

"We will leave that out," Philip said sternly, his face hard and grave. "You will oblige me by going on with your story as if that incident had never happened."

"There is really very little more to tell," Cleave proceeded. "As far as I am concerned, the thing is finished. I suppose all you want to know is how Eleanor managed to extract those two cases of diamonds from the Duchess's safe?"

"That is a small matter," Eleanor said. "As you know, her Grace kept the key of her safe on a long chain round her neck. Under pretence of getting some money I had deposited with her from the safe, I managed to detach the key from the chain and leave it where Jasper Cleave could find it. It was a simple matter to restore the key to the chain again. It only wanted a little courage and audacity, no more than a clever conjurer displays when he deceives his audience. And that is how the Duchess came to say that the key was never out of her possession for a moment. I think you are very fortunate, Mr. Hardy. The mere fact of recovering those stones lost in consequence of that extraordinary lapse of memory on the part of Jasper Cleave, is in itself an instance of your amazing luck. But I must not detain you longer. If we start from here now, we shall reach the junction before twelve and catch the midnight express to town. We are neither of us likely to see you again—"

The speaker turned away and vanished into the night, followed by Cleave. Philip could see that the woman still held her head high. It was quite