

The Brewster Diamonds

by H.S. Keller

“And you say the diamonds were very valuable?”

“Worth twenty thousand dollars, Mr.—what may I call your name?” asked Harold Brewster of the plainly-dressed man seated upon the opposite side of the table.

“Oh—Smith,” responded the man.

“Quite a common name that; but I suppose it will suffice as well as any,” said Mr. Brewster.

“Precisely.”

A short interval of silence then elapsed. It is quite evident that the two are studying one another—Mr. Brewster because the man is a stranger, and the other because it is his calling.

Finally Mr. Brewster broke the silence by asking:

“You are a detective?”

Smith acknowledged this by simply bowing.

“And do you think, Mr. Smith, that you can help me to recover the jewels?”

“I can try—”

“So can any one try,” quickly interrupted Brewster.

“Let me finish, please,” said Smith. “When I try I succeed. If you wish my services give me some points. Tell me who the diamonds belonged to. Give me some explicit idea as to their form, number, and the like. I cannot work in the dark, and blindfolded, Mr. Brewster.”

“That’s a fact. Well, in the first place, the jewels are old family heirlooms. They consist of a necklace, eardrops and a pair of bracelets. Ah! by-the-way, I can give you a better idea by these,” said Mr. Brewster, taking from a drawer a box. He took the cover off; and there, ensconced among downy cotton was a perfect mass of glittering, shimmering jewels.

Smith uttered an ejaculation of surprise as his eyes fell-upon the sparkling gems.

“You seem surprised, Smith; well, they are pretty fair counterfeits,” said Brewster, as he laid the diamonds upon the table.

“Counterfeits, did you say?” asked Smith, as he bent lower to examine them.

“Precisely; they are but paste representation. They are the same in size and number as the originals; were made expressly for such an occasion as this. Please examine them closely, Mr. Smith, for by these must we recover the originals.”

The detective took the pieces up one by one and examined each closely. He counted the stones; noted the quaint, old-fashioned setting, which was intricate, delicate, and a marvel of skilled handiwork. “And you say these are bogus?”

“Yes, sir. If the originals were here you could then compare the two sets.”

“Who usually wore the real ones?”

“My daughter, which was seldom; for she is an invalid and goes in society but little. Poor Lucy! she does not even know that the diamonds are missing.”

“Does not know? What do you mean, Mr. Brewster?”

“The two sets are kept in a secret drawer in my desk at home. The originals in a plain white box; these in a blue box as you see.”

“Precisely; go on.”

“If possible, I would like to recover the diamonds before my daughter finds out about the matter. You may proceed in your own manner, Mr. Smith; if you succeed in recovering the jewels and punishing the thief, I shall not hesitate to reward you handsomely.”

“Of course you will allow me to take these,” said Smith, pointing toward the counterfeits.

“Certainly; they are only paste,” said Mr. Brewster, as he laid the bogus jewels back into their downy nest.

Smith took the box, rose, buttoned his coat and turned to leave, when he suddenly asked as he looked over his shoulder:

“Does your daughter know of the existence of these ‘bogus’ jewels!”

“She does.”

“Let me see—you have a son?” asked Mr. Smith.

“I have.”

“Is he a member of the firm?”

“No, sir.”

“What does he do?”

“Sir, my son is a gentleman of leisure.”

“That’s all; good night,” and the door closed behind the officer’s form.

Jack Smith was one of the best men on the force. He was sharp, cunning, and knew not the meaning of the word fear. As he wended his way from Harold Brewster’s office he began to cogitate, to wonder if there was no possible light ahead concerning the case in hand. Just as he was about to pass a jewelry store a sudden thought illuminated his mind. He stepped in, and showing the “bogus” diamonds to the proprietor, asked him one question. When Jack Smith emerged from the door a strange look was upon his face, and he hugged the box more closely to his breast as he threaded the great Broadway throng.

