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The Theft of the Dudley Diamonds.

By Walter Hackett. Author of "By Dead Reckoning," "The Squadron of the Air," etc.



By the very nature of his calling, many — nay, most — of the extraordinary exploits of Herr Otto Schmalz the preventer of crime, have remained unrecorded. The fact that as a rule he was successful, and that the contemplated crime was not even attempted, left nothing to be told. This, however, was not true in every instance. Indeed, in some of his cases the surrounding facts were so remarkable that they are well worth narrating. Such, for example, were the circumstances of the now famous theft of the Dudley diamonds.

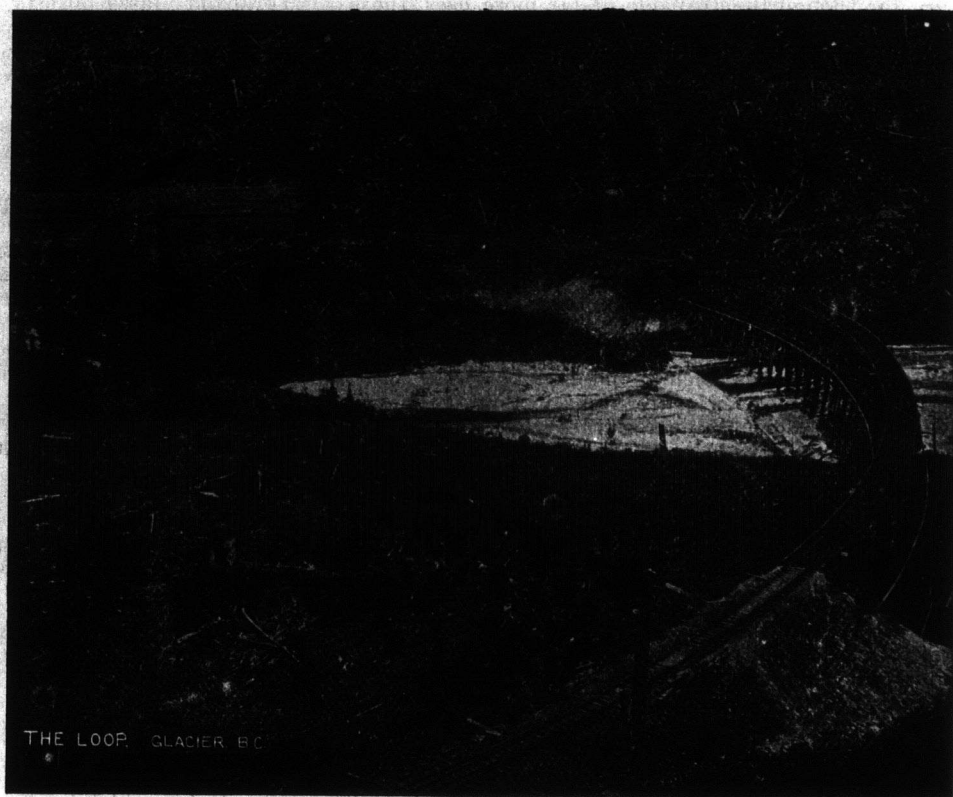
Of all of the essential incidents of that celebrated case I was an eye-witness. Indeed, it was a letter from me to my lifelong friend, Carleton Dudley, that made the affair possible. I wrote requesting the loan of a large sum of

send it forth again with an added radiance.

I gazed at them spellbound, while Carleton Dudley watched me with an amused smile.

"They are the Dudley diamonds," he said at length, "one of the most celebrated collections of gems in the world. That is how my father, and his father before him, invested every dollar they could spare. Diamonds, you see, were their hobby. The collection was left to me under one condition—it was not under any circumstances to be dispersed. I may only dispose of it to some one who will keep it intact, and never have I been able to discover a purchaser who could afford to pay even a part of its value under such conditions. So you can understand that even while I own gems worth more than a million, I am, nevertheless, a poor man."

He paused, but I was still too dazed to speak. I stood staring at the glitter-



money. I had been caught in a falling market, and needed the funds early the following morning in order to save me from absolute ruin. The messenger who carried my note to Dudley returned with the answer that he himself would reply in person.

An hour or so later—it was then toward the end of the afternoon—a servant ushered him into my library, where I sat waiting for him. He came forward at once, and shook hands with me. Then, thrusting his hand into his breast-pocket, he drew forth a worn, travel-stained chamois bag, and laid it on the table between us.

"Dick," he said, "I know that you, like everybody else, think that I am a rich man. Well, I'm not—or, at least, I'm not rich as many others are rich. Except for some investments which yield me enough to live on, and no more, everything I have in the world is in that bag."

For an instant I looked at him in surprise; then, involuntarily, my eyes wandered to the shabby bag on the table. He saw my glance and understood it.

"No," he exclaimed quickly, "don't doubt me. I have spoken the truth. You shall see that for yourself."

With a quick gesture, he caught up the bag and emptied its contents upon the table; and I saw before me the most magnificent collection of diamonds that I have ever seen. They lay there, glittering and gleaming, and it seemed as if they absorbed every ray of sunlight that drifted into the room only to

ing jewels in silence. They seemed to fascinate me as the eyes of a snake fascinate a bird.

Presently Dudley came around the table and laid his hand upon my arm.

"But even though I am poor, I can still help you," he said gently. "Any bank will lend you what you need on such security, and it is yours to pledge as you see fit. That is why I have taken it from my vault to-day, for the first time in years."

In my gratitude I had turned and seized his hand, but his last words sent a shudder of alarm through me.

"Good Heavens, Dick!" I cried. "Why did you do it this afternoon? Why didn't you wait until morning?"

He looked at me in amazement. He had expected gratitude, and here I was taking him to task.

"I don't understand," he remarked coldly.

"Thieves," I explained. "What a prize for them! How shall we keep the things safely overnight?"

He laughed gaily.

"Oh, there will be no trouble about that," he said confidently. "No one knows that it was the jewels I took out."

"You are sure of that?" I questioned. Before he could reply, the telephone bell rang sharply. I picked it up from the table. "Hello!" I called into the transmitter.

"Hello!" replied a heavy voice — a voice while it had no decided accent, was still markedly German. "Is that