

he ever would. To say that she contemplated a theft would be grossly overstating the thing; but it more than once struck her that pearls always suited Sybil very well. Percy, it was to be supposed, was broken-hearted: at any rate, he had shut himself up and would not see his friends, and Lady Otterbourne compounded with her conscience over the delay by saying that it would not be delicate to intrude on his grief. She meant—yes, she quite distinctly meant to send the pearls back to him sometime soon, but where was the hurry?

Sybil was engaged to Arthur Carnegie soon after Christmas, and the engagement was made public early in January. The pearls had been in Lady Otterbourne's own jewel safe all the autumn, and Sybil had not worn them; indeed, it was only a couple of nights before her meeting with Percy at the Wagner concert that her mother had come into her room as she was dressing for dinner with the case in her hand.

"I thought you might like to wear the pearls just once or twice," she said. "Of course, Percy will soon send for them. He will send for them as soon as he hears of your marriage, I daresay. Wear them to-night, Sybil. How magnificent they are!"

Sybil looked at them.

"Yes, they are wonderful," she said. "Mother, do you think Percy means me to keep them? He surely would have sent for them by now, would he