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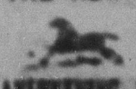

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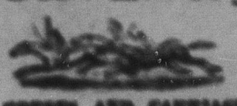

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A Courageous ..Girl..

"They look better in this," she remarked, as she lifted the lid, and revealed the crescents lying upon a rich white little tough, "now that I know they are genuine I really am very loath to part with them, in spite of my necessity."

She closed the case with a snap and passed it to him, and he slipped a roll of crisp bank bills into her hand.

"This arrangement will smooth all difficulties, I trust," he said, "and now," with a slight tremor in his voice, "I have a special favor to ask. May I come to see you at No. 18 ..... street?"

"Certainly you may, Mr. Cutler," she replied lifting a bright eager face to him, "and I assure you I shall have a warmer welcome for no one else. I cannot tell you now how grateful I am—"

"Do not speak of that," he interposed. "I am amply repaid for anything I have done by seeing the look of trouble gone from your face. I must bid you good-morning now, but I shall give myself the pleasure of calling upon you very soon."

He held out his hand to her, and she laid hers within it. He was surprised to find it so cold and trembling but he attributed it to emotion caused by the parting with him.

She looked so lovely that he longed to draw her within his arms and take a more tender leave of her, but again putting a curb upon himself, he simply bowed, and left her, when with a quick, elastic step, she swept upstairs to her own apartments.

Justin Cutler was very busy all the morning, and did not find time to go to the pawnbroker's until the afternoon.

He had no intention of disposing of the crescents—he simply wished to tell him that he himself had purchased them, and then ask the privilege of depositing them in Mr. Arnold's safe for a few days; for they were to be his gift to the woman he loved if she received his suit with favor.

The gentleman was in, and his eyes lighted as he glance fell upon the case which Mr. Cutler laid upon the showcase, for he believed that, in purchasing the crescents he was going to get an exceptionally good bargain.

"Ah," he remarked, "the lady has decided to dispose of the stones?"

"Yes; but—" Mr. Cutler began, when he suddenly stopped, and gazed astonished at the man.

He had taken the case, opened it, and started in dismay when he saw what was within, while a look of blank consternation overspread his face.

Then he turned sternly, almost fiercely upon the young man.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded, in a threatening tone. "Did you imagine you could cheat me in this miserable way? You have got hold of the wrong customer if you did."

"What do you mean, sir?" inquired Mr. Cutler, amazed, but flushing angrily at being addressed so unkindly.

"These are not the stones you brought me yesterday," said Mr. Arnold, who was also very angry.

"Sir!" exclaimed Justin Cutler, aghast but with haughty mien.

"They are nothing but paste," continued the jewelry among the fashionable customers with disdain, "and," he added, meaningly, "I'm a fool to have you arrested on the spot for attempting to obtain money under false pretenses."

Mr. Cutler grew pale at this with mingled anger and a sudden fear.

He reached across the counter and took the case from Mr. Arnold's hand.

At the first glance they seemed to be all right—he could detect nothing wrong; for aught that he could see the crescents were the same which he had submitted to the merchant the day before. But as he studied them more closely the gloom of the gems was entirely different — the fire of the genuine diamond was lacking.

"Can it be possible that I have been duped, swindled?" he exclaimed, with white lips and a sinking heart.

"I should say rather that you were attempting to dupe and swindle someone else," sarcastically retorted the diamond dealer. "The stones are a remarkably fine imitation, I am free to confess, and would easily deceive a casual observer; but if you have ever tried and succeeded in the clever game before, you are certainly caught this time."

"Mr. Arnold, I assure you that I am blameless in this matter—that I honestly believed these gems to be the same that I brought to you yesterday," the young man said, with an earnest directness which convinced the gentleman that he spoke the truth. "I see now," he continued, "that they are not; and"—a feeling of fastness almost overpowering him, aside from his pecuniary loss—"I have been outrageously deceived and bamboozled, for I have already advanced the sum you named to the woman who wished to dispose of the diamonds."

Mr. Arnold searched the manly face before him, and was forced to believe the truth of his statements.

"If that is so, then you have indeed been wretchedly swindled," he said; "for these crescents are but duplicates in paste of those I examined yesterday. How did you happen to be so taken in?"

Mr. Cutler briefly related the circumstances, and when he concluded Mr. Arnold remarked:

"The woman was an accomplished sharp and had you as completely fooled. Your mistake was in advancing the money for the stones; if you had brought them things to me first, you would have saved yourself the loss, for of course she never would have allowed that. Her game was to get the money from you and she worked you finely, for it."

Mr. Cutler groaned in spirit as he realized it all, and how he had fallen into the trap laid by one he had trusted so implicitly, and how he had paid for his folly in money and in the loss of the woman he loved, who he knew would scorn him when he should tell her the story.

To be continued.

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