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## A STRATAGEM THAT FAILED.

Throughout the entire course of my criminal career, which has included all sorts and conditions of ups and downs, I have encountered several discouraging failures. I will endeavour to record the history of the most humiliating of these repulses in the lines that follow.

Early in September, 1885, I found myself setting in my den in St. Giles's, discussing the state of our mutual finances with Ted Basting, my oldest chum and partner. Basting was inclined to take a pessimistic view of the situation, and he puffed savagely at his glowing clay as though concentrating all the bitterness of his emotions on the tobacco which burned therein.

"Everything's played out and hoverdone," he remarked, in a gloomy tone, "and that's the bloomin' truth. Blow me if I don't feel like joinin' the police force unless somethin' turns up before I'm much holder."

"My dear Ted," I remarked, with a smile which I could not repress, "surely you would not disgrace your family in that manner?"

"Well, guv'nor, I dunno. A copper's life ain't arf bad when 'e 'appens to get 'old of a good beat, with plenty o' cooks an' pork-pies in tow. But, there, wot's the good o' talkin' abast sich luxuries when it on'y makes my mouth water to think o' 'em without satisfyin' the vacancy jus' below my belt?"

"I quite agree with you," I replied, "but I fancy that I am on the verge of effecting a coup which will bring us in sufficient to remove the vacancy for evermore, or, rather, to fill it up satisfactorily. What do you say to securing £20,000 worth of jewellery from Stonor's the big Bond Street firm? How would that suit your book?"

He leaned back and peered at me cynically. "I would suit me down to the ground, guv'nor," he answered, "but the question is, 'ow do you propose to work the job?"

"By a means which is simplicity itself," I returned, slowly, "and if you will listen for a few minutes I think you will agree with me that the plan is not only workable, but almost certain of success."

"All right, guv'nor; fire away and hunkfold your tail, as the song sez," he muttered, with a grin. And, thus encouraged, I proceeded to explain my scheme.

"I propose to take a suite of rooms at the Hotel Recherche," I began, speaking in a slow, deliberate voice, so that he might follow my meaning, "and when I have secured the apartments in question I shall attire myself in gorgeous clothing and pay a visit to Messrs. Stonor and Sons."

"Werry good," he muttered: "and wot then?"

"Then I shall ask to be shown some specimens of their best work. I shall explain that my wife is lying in a somewhat delicate state of health at the hotel, and that she desires me to choose some stones for her. After some deliberation I shall go on to point out that I would prefer my wife to view the things for herself, and that I would suggest their sending an assistant with a large assortment to the hotel during the afternoon."

"I see," he replied, nodding his large head; "and when the chap comes round with the stuff you'll just knock him on the head and scoot with the swag. Ha, ha, ha!" and here the worthy fellow laughed long and loud.

"Your surmise is perfectly correct except in one detail," I made answer; "I shall not knock him on the head, as you elegantly suggest, but shall administer to the gentleman a mild sedative in the form of a dose of chloroform, which will render him quite harmless until we have made good our escape to the Continent. Or, rather, I shall leave you the task of drugging our friend whilst I divert his attention in some manner or other. And now, if there is any weak spot in the scheme which you have noticed, let me know."

"'Ow are you goin' to dispose of the stuff?" "Nothing will be easier. Our friend Groby, at Amsterdam, will discount the stones for us, after deducting his usual infinitesimal profit of 400 per cent."

Basting smiled approvingly. "You've got a good 'ead on you, guv'nor, and no mistake," he muttered, "but there's jus' one other thing I should like to mention. What part do I play in this 'ere tragedy 'in one hact? I ain't got to tog meself up as your missus, 'ave I?"

"Certainly not I replied," laughing at the idea of the burly fellow attired as a woman; "you will simply figure as my man-servant when the jeweller's assistant arrives. The signal for putting him to sleep will be the words: 'Is not this stone badly set?' You understand?"

"In course I do. Directly you hutters them words the bloke'll turn to examine the stone, and then I pops up behind 'im and does the trick."

