

"It is locked up," was the reply, "in a drawer in my dressing-room. Miss Murray shall bring it here if you wish to see it."

"Oh dear no, not at all. I am glad to hear you are not disposed to press the case harshly, supposing there to be one at all; and I have the honour to wish you, madam, a very good evening."

The magistrates' office was crowded the next day by an auditory which it did not surprise anybody to find, since they were all thoroughly acquainted with the antecedents of both parties, sympathised with the prisoner rather than the prosecution. Mrs. Robinson and her son were seated near the magistrates, *Miss Murray* had placed herself beside her mother, and, but that Mabel looked pale and agitated, two more charming females, at their respective ages, could not, I think, be found in the city of Bristol, or the two counties in which it stands.

At eleven precisely, the accused was placed in the dock, and business commenced. Mr. C. Robinson proved what he had seen, and then the lapidary was placed in the witness box. He had been sent for by Mr. Robinson, and found that a paste imitation, a very good one he must say, had been substituted for the original diamond, which he knew well, and had very lately seen in the prisoner's shop.

"Is the ring here?" asked Mr. Randall.

"Yes, it is in this case," replied Charles Robinson, handing it across the table.

"Very good. Now come, Mr. Lapidary, be modestly candid, let me intreat you. Are you positive, I ask, that you can always distinguish paste from a diamond, especially between the lights, as in this instance?"

"Sure!" rejoined the lapidary, with dignified contempt, "I could tell the difference blindfold. Look at this ring yourself; paste you perceive is—paste you perceive is—the devil!"

"Is it indeed!—well that is something new at all events. But pray go on with your very lucid description."

The confounded lapidary could not go on. His face was alternately as red as brick-dust and white as chalk.

"Can this be the ring," he at length stammered, addressing Charles Robinson, "that I saw yesterday evening?"

"No doubt of it—why do you ask?"

"Because this is unquestionably a real diamond—the real diamond, no doubt about it."

"The real diamond!" vociferated the mayor indignantly. "What is the meaning of this accusation then? But the witness seems hardly to know whether he stands on his head or heels."

A white-headed gentlemen in a large way of business, as a jeweller, it was whispered, stepped forward, and after looking closely at the ring, said, "This is not only a real diamond, but one of the finest I have ever seen of its size." At this confirmation of what had at first appeared to be too good to be true, the audience broke into a loud cheer, which was again and again repeated. The accusation was formally given up, and the prisoner was immediately liberated "without the slightest stain upon his character," the mayor emphatically assured him. I never, I must say, saw an accused person so thoroughly bewildered

by a triumphant acquittal in my life. Happily he held his tongue, which was a mercy.

"Hand the ring this way, if you please, Mr. Randall," said Charles Robinson, tartly.

"Ought I not, think you sir, to hand it to the right owner at once?"

"Certainly—you are asked to do so."

"In that case I must present it to this young lady on my right."

"To that young lady—to Miss Murray!"

"That was a mere *nom de circonstance*, and there is now no necessity for its retention. Her true name is Mabel Halliday, and she is the legitimate daughter and sole heiress of James Halliday, deceased. This we shall be able to show beyond the shadow of a doubt at the proper time and place, if her right is opposed, which is not, however, likely. James Halliday and Mabel Reeves were married, by banns, in London; and the fear of disinheritance by Mrs. Reeves, has hitherto prevented its acknowledgment. All this can be legally established, and I only mention these details because I know the great majority of the people of Bristol will rejoice, that an estate, cruelly diverted from the legitimate heirs, has, by the overruling providence of God, been restored to them in the person of their descendant, Mabel Halliday." I do not think the auditory breathed while this was uttered, but at its conclusion, a perfect hurricane of cheering took place, prolonged for several minutes. It was taken up in a trice, and ran like wildfire along the streets; in fact, the enthusiasm rose to such a fever-heat that I positively apprehended some accident would befall the mother and daughter, so boisterously did the mob press round to see, congratulate, and burrah them. As Mr. Randall anticipated, no impediment was offered to Mabel Halliday's accession to the property of which Mrs. Reeves had died possessed according to the tenor, happily unrevoked by his implacable relict, of her great grandfather's will. Jonathan Reeves, I have reason to know, was startled into sober and decorous conduct by the exceedingly narrow escape he had from the iron hands of the law. Should any reader fail in comprehending *how* it was he was so cleverly extricated from such deadly peril, he will be, if that can console him, in precisely the same mental condition as the discomfited lapidary who, to the day of his death, could never comprehend how the paste of the evening could possibly have become the diamond of the morning.

DCX.—Some think falsely it comes from the French, where *donnez* signifies "give me," implying a demand for something due; but the true origin of this expression owes its birth to one Joe Dun, a famous bailiff of Lincoln, so extremely active, and so dexterous at the management of his rough business, that it became a proverb, "when a man refused to pay his debts, to say, 'Why don't you dun him?'" that is, "Why don't you send Dun to arrest him?" Hence it grew into a custom, and is now as old as since the days of Henry VII. In Rider's Dictionary, dun is stated to be derived from *dunan*, Saxon, "to thunder," to demand a debt with vehemence.—*Brady's Varieties of Literature.*