

From Bentley's Miscellany

*Going into Exile; or, The Diamond Bracelet*

I.

A LITTLE man was striding about his library with impatient steps. He wore a wadded dressing-gown, handsome once, but remarkably shabby now, and he wrapped it closely around him, though the heat of the weather was intense. But Colonel Hope, large as were his coffers, never spent upon himself a superfluous farthing, especially in the way of personal adornment; and Colonel Hope would not have felt too warm, cased in sheepskins, for he had spent the best part of his life in India, and was of a chilly nature.

The Colonel had that afternoon been made acquainted with an unpleasant transaction which had occurred in his house. The household termed it a mystery; he, a scandalous robbery: and he had written forthwith to the nearest chief police station, demanding that an officer might be dispatched back with the messenger, to investigate it. So there he was, waiting for their return in impatient expectation, and occasionally halting before the window, to look out on the busy London world.

The officer at length came, and was introduced. The Colonel's wife, Lady Sarah, had joined him then; and they proceeded to give him the outline of the case. A valuable diamond bracelet, recently presented to Lady Sarah by her husband, had disappeared in a singular manner. Miss Seaton, the companion to Lady Sarah, had temporary charge of the jewel box, and had brought it down the previous evening, Thursday, this being Friday, to the back drawing room, and laid several pairs of bracelets out on a table, ready for Lady Sarah, who was going to the opera, to choose which she would wear when she came up from dinner. Lady Sarah chose a pair, and put, herself, the rest back into the box, which Miss Seaton then locked, and carried to its place upstairs. In the few minutes that the bracelets lay on the table, the most valuable one, a diamond, disappeared from it.

"I did not want this to be officially investigated; at least, not so quickly," observed Lady Sarah to the officer. "The Colonel wrote for you quite against my wish."

"And so have let the thief get clear off, and put up with the loss!" cried the Colonel. "Very fine, my lady."

"You see," added her ladyship, explaining to the officer, "Miss Seaton is a young lady of a good family, not a common companion; a friend of mine, I may say. She is of feeble constitution, and this affair has so completely upset her, that I fear she will be laid on a sickbed."

"It won't be my fault if she is," retorted the Colonel. "The loss of a diamond bracelet, worth two or three hundred guineas, is not to be hushed up. They are not to be bought every day, Lady Sarah."

The officer was taken to the room whence the bracelet disappeared. It presented nothing peculiar. It was a back drawing room, the folding doors between it and the front room standing open, and the back window, a large one, looking out upon some flat leads—as did all the row of houses. The officer seemed to take in the points of the double room at a glance; its door of communication, its two doors opening to the corridor outside, and its windows. He looked at the latches of the two entrance doors, and he leaned from the front windows, and he leaned from the one at the back. He next requested to see Miss Seaton, and Lady Sarah fetched her—a delicate girl with a transparent skin, looking almost too weak to walk. She was in a visible tremor, and shook as she stood before the stranger.

He was a man of pleasant manners and speech, and he hastened to reassure her. “There’s nothing to be afraid of, young lady,” said he, with a broad smile. “I am not an ogre, though I do believe some timid folks look upon us as such. Just please to compose yourself, and tell me as much as you can recollect of this.”

“I put the bracelets out here,” began Alice Seaton, laying hold of the table underneath the window, not more to indicate it than to steady herself, for she was almost incapable of standing. “The diamond bracelet, the one lost, I placed here,” she added, touching the middle of the table at the back, “and the rest I laid out round, and before it.”

“It was worth more than any of the others, I believe,” interrupted the official.

“Much more,” growled the Colonel.

The officer nodded to himself, and Alice resumed:

“I left the bracelets, and went and sat down at one of the front windows——”

“With the intervening doors open, I presume?”

“Wide open, as they are now,” said Alice, “and the other two doors shut. Lady Sarah came up from dinner almost directly, and then the bracelet was not there.”

“Indeed! You are quite certain of that.”

“I am quite certain,” interposed Lady Sarah. “I looked for that bracelet, and, not seeing it, I supposed Miss Seaton had not laid it out. I put on the pair I wished to wear, and placed the others in the box, and saw Miss Seaton lock it.”

“Then you did not miss the bracelet at that time?” questioned the officer.

“I did not miss it in one sense, because I did not know it had been put out,” returned her ladyship. “I saw it was not there.”