"Exactly."

We spent a further half-hour in discussing several minor details, and when we parted for the night all was in train for the execution of the scheme, which promised to be the most profitable that we had ever undertaken.

A week later I drove up to the Hotel Recherche in a hansom, accompanied by some baggage in the shape of a trunk containing a large consignment of stones, a portmanteau wherein there reposed a few necessities of the toilet, and lastly my faithful associate, Ted Basting, who, garbed in black, represented a valet to the life. Assuming what is known as a "lordly" manner, I engaged a couple of sleeping apartments for Basting and myself, together with an elegant sitting-room adjoining. The suite in question formed one of the most expensive in the hotel but that detail did not trouble me at all, seeing that I did not contemplate waiting for the presentations of the bill.

We lunched in the great hostelry, my chum, of course, taking this meal at the servants' table, and directly the elaborate repast was concluded I attired myself in a gorgeous frock-coat and silk hat, and, hailing a hansom which was passing the hotel, was driven rapidly to Bond Street.

Messrs. Stonor and Sons' establishment was a huge double-fronted shop, containing more wealth in the shape of precious stones than any other half-dozen places of the kind in England, and the arms of Royalty shone brilliantly over the door. Telling the cabman to await my return, I swaggered into the emporium and approached the long glittering counter.

A gentlemanly assistant leaned towards me, asking in a low, mellifluous tone what he could have the honour of showing me. I hinted my requirements in a few prempitory words, which seemed to impress him very deeply, and during the next half-hour I kept the youth busy displaying to me all sorts and conditions of precious stones, the mere sight of which made my mouth water, to use a somewhat forcible, though inelegant, expression.

When I had sustained the farce long enough I shrugged my shoulders disconsolately and observed:—

"Really, I don't care to decide on anything without consulting my wife. Unfortunately, she is kept to the hotel by a bad cold and cannot stir out."

It was then that the assistant made the suggestion for which I was waiting. "We could send round an assortment by one of our people, if you like, sir," he remarked, affably, "and then the lady could see for herself."

"Ah! an admirable plan," I cried, speaking as though the arrangement had occurred to me as he spoke. "Do you think you could send your man between five and six this evening?"

"Certainly, sir. Will you be good enough to state your name and hotel?"

"Here is my card," I returned, as I produced a piece of pasteboard specially printed for this purpose, and which bore the name of "The Hon. Charles Puget." "I am stopping at the Recherche."

"Thank you very much, sir. The messenger shall wait on you at the time you name."

He bowed politely, and insisted on accompanying me into the street and holding open the flap of the hansom whilst I took my seat in the vehicle. Much pleased with the success of my scheme thus far, I drove back to the hotel and told Basting that all was in capital train for the working of the stratagem. His eyes lit up with delight.

"Blow me, guv'nor," he muttered, "if you ain't a werry Nerpoleon o' dooplicity. 'Pon my siddy, it's a pleasure to commit a fellerly with a bloke like you, and no mistake."

"Hush!" I said, quickly; "remember, the game is not ended yet, and one false stroke may bring everything to ruin. Have you the chloroform ready?"

"'Ere it is," he replied with a chuckle, producing the phial from his pocket.

"And the bag for the stones?" I asked. "It's in the sittin'-room. Heverythin's as right as a trivet, guv'nor, and if the job falls through it won't be along of any want o' forethought on the part of yures truly."

"Good!" I cried; "and now there is nothing to be done but to await the arrival of Messrs. Stonor's man."

At a quarter past five a waiter entered and informed me that the jeweller's assistant was below.

"Show him up," I replied, smartly. The man bowed and retired. A moment later a tall, pale-faced youth made his appearance, bearing a parcel in his arms.

"Good afternoon, sir," he said, softly. "I have brought some stones for your inspection."

"Oh, ah, yes," I exclaimed; "my wife will be down in a moment, and, meantime, suppose I look at the things. Unfasten the parcel, if you please."

