

A Clever Diamond Swindle

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A Necklace Worth 450,000 Francs Obtained By Clever Swindling—A Ruse To Be Played On The Sharpest Tradesmen—A Cunning Set Of Drawers—A Handsome And Accomplished Young Lady—Tailor Versus Jeweler—The Detective Deceived—On The Track—Misled Again—Mr. Brown Makes Acquaintance With The Detective—Great Disappointment—Cuxhaven, Heligoland, An English Place Of Refuge—The Bird Has Escaped—A London Jeweler And His Cousin—An Agreeable Trip Across The Ocean—Milord And The Cousin In Hamburg—Milord In Naples—Milord In The Bagnio.

A perfect novelty in the art of swindling has been brought out in Naples, Italy. We will give a minute account of the affair: firstly, on account of the startling revelations in detective-life; and secondly, as a warning for our tradesmen, as a similar ruse might easily be played on the sharpest tradesmen in any country.

About four months ago, a gentleman of very aristocratic bearing, about 55 years old, with a beautiful, full, gray beard and hair, dark, piercing eyes, and an aquiline nose, stopped at the "Hotel de Genève." He was accompanied by an elegant-looking lady of about 24 years old, dressed in the best style, with laces and velvets, and one of those daughters of Eve, who, by a single wink of their jet black eyes, put so many hearts afire. She might be called really beautiful, and was the happy possessor of a pair of hands as fine as if they were chiseled in marble, and her foot, which she very gracefully showed, might have served as a model for Venus.

They gave themselves out to be English, but the attendants of the hotel, although Italians, readily observed that they spoke Italian, although very fluently, more with a German than an English accent. The young lady seemed very fond of exhibiting her knowledge of languages, for every time when she passed the office she spoke French for a while with the clerk, who was a Frenchman, and who declared that she spoke his language marvelously well, for an English lady. Her musical talents were now and then displayed in the parlor of the hotel by artistically rendering the sonatas of Beethoven or Mozart. In short, the lady as well as the gentleman were evidently highly educated, and their deportment was such that it could not but secure to them the fullest confidence, and in fact, they were the object of much attention by the attachés of the hotel, which were received with the greatest marks of recognition. They brought with them, among other luggage, four large boxes, containing two complete sets of drawers, like those used by officers in camp.

They chose a parlor and two bedrooms, one of which opened into the parlor. They ordered their trunks at once to be brought into their rooms, and as soon as they were settled, these drawers were unpacked, and one set was placed against the door in the parlor, the other on the other side of the door in the gentleman's bedchamber, the door in question being, like most of those in continental hotels, very thin.

For some time, things went on satisfactorily. The gentleman was not extravagant, but liberal, and was most particular in calling for his bill and paying it to the moment. His daughter amused the

guests in the hotel with her really masterly playing on the piano and her witty conversation, and soon the “milord” and the “signorina” had become great favorites in the hotel. Even Signor Isotta, the proprietor of the hotel, now and then called on them, and passed a delightful hour with his intellectual and very conversational guests.

Before they had been many days in town, they paid a visit to Signor Amalfi, the principal jeweler, and “milord” and his daughter made some small purchases, in each case paying cash, and showing that he was well provided with bank-notes. The jeweler was most anxious to press his new customers, and brought all kinds of beautiful articles to tempt them, but, although the young lady ardently coaxed “milord,” his purchases were at first very moderate, though liberally paid for. At the end of a month, the gentleman paid a visit alone, and, after making another purchase, and having looked around for some considerable time, he observed that his daughter was about to be married, that he thought of sending to Paris for a set of diamonds, requesting the jeweler to give him the address of the most reliable jeweler there, and begging him to keep the affair a secret from his daughter, as he wished to agreeably surprise her.

The jeweler could not allow such a chance to slip through his fingers, and told the “milord” that he would gladly oblige him with the address of a reliable firm in Paris, but that “milord” might save the trouble and delay, as he had a set of diamonds in his possession, the most beautiful in Europe, the property of a princess, and that he was sure that Paris could not show a set like it. He placed them before his rich customer, with the remark that only a “milord Inglese” could buy them, and begged him just to inspect them. The eyes of “milord” dazzled at seeing so much splendor displayed, but, preserving his accustomed *sang froid*, he carefully inspected the necklace; and really it was worth a careful inspection. A row of seventeen glorious diamonds, almost as large as filberts, were destined to encircle, not too tightly, a first time, the neck of the wearer. Looser, gracefully fastened thrice to these, a three wreathed festoon and pendant encircled it and enwreathed it a second time. Loosest of all, softly flowing round from behind, in priceless catenary, rush down two broad three-fold rows, and seem to knot themselves on the bosom; all these different rows were held together by tassels, which alone would make the fortune of some men. It was a second necklace of the queen, and, really, it seemed that this celebrated, or rather infamous gem, was closely imitated. The jeweler had a right to be proud of his gem, and valued it at 450,000 francs.