“But did you not miss it?” he asked of Miss Seaton.

“I only reached the table as Lady Sarah was closing the lid of the box,” she answered. “Lady Frances Chenevix had detained me in the front room.”

“My sister,” explained Lady Sarah. “She is on a visit to me, and had come with me up from dinner.”

“You say you went and sat in the front room,” resumed the officer to Alice, in a quicker tone than he had used previously: “will you show me where?”

Alice did not stir, she only turned her head towards the front room, and pointed to a chair a little drawn away from the window. “In that chair,” she said. “It stood as it stands now.”

The officer looked baffled. “You must have had the back room full in view from thence; both the door and window.”

“Quite so,” replied Alice. “If you will sit down in it, you will perceive that I had uninterrupted view, and faced the doors of both rooms.”

“I perceive so from here. And you saw no one enter?”

“No one did enter. It was impossible they could do so, without my observing it. Had either of the doors been only quietly unlatched, I must have seen.”

“And yet the bracelet vanished!” interposed Colonel Hope. “They must have been confounded deep, whoever did it, but thieves are said to possess sleight of hand.”

“They are clever enough for it, some of them,” observed the officer.

“Rascally villains! I should like to know how they accomplished this.”

“So should I,” significantly returned the officer. “At present it appears to me incomprehensible.”

There was a pause. The officer seemed to muse; and Alice, happening to look up, saw his eyes stealthily studying her face. It did not tend to reassure her.

“Your servants are trustworthy; they have lived with you some time?” resumed the officer, not apparently attaching much importance to what the answer might be.

“Were they all escaped convicts, I don’t see that it would throw light on this,” retorted Colonel Hope. “If they came into the room to steal the bracelet, Miss Seaton must have seen them.”

“From the time you put out the bracelets, to that of the ladies coming up from dinner, how long was it?” inquired the officer of Alice.

“I scarcely know,” panted she, for, what with his close looks and his close questions, she was growing less able to answer. “I did not take particular notice of the elapse of time: I was not well yesterday evening.”

“Was it half an hour?”

“Yes—I dare say—nearly so.”

“Miss Seaton,” he continued in a brisk tone, “will you have any objection to take an oath before a magistrate—in private, you know—that no person whatever, except yourself, entered either of these rooms during that period?”

Had she been requested to go before a magistrate and testify that she, herself, was the guilty person, it could scarcely have affected her more. Her cheek grew white, her lips parted, and her eyes assumed a beseeching look of terror. Lady Sarah Hope hastily pushed a chair behind her, and drew her down upon it.

“Really, Alice, you are very foolish to allow yourself to be excited about nothing,” she remonstrated: “you would have fallen on the floor in another minute. What harm is there in taking an oath—and in a private room? You are not a Chartist or a Mormon—or whatever the people call themselves, who profess to object to oaths, on principle.”

The officer’s eyes were still keenly fixed on Alice Seaton’s, and she cowered visibly beneath his gaze. “Will you assure *me*, on your sacred word, that no person did enter the room?” he repeated, in a low, firm tone; which somehow carried to her the terrible belief that he believed she was trifling with him.

She looked at him; gasped, and looked again; and then she raised her handkerchief in her hand, and wiped her damp and ashy face.

“I think someone did come in,” whispered the officer in her ear; “try and recollect.” And Alice fell back in hysterics.

Lady Sarah led her from the room, herself speedily returning to it.

“You see how weak and nervous Miss Seaton is,” was her remark to the officer, but glancing at her husband. “She has been an invalid for years, and is not strong like other people. I felt sure we should have a scene of some kind, and that is why I wished the investigation not to be gone into hurriedly.[”]

“Don’t you think there are good grounds for an investigation, sir?” testily asked Colonel Hope of the officer.

“I must confess I do think so, Colonel,” was the reply.

“Of course: you hear, my lady. The difficulty is, how can we obtain the first clue to the mystery.”

“I do not suppose there will be an insuperable difficulty,” observed the officer. “I believe I have obtained one.”

“You are a clever fellow, then,[”] cried the Colonel, “if you have obtained it here. What is it?”

“Will Lady Sarah allow me to mention it—whatever it may be—without taking offense?” continued the officer, looking at her ladyship.

She bowed her head, wondering much.

