

gone much too far. Lord Porthoning had staggered to a chair and was sitting there with his face buried in his hands. He was a stricken man. I turned to my father-in-law.

"This is too much of a good thing, sir," I whispered angrily. "The brooch was all right enough, so far as it went, and he deserved a lesson; but these other things ——"

A look in Mr. Bundercombe's face suddenly froze the words upon my lips. He leaned over toward me.

"Paul," he declared earnestly, "on my honor I put nothing into his pocket except the brooch. I knew no more of those things," he added, pointing to the table, "than you did!"

I was speechless. Lord Porthoning looked up. I had never seen a face quite like his in my life. One side of it seemed drawn with pain. He checked a sob. His fingers gripped at the air as he spoke.

"Paul," he begged hysterically, "don't give me away! I give you my word of honor — I give you my word as a Porthoning — I can't help it! You know what they call the damned thing when women have it — kleptomania, isn't it? I tell you I can't see these things without that same horrible, fascinating, cruel instinct! My hands are on them before I know it. But ——" he broke off. "It's sending me