The inspection was made, but although the jeweler used his most persuasive language, no decision was come to that day. The next day another call was made, “milord” looked at some small jewelry, and, without speaking at all about the necklace, he was about leaving the store, when the jeweler politely intimated that the necklace had not been shown to any other customer, as the jeweler gave “milord,” as having been the first to look at it, the preference. “Milord” remarked that he had not given it any further thought, but now he was reminded of it, he would look at it again. The merchant gladly showed it, pointed out all the merits of the masterpiece of workmanship, and at last, to his great delight, “milord” agreed to take it. No happier man in all Naples that day than the jeweler. He thought it would be best to ask if he should send them around in the evening, but he received a perfectly straightforward answer. “I do not keep so much money about me. I must draw upon my banker in London. I will give you 500 francs to close the business, and the jewels you can deliver against cash in the course of the next week, to close the bargain. The deposit was paid, and the jeweler satisfied, beyond a doubt, that he was

dealing with a most perfect gentleman. Deeply bowing, he opened the door for “milord,” who, smiling condescendingly, stepped into his carriage.

Eight days had passed, when the jeweler was requested to call the same morning at eleven, and bring the diamonds, for which he would be paid. He arrived at the moment, and found his customer in his dressing-gown, sitting alone at the set of drawers above referred to, a front lid of which turned down so as to form a writing table.

The jeweler advanced respectfully, and laid the casket containing the necklace, open, on the lid in question. “Milord” just examined the jewels, beams of delight dashed from his eyes, but he coolly remarked that he did not wish his daughter to know anything about the transaction at present, and then proceeded to take out a large handful of beautiful, crisp notes.

At that moment the door was suddenly opened, and, to the apparent great annoyance of “milord,” in bounded the young lady in question, as the jeweler afterwards testified, “like a golden fawn.” Nothing was more natural than that “milord” should wink at the jeweler, close up the lid, leaving the necklace in the drawer, put the key and the banknotes in his pocket, and ask the young lady to go away, as he had to transact business with the gentleman, and wished to be alone. But she seemed to be a spoilt child, and would have her own way. She said that she had come to tell “papa” that the tailor was waiting for him in the next room, and he must go, “and,” she added, with a most captivating smile, “I am quite sure that the jeweler will be just as much pleased with my company for a little while as with yours; besides, I have a locket, which I can not open, and the gentleman will certainly be kind enough to assist me in the meanwhile.” The jeweler was not proof against the charms of the young lady; he saw his goods safely locked up in the chest of drawers, almost under his very eyes, and, as he supposed, as secure as though he had them in his own hands. So he begged “milord” not to be troubled on his account; he would gladly wait, and “milord,” after making many excuses, and playfully threatening the spoiled child with his finger, left the room; and the poor dupe enjoyed half an hour of the most delightful flirtation with the young lady. The artful siren captivated him so thoroughly, she was so winning in her ways, that the jeweler envied her bridegroom, and the time passed by entirely unnoticed. It was to him like a dream, and he willingly would have enjoyed it some time longer, but the young lady remarked that the tailor always talked so very, very long, and that she would go and hurry her father. She left the room, thanking the jeweler kindly for his assistance in opening the locket, and rewarding him with one of her most winning smiles.

The jeweler looked after her as if he were under a charm, and, gazing at the door through which she had passed, he sat for a long while in deep meditation; his thoughts naturally being engrossed with the sweet girl who had just left him. He sat thus for some time, but at last he began to wonder how long his customer would be. Then he went and tried the lid of the drawer. It was “all right,” it was locked, and his necklace safely deposited in it. So he sat down and mused again, and in his imagination he saw the beautiful young lady in her bridal dress, adorned with the diamonds, whose luster would be enhanced by the reflection of the rosy hue of her blushing cheeks. After he had passed in that way some three hours, he began to think that he must be forgotten. So he rang the bell, and requested the waiter to just remind “milord” that he was waiting, but to do it very politely. The waiter replied that “milord” had gone out with the gentleman who had called upon him about two hours ago. “Why,” replied the jeweler, “that is