“What’s the good of standing upon ceremony?” peevishly put in Colonel Hope. “Her ladyship will be as glad as we shall be, to get back her bracelet; more glad, one would think. A clue to the thief! Who can it have been?”

The detective smiled. When men are as high in the police force as he, they have learned to give every word its due significance. “I did not say a clue to the thief, Colonel: I said a clue to the mystery.”

“Where’s the difference?”

“Pardon me, it is indisputably perceptible. That the bracelet is gone, is a palpable fact: but by whose hands it went, is as yet a mystery.”

“What do you suspect?”

“I suspect,” returned the officer, lowering his voice, “that Miss Seaton knows how it went.”

There was a silence of surprise; on Lady Sarah’s part, of indignation.

“Is it possible that you suspect *her*?” uttered Colonel Hope.

“No,” said the officer, “I do not suspect herself: she appears not to be a suspicious person in any way: but I believe she knows who the delinquent is, and that fear, or some other motive, keeps her silent. Is she on familiar terms with of the servants?”

“But you cannot know what you are saying!” interrupted Lady Sarah. “Familiar with the servants! Miss Seaton is a gentlewoman, and has always moved in high society. Her family is little inferior to mine; and better—better than the Colonel’s,” concluded her ladyship, determined to speak out.

“Madam,” said the officer, “you must be aware that in an investigation of this nature, we are compelled to put questions which we do not expect to be answered in the affirmative. Colonel Hope will understand what I mean, when I say that we call them ‘feelers.’ I did not expect to hear that Miss Seaton had been on familiar terms with your servants, (though it might have been); but that question, being disposed of, will lead me to another. I suspect that someone did

enter the room and make free with the bracelet, and that Miss Seaton must have been cognizant of it. If a common thief, or an absolute stranger, she would have been the first to give the alarm: if not on too familiar terms with the servants, she would be as little likely to screen them. So we come to the question—who could it have been?”

“May I inquire why you suspect Miss Seaton?” coldly demanded Lady Sarah.

“Entirely from her manner; from the agitation she displays.”

“Most young ladies, particularly in our class of life, would betray agitation at being brought face to face with a police officer,” urged Lady Sarah.

“My Lady,” he returned, “we are keen, experienced men; and we should not be fit for the office we hold if we were not. We generally do find lady witnesses betray uneasiness when first exposed to our questions, but in a very short time, often in a few moments, it wears off, and they grow gradually easy. It was not so with Miss Seaton. Her agitation, excessive at first, increased visibly, and it ended as you saw. I did not think it the agitation of guilt, but I did think it that of conscious fear. And look at the related facts: that she laid the bracelets there, never left them, no one came in, and yet the most valuable one vanished. We have many extraordinary tales brought before us, but not quite so extraordinary as that.”

The Colonel nodded approbation; Lady Sarah began to feel uncomfortable.

“I should like to know whether anyone called whilst you were at dinner,” mused the officer.

“Can I see the man who attends to the hall door?”

“Thomas attends to that,” said the Colonel, ringing the bell. “There is a side door, but that is only for the servants and tradespeople.”

“I heard Thomas say that Sir George Danvers called while we were at dinner,” observed Lady Sarah. “No one else. And Sir George did not go upstairs.”

The detective smiled. “If he had, my lady, it would have made the case no clearer.”

“No,” laughed Lady Sarah, “poor old Sir George would be puzzled what to do with a diamond bracelet.”

“Will you tell me,” said the officer, wheeling sharply round upon Thomas when he entered, “who it was that called here yesterday evening, while your master was at dinner? I do not mean Sir George Danvers; the other one.”

Thomas visibly hesitated: and that was sufficient for the lynx-eyed officer. “Nobody called but Sir George, sir,” he presently said.

The detective stood before the man, staring him full in the face with a look of amusement.

“Think again, my man,” quoth he. “Take your time. There was someone else.”

The Colonel fell into an explosion: reproaching the unfortunate Thomas with having eaten his bread for five years, to turn round upon the house and its master at last, and act the part of a deceitful, conniving wretch, and let in that swindler——

“He is not a swindler, sir,” interrupted Thomas.

“Oh! no, not a swindler,” roared the Colonel, “he only steals diamond bracelets.”

“No more than I steal ’em, sir,” again spoke Thomas. “He’s not capable, sir. It was Mr. Gerard.”