He obeyed silently. Whilst he was untying the string Basting walked into the room and busied himself with some imaginary work in order to account for his presence. Directly the paper had been removed from the jewel-case, and the glittering contents displayed to my view, I took out a tiny diamond brooch and held it up to the light.

"Er—look here," I said, addressing the youth; "just examine this brooch. Is not the stone badly set?"

He was all attention in a moment, and Basting, having overheard the peconcerted signal, crept up behind him, pressed a chloroformed handkerchief to his nose, and dragged him to the ground. The young man struggled for a few seconds, and then with a heavy sigh became unconscious.

Without a moment's delay I grabbed the stones and placed them in the small bag. I then told Basting to quit the hotel and meet me outside Charing Cross Station, as the sight of my supposed valet accompanying me into the street might have created suspicion. He obeyed with a grin, and ten minutes later we both stood on the platform of the big terminus awaiting the boat express to Folkestone. Arrived at the latter port we journeyed to Boulogne, and next morning caught the first train to the Dutch capital. All had worked thus far with the utmost smoothness, and no scheme in which I had taken part had ever occasioned me so little trouble and so much amusement.

We breakfasted at the railway hotel in Amsterdam and then set out for Groby's den, situated in the east-end of the city. Groby, though possessed of an English name, had lived so long in Holland that he spoke our tongue like a foreigner, and when we entered his "office" he greeted us with a very amazing accent.

"Ah! gute morning, zhentlemen," he said, smiling. "And vat brings you here dis fine morning?"

"Business, as usual, Mr. Groby," I replied, as I took the greasy hand which he extended to me; "my friend and I have been engaged in the diamond trade of late, and we have brought you some very excellent stones."

"Ha, ha! dat was goot—very goot," cried Groby, rubbing his hands. "You know me, zhentlemen. You know that I give de best price in Holland for good tings."

"Well, here is your opportunity to be generous," I returned, as I opened the bag and drew forth the big collection of "annexed" jewels. "Look at these."

Groby eyed the stones for a few minutes narrowly. Then he burst into a hoarse, irritating laugh.

"Vat do you call dese?" he asked, slowly. "I call them diamonds, rubies, and opals," I answered. "What do you call them?"

"Paste, my goot sir—paste, and noting more."

"Paste!" I thundered, as I turned sick with apprehension, while Basting eyed the merchant as though he contemplated designs upon his life. "Paste! Are you joking?"

"My goot fellow, I never choke in bizness. All dis stuff is a goot imitation of the real ting, but I do not deal in imitations. Ze market price of the lot would be one thousand marks—dat is, fifty pounds in your Engleese money. Not a groat more."



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At first I would not believe this terrible truth. But when I perceived that Groby absolutely refused to accept the stones, and reiterated his decision that they were merely paste, I realized with an overwhelming pang that my task had been doomed to failure. With heavy hearts my chum and I departed from the dealer's office, and the language in which Basting indulged on our way to the hotel would have formed a valuable addition to the verbal stock-in-trade of a London cabman.

We sat in our little room discussing the incident with mournful speech. Neither of us could fathom the mystery of the affair—neither of us could understand how it had come about that Stonor and Sons had sent paste instead of genuine goods to the Hotel Recherche.

Next morning illumination came. Basting, who had been enjoying an early potation at a neighboring cafe, returned to the hotel, clutching a copy of "Galignani's Messenger" in his hand, whilst his eyes gleamed with fury.

"Read that paragraph, guv'nor," he yelled, "and you'll understand all."

He pointed to a passage that ran thus:—"STRANGE SEQUEL TO A DARING JEWEL ROBBERY."