strange; ‘milord’ knew that I was waiting here. Pray, go and ask the signorina whether she knows about when her father expects to return.” The waiter went away, and soon returned with the intelligence that the signorina was not in, but that he would go down to the office and inquire. The jeweler began to feel anxious, but soon the landlord himself came up and told him that “milord” had left word at the office, some two hours ago, before he went out with the gentleman who had called upon him, to just request the jeweler, if he lost his patience and inquired for him, that he would be back soon, that he had some important business to transact at once, and that he was sure the jeweler would excuse him. About half an hour afterwards, the servant had seen the “signorina” leave the hotel, apparently going out for a walk. The jeweler expressed his fear, but the landlord laughed at him, and assured him that he, in his large experience, never had met with a more perfect gentleman, and that he wished the “milord” owed him 500,000 francs; he certainly would consider them as safe as if he had them in the bank, besides his jewels were there in the drawer, immediately under his eyes, and even in the case that the “milord” did not return, he was safe, as his diamonds were in the hotel, and besides, he would have the 500 francs deposit for his trouble.

The jeweler soon was convinced that he had troubled himself for nothing, and almost felt ashamed of his fear. He requested the landlord not to mention their conversation to “milord,” and, as he intended to wait, to have some refreshments brought up. The time of the *table d’hôte* had come, but neither “milord” nor the “signorina” returned, and although the poor man began to have a presentiment that something was wrong, he consulted again with the landlord, who said he was sure that his guest was a real gentleman, whose only fault was forgetfulness. So again he waited till past the small hours of the night. At early morning, the landlord again returned, and he also began to think the case suspicious, but he declared that he could not understand why he should leave in such a way, as the diamonds were here, and all his luggage and valuables were left in the rooms. The jeweler now became furious; he made a dash at the drawers, and, with the aid of the poker, broke open the lid, behind which his diamonds were locked. His next move was take the casket, but judge of his astonishment and indignation, when he thrust his hand into the compartment and saw nothing before him but a square, open void, leading into a set of drawers into the next room. The contrivance was so cunningly devised that we will give a full explanation of the discovery. The reader will remember that one set of drawers was placed on either side of the door, one in the parlor, and the other in the gentleman’s bedroom; the panel of the door which separated the two sets had been carefully cut out, and, as the drawers had no back to them, the “milord” was enabled to open one of the drawers in either room and take objects from the corresponding drawer in the other room, without being obliged to unlock that drawer or to remove it at all. All present were convinced of the fact, and as it was evident that they had to deal with a cunningly contrived swindle, they searched the drawers and the other rooms, with the assistance of the police, who had in the meanwhile been called in.

In the drawers some letters were found, all directed to Lord Sheffield, and evidently all written in the same handwriting; they did not lead to any disclosure as to the identity of the swindling “milord.” Not a single piece of jewelry was to be found in the rooms. The trunks in the room of the lady were well provided with underwear and a few dresses; but the most costly, such as she had been wont to wear around the hotel, her beautiful laces and furs, had disappeared. In the bedroom of “milord,” the dressing-gown was found, lying on a chair, but the key of the drawers and the roll of beautiful, crisp notes had been taken from the pockets. What to do? the jeweler

was in despair. He declared himself ruined, and offered large amounts for the detection of the thieves. The detective, Bonfi, was placed on his track, and now we will let him tell his own story:

“It was rather doubtful, or we may say very evident, that Lord Sheffield was a bogus lord; that he was neither a member of the English nobility, nor, to all appearance, an Englishman. The letters found in his drawers, therefore, gave plain evidence that he had accomplices, in which suspicion I was confirmed by the following facts: My first step was taken to the office of the steamer, which had left on the preceding day, at 4 P.M., for Marseilles; and really I found on the register the name of Lord Sheffield and lady. The clerk told me that at about noon an English gentleman had called, had engaged two staterooms, one for a lady and one for himself, had paid for both, and told him that he would send his baggage soon afterwards, that the trunks were marked with their name, and that he requested him to have them put into the staterooms. This had been done, and the clerk did not doubt but that “milord” and his lady were on their way to Marseilles. I was very well satisfied with the success of my step, and sent a dispatch to the police at Marseilles to arrest the guilty parties at arrival of the steamer at Marseilles, but judge of my disappointment and rage when, thirty-six hours afterwards, a dispatch reached me, saying that the trunks had been duly found, but not the “milord” and his lady; that they evidently had not embarked, and that the police, after having waited for the morning steamer, and seeing that they were on this neither, had searched the trunks, and found that they were provided with nickel-plates, bearing the name of “Lord Sheffield;” had found them to be filled up with old papers and a few bricks. The papers did not give the least information, being for the greatest part old Italian newspapers. No time was to be lost, as the swindler and his accomplice had already thirty-six hours the start of me. However, I went first once more to the office of the steamer and inquired whether they knew the man who had brought the trunks? They did; it was an expressman, who daily brought luggage for the steamer. He declared that a gentleman, the description of whom exactly answered to that of “milord,” had ordered him to get his trunks from a house, No. 32 Corso; to be very careful with them, and to bring them to the steamer for Marseilles; he had done so, and “milord” had liberally paid him for his trouble. Inquiring at No. 32 Corso, I was told by the landlady that “milord” had rented a small front-room in the house, as he was writing a book, and desired to have quietude. He paid for a month in advance; had two trunks, bearing the name of “Lord Sheffield,” brought to the house, and, for all the lady knew, he was a perfect, quiet gentleman, who only passed an hour or so a day in his room. The day before, he had acquainted the lady, at about noon, that he intended to leave for Marseilles, settled his bill, and soon afterwards the expressman called for the trunks, and a young lady of remarkable beauty called for the gentleman in a hack; he stepped in, and this was the last time she ever saw him. It was now evident to me that I had to deal with a rascal of the sharpest kind. The whole contrivance of the trunks was a cunningly devised plan to mislead the detective and to get the start of him. I must confess he had succeeded remarkably well. I at once proceeded to the railway depot and made my inquiries, and the ticket agent told me that he had sold two tickets for Genoa to a gentleman answering the description, but that he was not an Englishman, but a German. I now knew that this was my man, and took at once the train for Alexandria, whither my game had gone. The conductor of the train told me that he had seen such parties as I described on the train, and that he was sure that they had left the cars at Alexandria, as he remarked that the young lady created quite a sensation at the depot, on account of her remarkable beauty and her queenly bearing. This filled me with the greatest hope of discovery, but, accustomed to disappointments of all kinds, I was not too sanguine. Arrived at Alexandria, I resolved to alight there, and to see whether

“milord” could be found. I looked over the registers of all the hotels, but in vain; Lord Sheffield’s name was not to be found. On my inquiry, a clerk of a first-class hotel told me that a gentleman and lady, answering my description, but speaking French, had stopped there overnight, but had left with the first train, whither, he said, he did not know. They had two trunks with them, carrying the name “Dumont.” Of course I had no sufficient guarantee that they were the parties I was looking for, but as the description so exactly coincided with that which I had received in Naples, I resolved to follow this track, and inquired at all the depots in town. My man had departed for Torina, and at once I took the cars for that place, and learned there that the parties had gone on that same day to Martigny, Switzerland. I had to wait till morning before I could take the train, and employed my time in thoroughly studying up the different courses he now could take, and as I saw that the roads diverged so much that I probably should want help, I sent a dispatch to Naples, to Miss Guoni, to join me at Cologne, where I should be in need of her services, she having more than once done very clever detective-work. It is often much easier for ladies to trace a criminal, without exciting his suspicion, than for gentlemen, for whom they are always on the alert. This done, I took, in the afternoon, the train for Bern, and there I learned that a lady and a gentleman, with the name of Dumont, had stopped at the “Bernner Wirthshaus” for a couple of hours; the lady perfectly answering to the description; the gentleman, to all appearance, was another party. He did not have his long, gray beard, but was cleanly shaved, and wore only a black, heavy mustache; his eyes, nose, and general appearance coincided so well with my original, that I concluded he might be the right party after all, and had only shaved his beard and colored his mustache to put us from the track.

I was informed that they had taken the train for Narburg, so I proceeded at once, but as I could not learn any particulars there, as they, to all appearance, had not stopped, I went on to Basel. Here Mr. Dumont and his wife had engaged, on the preceding evening, one room, in which they had passed the night, and, to all appearance, they intended to stop for a few days. In the morning, however, the gentleman had asked for the “Besner Zeitung.” He carelessly read it over, leaning against the counter of the office, when at once his eyes fell on an article which seemed to attract his greatest attention. He carefully read it over, inquired when the next train should leave for Cologne, took the paper along, and went at once to his room, requesting the clerk to send up the waiter with his bill, as he intended to leave with the next train. I at once took a copy of the paper, and soon my eyes were attracted by the following article:

“A swindle was perpetrated a few days ago in Naples, the cunning device of which outstrips all that we have heard of before. A man, giving himself out for an English nobleman, contrived to obtain possession of a valuable necklace, belonging to one of the principal jewelers in Naples. As soon as he had the valuables in his hand, he left town, and put the detectives on the wrong track. It seems that they have to deal with an uncommonly smart swindler, but it is to be hoped that the able detective, who has been put on his track, will ferret the villain out, and that justice will overtake him.”