Fred Brewster was one of those gay, petted darlings of society, of which New York has a surfeit. He toiled not, neither did he spin, yet no one of the fashionable set in which he moved had finer raiment nor spent money more lavishly. Perhaps if Fred had had some aim in life, his lot would not have been as vapid as it is. But, as the case now stands, he is rapidly going to the dogs. He knows it, and his boon companions know it; but he cared as little for his mistaken career as they did. He was petted by his mother and sister, and his father condoled his many foibles by saying:

“Let the boy sow his wild oats; he’ll settle down soon enough.”

The young man gambled; was a frequenter of sporting circles of every description, and did not disdain to bet hundreds of dollars on a brutal prize-ring affair. Upon the evening following the interview between Harold Brewster and the detective, while Fred was in one of the noted gambling resorts on —— street, he found that a plainly dressed man of middle age was watching him closely.

It troubled him exceedingly, and made him careless in his play. The consequence was when he rose from the game he found that he had lost five hundred dollars. He went to the bar and called for brandy. After drinking, it he took his departure. The middle-aged man who had watched him so closely was at his heels.

“Look here, stranger,” said Fred, turning to the other when the pair had reached the walk, “am I such an object of curiosity that you must needs keep your eyes upon me?”

“Be calm, Mr. Fred Brewster. I arrest you in the name of the law,” said Jack Smith; for he it was in one of his many disguises,

“My god! Arrest me? For what?” gasped the young man, starting back.

“No matter; come with me,” simply returned Smith.

The young man now saw that it would be utterly out of [the] question to offer resistance and so he accompanied the officer. The pair passed into Broadway, and after reaching and passing through Bond street, went down the Bowery.

A strange expression of fear came upon Fred Brewster's face when the officer told him to step into a pawnshop with him near canal street crossing.

"The ticket, please," said Smith.

Fred trembled in every limb; his face was the picture of abject despair.

"What—what do you—mean?" he ejaculated.

"The pawn-[ticket] for the diamonds," whispered the detective.

Fred took his pocket book out, and, extracting the slip of paper from its contents, passed it to Smith.

"Now, friend Jacob, I'll take that lot of diamonds in the white box, please," said Smith, handing the ticket to the Jew behind the counter.

"Yes, mine fren, but I must haf mine monish. Twenty-five-tollar and fife for de use of de monish," returned the Jew.

Smith handed him the required amount, and took the diamonds.

After the pair had reached the street, the detective said to the thoroughly-astonished young man:

"Now, my young man, let me give you a piece of advice; mend your ways; change your manner of living, and be a man for your mother's sake."

"And—am I—at liberty?" asked Fred, as the other turned to leave.

"You are; go and do the right thing hereafter. But recollect there's one man who knows of your crimes, and will not hesitate to use this incident against you if you ever give him occasion."

The next day, while Harold Brewster was seated in his office, he was startled by the appearance of Smith, the detective.

"Ah Smith, I see by your face that you have succeeded."

"I have. There are your diamonds," said Smith, laying the two boxes upon the table.

"I'm so happy! Are they not beauties?" asked Mr. Brewster, lifting the jewels from the white box.

“They are fair,” responded Smith, smiling.

“*Fair!* What do you mean? They are worth twenty thousand dollars. Compare them with these,” said Brewster, taking the jewels from the blue box.

“Suppose you tell me which are the originals, the genuine ones,” said Smith. Mr. Brewster looked up quickly and asked:

“What do you mean?”

“Simply this. Mr. Brewster—the *real* diamonds have not been stolen at all.”

“Eh?—not stolen! I—bless my soul! What—do you mean man?”

“It is the truth, Mr. Brewster. The boxes must have got changed, or rather the contents. You gave me the *real* diamonds, and I have recovered the bogus ones.”

The listener was so thoroughly astonished that he could not speak at first. Finally he asked: “How did you learn of it?”

Smith then told the astonished merchant how he had stepped into a jewelry store and asked the proprietor to examine the jewels and tell him their value. He also told Mr. Brewster how he had found the paste gems in a bowery pawn shop.

“And did you not capture the thief?” asked Brewster.

“Don’t press that part of the case, Mr. Brewster, please. I guess he has had a lesson.”

After receiving remuneration for his services the detective took his departure.

Mr. Brewster never questioned his son because of his changed manner of living, but he imagined he knew the reason of Fred’s change for the better.

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