

# The Story of a Scrape

(Continued from page 15)

"Like you."  
 "Hang it!" said I.  
 "And not so bad, either—for a little feller!" he remarked.  
 This was rather too much. I could have kicked the fellow, and would have, but that he had a way of keeping his hand in his great-coat pocket. As it was, I sat still and glared at him while he smoked serenely on.  
 The fire had died down and it was extremely cold. My hands and feet grew numbed, and so did my brain, as I sat on watching for his next move. At last I could no longer hold my thoughts and I fell asleep.

I don't know how long I slept, but when I awoke I found the chair opposite to me empty. A great feeling of relief came over me as I thought that I had only dreamed about the scoundrel, but I was quickly disillusioned by a laugh from my bedroom.

My overnight visitor came in, carrying in his arms my very newest and most satisfactory suit of clothes. "Ullo!" was his greeting—"woke up, 'ave yer? It's lucky it was you that went to sleep, and not me, ain't it? I'm goin' to take the loan of these."

"Not those," I said; "anything but those. They are brand new and the best I've got."

"Then they'll be good enough for me," he said with a grin. "If I'm going to represent yer, I should like to do yer credit."

I could only sit and fume with indignation.  
 "Now," he said, "I'm abart to make my toilet."

"But they'll be coming up to do the room directly," I objected.

"Then you must send 'em away. Pretend—oh! pretend anything you like. And now I want your kind assistance. Let's see, there's water—'ave to have it cold, I suppose—shavin' things—shirt—socks—and anything else you can suggest."

He stood by the table and put the pistol elaborately in front of him, while he divested himself of his clothes.

To see a grimy scoundrel shave with your razor and dress in your linen, nearly burst your boots and split up your waistcoat, is trying; but when you know that these preparations are likely to land you in a most serious danger, they become unbearable.

In the middle of all this, Mrs. Jones, who attends to my rooms, came up, and I had to shut the door of my flat in her face with a wildly muttered excuse. I don't know what on earth she thought of me.

At last he was dressed and was surveying himself with satisfaction in the looking-glass. He had elected to take his own overcoat, in the pockets of which the jewels were, I suppose.

"I don't think no one'll recognise it, thrown over the arm sort of negligay," he remarked, and prepared to go. It seemed the greatest joy I had ever experienced.

"Oh! I forgot," he said. "Proof of identity is what I want, o' course. What shall I 'ave?"

He glanced at the dressing-table and saw one or two letters lying there. Among them were two from Annette.

"These'll do fine," he said, and prepared to pocket them.

Then, as I have just explained to Annette, I made an impassioned appeal to his manhood. I told him he had taken my clothing and drunk of my whisky, and I had said nothing. To which he replied that I blooming well couldn't! I told him that he was exposing me to dangers of the most serious kind and suspicions of the most damaging nature, and he



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