I knew now what had frightened Mr. Dumont, and, cursing the indiscretion of the newspapers, which often, by their over-great zeal for news, make the work of the detective, if not entirely useless, at least, often very complicated, I started as soon as possible for Cologne.

Now, from Basle to Cologne is a very long stretch, and many great stations are found between them. If I had had a great number of assistants with me, I might have left one in every station, to “do” the place, and proceed myself to Cologne. As it was now, I resolved to do myself what my assistants should have done, and trust to luck for the rest.

From Basle, three different trains, besides the one coming from the south, leave at different times in diverse directions. One line goes east, over Hauenstein to Schaffhausen, another northwest, over Muhlhausen to Epinal, and leads into France, and the northern one goes almost straight north, over Krotzingen to Freiburg, and as this is the direct line to Cologne, I resolved to pursue this road, and to send dispatches for the arrest of the thief in the other directions. It would be of very little interest to my readers if I told them of all my different bright beams of hope, and subsequent disappointments. Let it suffice to say, that at some stations my man had been seen, as I thought, and at others I was left entirely in the dark. The young lady who accompanied the “milord,” and everywhere attracted attention on account of her beauty, was my safest guide, as “milord” seemed to have altered his appearance, not only in regard to his beard, but also in his personal attire. At Karlsruhe, in Baden, I was told that “milord” and the young lady had taken supper, but if his accomplice had not accompanied him, I scarcely would have known that I was on his track yet, as Mr. Dumont did not exist any more, and now Mr. Braun, a Hungarian, the real type of his nation, in riding-boots, and a Hungarian cap, bordered with fur, was the chapeau of the beauty. At Heidelberg the road diverged again, but I was rather convinced, that at Basle, reading the newspaper article, “milord” had been frightened, and, in his fright, had unconsciously betrayed his plan of travel. So I went on, and, in the evening, arrived at Darmstadt, where I resolved to pass the night, and gather some new information, if possible. I went at once to the *Darmstaedter Hof*, the best hotel in the city, and, as I had plenty of time, I invited the clerk to take a drink with me, and then told him the whole story, and requesting him to try his very best to remember whether he had seen some person answering the description; at which the clerk exclaimed: “Why, they have been here, I know! They must have left an hour before you arrived here.” Now, from Darmstadt, three roads leave in different directions; one goes east, to Aschaffenburg, another west, to Mayence, and another north, to Frankfort. The trains depart at different hours, and several times a day. From Darmstadt there are two direct lines to Cologne, one over Frankfort, Giessen, Blantenburg, to Cologne, and the other over Mainz, Cohlentz, Bonn, to Dusseldorf. I was at a loss what line to take, but carefully thinking the matter over, and considering the time they must have left, I resolved to take the former line, which, at all events, was the shortest, and, in case I had been mistaken, I would have gained a little time, and if their destination was Cologne, I would probably find them there, or, at least, traces of them. In the evening, arrived at Cologne, I at once proceeded to the “Hotel de Bonn,” on the square of the Augustines, which is only at fifteen minutes distance from the railroad depot, on the line of Bonn. I judged that if they had come by that line, and this was probable, as I had not found any trace of them on the road, they probably would stop at that hotel, as it was one of the best, and “milord” was accustomed to frequent only first-class hotels. The register mentioned neither “Lord Sheffield,” nor “Mr. Dumont,” nor “Mr. Braun,” and nobody in the hotel answered to my description, as far as the clerk knew. I now searched all the hotels, and had been at the Hotel Royal, the Hotel de Hollande, and many more, all in vain, when the music of a military band attracted me, and, wandering in the direction from whence the music proceeded, I arrived at the Hotel Bellevue, the gardens of which allow a charming view over the city, and over the animated bridge over the Rhine. During the summer, there is, almost every evening,

