looked at the case which his father was holding. Circling three times round the velvet boss lay a pearl necklace of exquisite harmony and colour.

"Isn't he a ripper?" cried Deryk, his eyes shining with pleasure. "I got him in Paris for Dina Penrose; I wanted to give her something decent."

Sir Aylmer raised his eyebrows and looked wonderingly at his son.

"My dear boy! you mustn't go giving expensive presents of jewelry in this way!" he exclaimed.

"We can afford it," Deryk answered easily.

"That's not the point. You *must* know that a girl of her age can't accept pearls from a man of your age. I've never heard of such a thing."