"A very extraordinary affair is reported from London. It would appear that a few days ago a well-dressed stranger called at Messrs. Stonor's the well-known Bond Street jewellers, and commissioned the firm to forward a consignment of stones for his wife's approval at the Hotel Recherche. On the clerk arriving at the hotel he was set upon by two men and drugged, and, needless to add, he found on recovery that his assailants had made good their escape. The extraordinary sequel to the episode lies in the fact that the rogues had their trouble for nothing, seeing that the stones which he displayed consisted of paste goods, worth at most some £50. It would seem that the assistant charged with the errand in question was also commissioned to proceed afterwards to another hotel, where he was to show some paste goods to another possible customer, but owing to the fact that he was suffering from severe neuralgia and sleeplessness he made a lucky mistake and displayed the sham stones to the thieves, the genuine articles being securely placed in his breast pocket. Thus has it come about that Messrs. Stonor have been preserved from a loss of some £20,000."

Basting stared at me with a curious expression in his eyes.

"Guv'nor," he muttered, "I should like to have that clurk all to myself for abast two minits."

"So should I," I answered. And then we let the matter drop, for, indeed, it was too painful for further comment.

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Jack: "I don't see why you girls shouldn't work hard like the rest of us and do things for yourselves. You could save lots of money by making your own hats and dresses."

Laura: "I'd just like to know what you do yourself?"

Jack: "Why, I've been making my own cigarettes ever since the 1st of January."

The following is an extremely affectionate poetical epistle addressed to an Irish maid—

"I'm yours to command, both in weepin' and laughter; I'm awake all the night, that of you I may dream."

I'd hang meself now if you'd marry me after; And though I may change I'll be ever the same."

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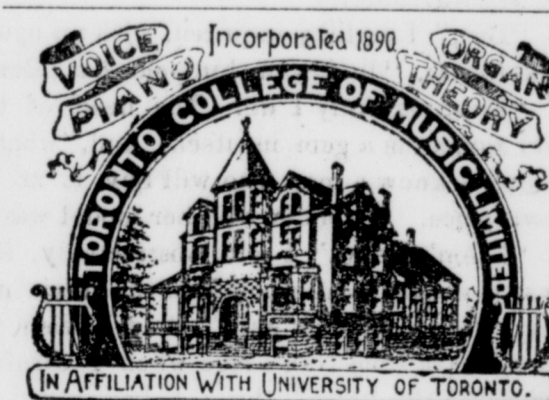
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## Notice of Sale.

To Herbert Turner of the Parish of Grand Falls in the County of Victoria and Province of New Brunswick, painter, and Edith E. Turner his wife and to whom else it may concern:

NOTICE is hereby given that under and by virtue of a Power of Sale contained in a certain Indenture of Mortgage bearing date the thirteenth day of February, A. D., 1893, between the said Herbert Turner and Edith E. Turner his wife of the one part and Benjamin Kilburn of the Parish of Perth in the said County of Victoria, merchant, of the other part and registered in the office of the Registrar of Deeds for the said County of Victoria in book "P" of records numbered seven thousand three hundred and four (7304) there will for the purpose of satisfying the money secured by the said Indenture of Mortgage default having been made in payment of the same be sold at Public Auction in front of the office of Alexander Straton, Barrister-at-Law, in the Parish of Andover in said County of Victoria on THURSDAY the FIFTEENTH day of JANUARY next at the hour of two o'clock in the afternoon the lands conveyed by the said Indenture of Mortgage and therein described as follows:—A tract of land situate in the Parish of Grand Falls in the County of Victoria and Province of New Brunswick and bounded as follows:—Beginning at the northeast angle of lot number six in Colebrook West granted to one William Hart thence running by the magnet of the year 1892 north seventy-two degrees and forty minutes west sixty chains and fifty links along the northern line of said grant and its prolongation to the commissioner's line thence along the same north seventeen degrees and twenty minutes east seventeen chains thence south seventy degrees and forty minutes east sixty chains and fifty links thence south seventeen degrees and twenty minutes west seventeen chains to the place of beginning containing one hundred acres more or less and known and distinguished as lot number five in Colebrook West together with the improvements thereon and the appurtenances thereto belonging.

Dated at Andover in the said County of Victoria the fourth day of November, A. D., 1902.  
ISABELLA GRAHAM,  
Assignee of Mortgagee.

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