music in the gardens. Wandering in the garden, I looked around, but saw nobody who had the least similarity to the party I was looking for. Soon the night-air felt chilly, and, entering into the office, I registered my name, when, lo! the signature of "Mr. Braun and lady" at once attracted my attention. At my inquiry, the clerk told me that they had arrived that very day, and occupied a front-room on the first floor; that they had just entered from the garden, and probably were sitting in the parlor. I proceeded at once to my room, arranged my toilet, and entered into the parlor, without giving the slightest reason for suspicion. A young lady was sitting before the window, answering to the description which I had received about her in Naples; she was remarkably handsome. The gentleman, who was talking with her, did not answer the description in the least; his eyes were blue, his nose the very opposite of aquiline, and his mustache, instead of black, of the very lightest blonde color. It was very evident that I, at least, as far as the gentleman was concerned, was entirely misled; he, assuredly, was not the man I was looking for. The lady, soon afterwards, began to play on the piano. She was a skillful pianiste; played the Wedding March of Mendelssohn, the notes of which were lying on the piano, and, turning one of the leaves, it fell on the floor; and I at once arose, picked it up for her, which attention she acknowledged with a graceful bow, and, at my request, she smilingly allowed me to turn the leaves for her. After playing, I complimented her on her artistic execution and beautiful touch, at which she asked me whether I would favor her with playing a piece, as she was convinced that I was a skillful player; and she asserted that she was almost ashamed to have made me listen to her playing, which must have sounded, in my critical ears, perfectly shocking. I assured her of the contrary, told her that her playing had delighted me, although I could not execute myself, and that I was very sorry not to be able to gratify her demand. At this moment Mr. Braun stood up, advanced towards the piano, and I, seeing no other alternative, introduced myself as Mr. Sartori, from Rome. He handed me his card, and I read the following:

LE CONTE DE BRAUN,

Officier d' Artillerie,
Armee Autrichienne.

He introduced the young lady as his wife, and asserted that he was very much pleased to make a new acquaintance, as the hotel was almost entirely filled up with American and English tourists, and he did not speak the language. We chatted a long while very agreeably together, when at once the sweet strain of the "Beautiful Blue Danube," of Strauss, reached our ears. At my inquiry, where the music proceeded from, she told me that the guests were dancing in the large, beautiful hall belonging to the hotel. I at once politely asked her to grant me the favor of leading her thither, which was readily accepted, and soon we were gliding over the well-polished floor, amid laces and perfume, light and love, and were only reminded of the late hour by a warning from Mr. Braun. At last I went to bed with the conviction that from Basle I had followed the wrong track, all my pains were lost, the "milord" had now had all possible time to make his escape, and, if he had not been very awkward, it was useless to look for him any more. However, I sent dispatches to all the seaports, hoping, in that way, to prevent his leaving the continent.

What to do now? Return to Basle, and from there follow up the track again, which I had lost? I did not think it worth while, as the "milord" had had plenty of time to leave that place, and to efface his track. I, therefore, went to the different hotels, and at last succeeded in finding Miss

Guoni, the female detective whom I had requested to join me at Cologne. I told her how I had been misled, and we together came to the agreement that she should go to Calais, in France, while I would proceed to Cuxhaven, in that way being sure that no escape to England or America was probable, unless it had already been executed without our knowledge. I must confess that I now depended more upon accident than actual search. Scarcely had I been two days in Cuxhaven, when I almost reached the certainty that "milord " had escaped to Heligoland, a British island in the North Sea, west of Holstein, and I received a dispatch, in cipher, from Miss Guoni, that she was sure to be on the track of the lady, as she had found diamonds in Paris, sold at Lafitte, which exactly corresponded with those of Amalfi, at Naples, and that they had been sold by a lady answering the description, who had embarked in Calais for Dover. I at once sent a dispatch to her, not to pursue the lady, as she probably would remain in England, thinking herself safe, and that she should find out as much about the diamonds as she possibly could. This done, I took the steamer for Heligoland.

Before, however, I describe my experiences there, it is necessary to say that the island Heligoland, one of the fashionable watering-places of the day, is really nothing else but a large, red rock, raising its head above the surface of the water, almost bare, save a few trees around the hotel, the "Old Post," and selected as a watering-place for the cool, invigorating sea-breeze, and the free, unconventional life which it affords. Of course, the bathing-guests, who have nothing else to do or to converse about, consider the arrival of a steamer from Cuxhaven as a great event, and as soon as the cannon-shot announces such an arrival, ladies and gentlemen start for the shore to exchange their opinions as to the new fellow-guests. For that reason, the passage from the point of debarkation to the "Old Post" is characteristically called the "gossip alley." I mention this fact because the reader will see, that, in this case, the "gossip alley " did me great service.

Arriving at the "Old Post," I wished to create no suspicion, and therefore, while I registered my name as the merchant Werner, of Berlin, I carelessly looked over the list, and saw neither "Lord Sheffield's" name, nor that of "Mr. Dumont," nor "Mr. Braun's." However, this did not discourage me, as my customer might use a hundred different names.

I established myself at the hotel, sat down before the door, from where a beautiful view over the sea, with its numerous white sails of fishermen, might be seen, and ordered a cup of coffee. The daughter of the landlord, a pretty blonde of about twenty, soon appeared with the beverage, and, slowly drawing out my purse, and being careful to give her a large piece of money, so that she would be obliged to change, I inquired whether they had many guests at present. She answered, "Not so many at present as we generally have at this time."