The Colonel was struck speechless: his rage vanished, and down he sat in a chair, staring at Thomas. Lady Sarah colored with surprise.

“Now, my man,” cried the officer, “why could you not have said it was Mr. Gerard?”

“Because Mr. Gerard asked me not to say he had been, sir; he is not friendly here, just now; and I promised him I would not. And I’m sorry to have had to break my word.”

“Who is Mr. Gerard, pray?”

“He is my nephew,” interposed the checkmated Colonel. “Gerard Hope.”

“But, as Thomas says, he is no swindler,” remarked Lady Sarah: “he is not the thief. You may go, Thomas.”

“No, sir,” stormed the Colonel; “fetch Miss Seaton here first. I’ll come to the bottom of this. If he has done it, Lady Sarah, I will bring him to trial; though he is Gerard Hope.”

Alice came back, leaning on the arm of Lady Frances Chenevix; the latter having been dying with curiosity to come in before.

“So the mystery is out, ma’am,” began the Colonel to Miss Seaton: “it appears this gentleman was right, and that somebody did come in; and that somebody the rebellious Mr. Gerard Hope.”

Alice was prepared for this, for Thomas had told her Mr. Gerard’s visit was known; and she was not so agitated as before. It was the *fear* of its being found out, the having to conceal it, which had troubled her.

“It is not possible that Gerard can have taken the bracelet,” uttered Lady Sarah.

“No, it is not possible,” replied Alice. “And that is why I was unwilling to mention his having come up.”

“What did he come for?” thundered the Colonel.

“It was not an intentional visit. I believe he only followed the impulse of the moment. He saw me at the front window, and Thomas, it appears, was at the door, and he ran up.”

“I think you might have said so, Alice,” observed Lady Sarah, in a stiff tone.

“Knowing he had been forbidden the house, I did not wish to bring him under the Colonel’s displeasure,” was all the excuse Alice could offer. “It was not my place to inform against him.”

“I presume he approached sufficiently near the bracelets to touch them, had he wished?” observed the officer, who of course had now made up his mind upon the business—and upon the thief.

“Y—es,” returned Alice, wishing she could have said no.

“Did you notice the bracelet there, after he was gone?”

“I cannot say I did. I followed him from the room when he left, and then I went into the front room, so that I had no opportunity of observing.”

“The doubt is solved,” was the mental comment of the detective officer.

The Colonel, hot and hasty, sent several servants various ways in search of Gerard Hope, and he was speedily found and brought. A tall and powerful young man, very good-looking.

“Take him into custody, officer,” was the Colonel’s impetuous command.

“Hands off, Mr. Officer—if you are an officer,” cried Gerard, in the first shock of the surprise, as he glanced at the gentlemanly appearance of the other, who wore plain clothes, “you shall not touch me, unless you can show legal authority. This is a shameful trick. Colonel—excuse me—but as I owe nothing to you, I do not see that you have any such power over me.”

The group would have made a fine study: especially Gerard, his head thrown back in defiance, and looking angrily at everybody.

“Did you hear me?” cried the Colonel.

“I must do my duty,” said the police officer, approaching Gerard. “And for authority—you need not suppose I should act, if without it.”

“Allow me to understand first,” remarked Gerard, haughtily eluding the officer. “Which is it for? What is the sum total?”

“Two hundred and fifty pounds,” growled the Colonel. “But if you are thinking to compromise it in that way, young sir, you will find yourself mistaken.”



“Oh! no fear,” retorted Gerard; “I have not two hundred and fifty pence. Let me see: it must be Dobbs’s. A hundred and sixty—how on earth do they slide the expenses up? I did it, sir, to oblige a friend.”

“The deuce you did!” echoed the Colonel, who but little understood the speech, except the last sentence. “If ever I saw such a cool villain in all my experience!”

“He was awfully hard up,” went on Gerard, “as bad as I am now; and I did it. I don’t deny having done such things on my own account, but from this particular one I did not benefit a shilling.”

His cool assurance, and his words, struck them with consternation.

“Dobbs said he’d take care I should be put to no inconvenience—and this comes of it! That’s trusting your friends. He vowed to me, this very week, that he had provided for the bill.”

“He thinks it is only an affair of debt!” screamed Lady Frances Chenevix. “O Gerard! what a relief! we thought you were confessing.”

