

beads of perspiration appeared on Elzevir's brow. She inspected the ring closely and her most awful fears were confirmed. Her ring boasted a sadly worn and defective prong. The prongs of this usurper were new and flawless. Elzevir dropped limply into a wicker chair.

"Oh! my Gawd!" she groaned. "My di'min' is done been stold! Ol' 'Rias is gwine give me the devil an' some, sho' nuff!"

It was all very plain to her. In some way news of her carelessness with the family Koh-I-Noor had become bruted about. Perhaps Urias himself had told of it. A covetous, unscrupulous gentleman had thereupon stolen it, substituting an imitation in order to postpone discovery as long as possible.

The gloom of the ages descended in one great gob on the shoulders of Elzevir Nesbit. She bowed supinely under the burden of woe which had been heaved at her. That Urias was the culprit she never dreamed. He, like Cæsar's wife, was miles above suspicion. Besides, she knew that he didn't have the nerve.

As the horror of the situation banged itself with trip-hammer blows into her consciousness she saw one fact staring her in the face. Urias must not know of the loss! He must, at all hazards, be kept in ignorance. For the first time in her married life Elzevir knew fear of her husband.

She thought it over from every conceivable angle. She reinspected the ring. It was a beautiful ring: even she in her misery gave credit for that much. She knew that if it could be made to fit her finger, Urias would never suspect the substitution. She was a woman of action. Twenty minutes