"Why," I replied, "can you give any reason for it?"

"I do not know," was the answer; "at other seasons the guests come and stay for two or three months, and now, it has happened already twice that they leave after having been only one or two days on the island."

“That is strange; I am sure the guests cannot be dissatisfied with the hotel, everything here looks so inviting and comfortable, and your coffee, as I see, is so excellent that I should think it would be a real enjoyment to pass the whole summer here.”

The pretty Heligoland girl was flattered, and, as this was the hour that the other guests took their *siesta*, we soon were engaged in a lively conversation, and she told me that three days ago, a rich Englishman, who did not look at all like being in need of taking the baths for restoring his health, had arrived on the island; that he inquired at once what the shortest method was to reach England from here, “and,” she continued, “when father had told him, he ordered a sailing vessel to be made ready in the morning.”

“A sailing vessel?” I inquired, astonished.

“Yes,” was the reply; “oftentimes, guests, who do not wish to return to Cuxhaven per steamer, take a sailing vessel here, and our sailors are able to exactly calculate with the weather, when the steamer is due at a certain point. They generally reach the point at the exact time, and the passenger is taken up on board the steamer, in that way going direct from here to England. Many do that, in order to avoid the trouble of having their goods examined by the custom-house officers.”

“That is really a very good reason,” I added, laughingly, “but your rich Englishmen can not have had that same motive. What a strange behavior. You say he did not look ill?”

“No, not at all! His dark, black eyes glistened with all the luster of health, and, although he was a man of about 55 years, he looked as strong as a man of forty.”

“Did he have a heavy mustache?”

“Yes! do you know him?”

“I do not think I do, but I remarked a gentleman in the hotel at Cuxhaven who nearly answers your description. Do you know his name?”

“He did not register his name, as he did not stay overnight. But *Dumont* was painted on his trunks.”

My heart bounded for joy; this was my man, but I did not intend to show it to the girl. Therefore I changed the subject, and paid her a compliment on her beautiful, healthy complexion. The sweet child of nature blushed, and at once remembered that she had something to do in the house.

She left me, and I was alone with my joy and the device of further plans. My fear that he had left for America, had not been realized. This was a great step gained, and I did not despair yet.

It is needless to say that I went at once to the shore and ordered a sailing vessel to be ready in the evening, to convey me to the English steamer, and that on the next day I disembarked in London.

My first step then, was to find out whether any diamonds had been sold in that city, which fact might lead me to find the track of the criminal. Searching in the elegant stores of Piccadilly, I learned that a German had been in one of the principal stores, looking for a watch; he had said that he wanted a cheap watch, as he intended to make a trip to Rio de Janeiro, where he had connections with a house in diamonds in the ruos dos Ourives, and that he did not want to purchase an expensive one, as he was afraid the saltwater air would spoil it. The jeweler asserted that he was acquainted with the house in Rio de Janeiro the German had spoken of; had sold him the watch, and, as he wished to trade a couple of diamonds, he had paid him the balance due in cash. He further said that the German seemed to be very wealthy, as he wore the most costly diamonds. The description of the man coincided so perfectly with “milord,” after he had shaved off his beard, that I did not doubt any more, and asked whether the jeweler knew where he was stopping. He did not know, but promised me to advise me as soon as he entered his store again. I gave him my address, requested him to use the greatest prudence, and had just entered my hotel when a clerk of the store requested me to return at once. I took a cab, entered the store, pretending to look after some jewelry, and yes! my “milord” was standing before me. I requested the clerk to pay the cabman for me and to dismiss him, and now began to inquire of the jeweler whether he could furnish me with a large solitaire diamond, which was missing in a set of jewelry of my wife. The jeweler replied that he was not certain that he had any such as I was looking for in his stock, but that, at all events, he could procure one in a few days.

“Milord,” to all probability, had overheard us, for, a short while afterwards, he took the jeweler aside, and told him that he had a large solitaire diamond in his possession, and was willing to sell it to him, if they could agree upon the price; he would go and get it, and return in the afternoon. The jeweler requested him to do so, and “milord” left the store.

I now begged the jeweler to buy the diamond at all events, and to have “milord” return, for some cause or other, in a couple of days, when I would be there again, but so disguised that “milord” would not recognize me. The jeweler bought the diamond, and when it was taken, in the evening, from the cheap setting, in which “milord” had inserted it, we found that it had a little flaw. I sent a dispatch at once to Mr. Amalfi, at Naples, and soon received the following answer:

“Solitaire has a small flaw at the underpart. I remember now that ‘milord’ had one of his front teeth, upper row, filled with gold. Do all you can to catch him. I defray all expenses.”

