



of making himself in the dock had the effect of spurring his imaginative and inventive powers; so, inspired by sheer desperation, he at length concocted a story which he hoped might serve his purpose. The consequence was that when in the course of the next day he received a peremptory note from the widow requesting him to call upon her immediately, he was able to keep the appointment with an outward appearance of calm.

"Mr. Tempany, this is most extraordinary!" said Mrs. Bramwell Jay, after a very cold greeting. "Amy has been here this morning, and I find that the bracelet you presented to her is mine! I gave it to you to take to the jeweler's."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Tempany, with a well feigned start of surprise. "It is impossible!"

"Impossible! Why, here it is!" said the widow producing the ornament. "There can be no mistake about it. I will swear to it. Of course Amy returned it to me, and I have lost no time in asking you for an explanation."

"What an odd circumstance—quite ludicrous! I must speak to Bevis. He evidently gave me back your bracelet in mistake for the one I had bought," said Mr. Tempany, speaking quickly and nervously.

"Who is Bevis?" inquired Mrs. Bramwell Jay. "Do you mean the jeweller in Sackville street?"

"Yes. I never opened the case after he handed it to me across the counter, but sent it direct to Mrs. Bullivant," explained Mr. Tempany, gaining confidence. "I recollect it was the same day that I left your bracelet to be repaired. It is clear how the mistake arose."

"Still it seems extraordinary," repeated the widow, who was evidently only half convinced. "The jeweler must be a very careless man and deserves a good scolding. Suppose we go at once and ask him what he means by it? The carriage is at the door, and I am dressed for my drive, as you see."

"Pray don't trouble, Theodosia. I—I really think you had better stay at home on a cold day like this," cried Mr. Tempany, with fearful eagerness. "I will call on Bevis at once, this instant, but there is no occasion for you to go."

"Oh! I should like to go and shall enjoy the man's confusion," returned the lady, rather sharply. "Besides I am curious to see the bracelet you have chosen for dear Amy."

Mr. Tempany was so utterly taken aback by this sudden unexpected whim of Mrs. Bramwell Jay's that he could not find another word to say. He followed the lady meekly to her carriage and took his seat beside her, feeling like a criminal being led to execution. This ill timed visit to the jeweler's must, he felt, inevitably complete his discomfiture, for Mr. Bevis would naturally deny all knowledge of the bracelet. It really seemed as though the only course open to him was to confess everything on the spot, to avoid needless exposure and disgrace. But Mr. Tempany could not bring himself to acknowledge his deceit unless he were absolutely

forced, and during the drive he resolved as a last chance to slip into the shop alone, on pretense of inquiring if Mr. Bevis were within, and take the opportunity to whisper a word of warning in his ear. No doubt the jeweler was open to a bribe and would make no difficulty about screening him. In this desperate strait Mr. Tempany took heart at this idea, and

even tried to converse with the widow with apparent equanimity.

But his scheme was frustrated by an accidental circumstance. The coachman took an extra turn, so when the carriage was stopped the side on which the widow was seated was next the pavement. The footman, too, interfered. He was a smart youth, and descended from the box with such alacrity that the carriage door was open before Mr. Tempany had recovered his surprise at having so soon arrived at the jeweler's. The widow alighted first and stepped into the shop. Mr. Tempany, feeling that the fates were against him and that he was pursued by Nemesis followed in a state bordering on despair.

"Mr. Bevis, how can you make such an extraordinary mistake? You are Mr. Bevis, I presume?" said the lady, doubtfully.

"Yes, madam," the jeweler quietly replied. "Will you be seated? What mistake?"

Mrs. Bramwell Jay explained with fatal precision, while Mr. Tempany was almost bursting with eagerness to speak a warning word. By sheer force of will and mesmeric influence, as he regarded it, he succeeded in catching Mr. Bevis' eye during the recital. The latter was a shrewd little man and at a glance read the agonized expression Mr. Tempany's bloodless features had assumed. He knew the unhappy man by both sight and reputation, and, although their transactions had been extremely limited in extent he had pretty well fathomed Mr. Tempany's character. He was sufficiently alert to guess that discretion on his own part might be of great value, and although he made no sign a ghost of a smile flitted across the corners of his mouth before he was ready to reply to the widow's question. He then said:

"I am very sorry, madam."

"It was very careless," Mr. Tempany was bold enough to say, although his heart was beating fiercely.

"Very," said the widow, manifestly surprised. "I cannot see how you could have made such a mistake!"

"Mistakes sometimes happen in the best regulated establishments," Mr. Bevis said with great humility, and Mr. Tempany felt a strong desire to evince his gratitude by falling on the jeweler's neck.

"Where is the bracelet this gentleman purchased, then?" inquired the widow, still in an incredulous tone.

For an instant Mr. Tempany's uneasiness was revived, but Mr. Bevis proved to be equal to the emergency. Without a moment's hesitation he turned around and produced from a drawer behind a case which he laid upon the counter. Mr. Tempany was so overwhelmed with a blessed sense of relief that he felt no curiosity as to the contents of the case. His attention was attracted to it by a startling exclamation from Mrs. Bramwell Jay.

"Oh, Podmore! What a splendid bracelet! Why, it is a blaze of diamonds!" she cried, clasping her hands.

"Eh?" exclaimed Mr. Tempany, hastily putting on his glasses with a startled air. "What! Good heavens! That isn't the bracelet that I—chose." He saw at a glance that it was worth several hundred pounds.