The jeweler told me, in the evening, that “milord” had agreed to return on the next day, before his departure to Rio de Janeiro, and would draw up a contract with him for the purchase of some diamonds there for the firm. I was delighted, and requested the jeweler to receive “milord” in his private apartment, and to allow me to call on him that same evening, and to introduce me to the gentleman. The jeweler invited me to take supper with him, in that way being sure that I would be there before “milord” should enter, and hence avoid his suspicions.

At about 5 o’clock I began to dress myself, and even the most skillful detective could not have avoided taking me for a Spaniard. My hair was raven black, so were my mustache and imperial, and, as my eyes were naturally black, I formed the complete picture of one of the sons of Hispania. Thus attired, I went to the jeweler, who did not recognize me. I made myself known, we had supper, and, after we had been smoking a cigar, the “milord” entered. The jeweler

introduced me as a cousin, who had just arrived that afternoon from Madrid, and we soon were engaged in the most delightful conversation. In the course of it, "milord" told me that he intended to make a trip to Rio de Janeiro, he having business relations there with merchants in diamonds. I expressed my desire of visiting that country, and said that I would be very glad to make the trip in his company, but that I had already engaged staterooms on a steamer which was to leave next Friday (this being Monday) from Hamburg. "Milord" expressed his regret, as he intended to go with the steamer from Liverpool. I did not insist too much about his altering his plan, so as not to arouse his suspicion, but hoped to prevail upon him to engage place on the Hamburg steamer. We conversed till late in the evening, the jeweler making a satisfactory contract with him, and we left arm in arm for the hotel, as I declined the invitation of my pseudo-uncle to pass the night with him.

Now I had all possible opportunity to improve his acquaintance. We breakfasted at the *table d'hôte*, and, after breakfast, picking his teeth, I had occasion to see the gold filling of one of his front teeth, in the upper row. No doubt any more; this was my man, and, trusting that I might prevail upon him to go with me to Hamburg, I sent dispatches to Italy to obtain authorization of the German government to arrest him there. The next day I received the following dispatch:

"Dispatches are exchanged. Nothing will interfere with your plans."

I now took a ride in Hyde Park with my new friend, and really succeeded, after a long debate, to induce him to go that same evening with me to Hamburg, and leave on the next day for Rio Janeiro, and only being obliged to remain an hour, at the most, at that place. I now told him that I had to do some necessary errands in the city, but would return within an hour.

I took a boy, went to the telegraph office, and sent a dispatch to Hamburg to have policemen stationed at the pier; bought a trunk, packed it with papers and old books, addressed it to Don Henriques, Madrid, and saw Miss Guoni, telling her what I had done, and to let me know if she knew anything more about the lady.

Returning to the hotel, I saw "milord" preparing for the journey, and really at 8 o'clock that same evening we were both safely on board the steamer, playing chess and talking, drinking a glass of Burgundy wine, of which "milord" seemed to be very fond. We passed a few agreeable hours together; my good luck had put me in high spirits, and never in my life did I cross the ocean with more delight.

Arrived at Hamburg, the policemen were standing at the pier. I showed them my mandate, and "milord," to his great astonishment, was arrested. The preliminaries for extradition were soon done with, and on Monday morning I left with "milord" and two policemen for Naples.

The joy of the jeweler knew no bounds. He was about to embrace me, and, when confronted with "milord" before the court, he was so furious that he drew a pistol, and would have shot the culprit on the spot, if a policeman had not prevented his doing so.

"Milord" confessed his guilt, and said that, leaving Basle, he had taken the road east, over Hauenstein to Schaffhausen, and had proceeded from there north, to Cuxhaven, not resting day

or night. This explained why I had lost his track. The lady had gone west, over Munchausen to Epinal, and proceeded to Calais. This was all he knew about her. He had some diamonds left; the others were in possession of the lady, who was neither his wife nor his daughter, and some of them he had sold in London. The cash he had with him amounted to about 70,000 francs.

During the trial, some of the diamonds were recovered, but the lady had about 100,000 francs worth with her.

Intelligence came in from Miss Guoni that the lady had proceeded to Liverpool the day before they reached London, and had embarked for Rio de Janeiro. At the time at which this is written she has not been discovered.

“Milord” was condemned to twenty years hard labor in the bagnio at Palermo, where he is suffering at the present time for his cunning and well-planned swindle.

George S. McWatters, *Detectives Of Europe And America, Or Life In The Secret Service: A Selection Of Celebrated Cases*. Hartford: Burr, 1877