“You are not arrested for debt, sir,” cried the officer, “but for felony.”

“For felony!” uttered Gerard Hope. “Oh! indeed! Could you not make it murder?” he added, sarcastically.

“Off with him to Marlborough Street, officer,” cried the exasperated Colonel, “and I’ll come with you and prefer the charge. He scoffs at it, does he?”

“Yes, that I do,” answered Gerard; “for whatever pitfalls I may have got into, in the way of carelessness, I have not gone into crime.”

“You are accused, sir,” said the officer, “of stealing a diamond bracelet.”

“Hey!” uttered Gerard, a flash of intelligence rising to his face, as he glanced at Alice. “I might have guessed it was the bracelet affair, if I had had my recollection about me.”

“Oh! ho,” triumphed the Colonel, in sneering jocularity, “so you expected it was the bracelet, did you? We shall have it all out presently.”

“I heard of the bracelet’s disappearance,” said Mr. Hope. “I met Miss Seaton when she was out this morning, and she told me it was gone.”

“Better make no admissions,” whispered the officer in his ear. “They may be used against you.”

“Whatever admissions I may make, you are at liberty to use them, for they are truth,” haughtily returned Gerard. “Is it possible that you do suspect me of taking the bracelet, or is this a joke?”

“Allow me to explain,” panted Alice, stepping forward. “I—I—did not accuse you, Mr. Hope; I would not have mentioned your name in connection with it, because I am sure you are innocent; but when it was discovered that you had been here, I could not deny it.”

“The charging me with having taken it is absurdly preposterous,” exclaimed Gerard, looking first at his uncle, and then at the officer. “Who accuses me?”

“I do,” said the Colonel.

“Then I am very sorry it is not somebody else, instead of you, sir.”

“Explain. Why?”

“Because they should get a kindly horsewhipping.”

“Gerard,” interrupted Lady Sarah, “do not treat it in that light way. If you did take it, say so, and you shall be forgiven. I am sure you must have been put to it terribly hard; only confess it, and the matter shall be hushed up.”

“No it shan’t, my lady,” cried the Colonel. “I will not have him encouraged—I mean, felony compounded.”

“It shall,” returned Lady Sarah, “it shall indeed. The bracelet was mine, and I have a right to do as I please. Believe me, Gerard, I will put up with the loss without a murmur: only confess, and let the worry be done with.”

Gerard Hope looked at her: little trace of shame was there in his countenance. “Lady Sarah,” he asked in a deep tone, “can you indeed deem me capable of taking your bracelet?”

[“]The bracelet was there, sir, and it went; and you can’t deny it,” uttered the Colonel.

“It was there, fast enough,” answered Gerard. “I held it in my hand two or three minutes, and was talking to Miss Seaton about it. I was wishing it was mine, and saying what I should do with it.”

“O Mr. Hope! pray say no more,” involuntarily interrupted Alice. “You will make appearances worse.”

“What do you want to screen him for?” impetuously broke forth the Colonel, turning on Alice. “Let him say what he was going to say.”

“I do not know why I should not say it,” Gerard Hope answered, in, it must be thought, a spirit of bravado or recklessness, which he disdained to check. “I said I should spout it.”

“You’ll send off to every pawnshop in the metropolis, before the night’s over, Mr. Officer,” cried the choking Colonel, breathless with rage. “This beats brass.”

“But I did not take it any the more for having said that,” put in Gerard, in a graver tone. “The remark might have been made by anyone from a duke downwards, if reduced to his last shifts, as I am. I said *if* it were mine: I did not say I would steal to do it. Nor did I.”

“I saw him put it down again,” said Alice Seaton, in a calm, steady voice.

“Allow me to speak a word, Colonel,” resumed Lady Sarah, interrupting something her husband was about to say. “Gerard—I cannot believe you guilty; but consider the circumstances. The bracelet was there: you acknowledge it: Miss Seaton left the apartment when you did, and went into the front room: yet when I came up from dinner, it was there no longer.”

The Colonel would speak. “So it lies between you and Miss Seaton,” he put in. “Perhaps you would like to make believe she appropriated it.”

“No,” answered Gerard, with a flashing eye. “*She* cannot be doubted. I would rather take the guilt upon myself, than allow her to be suspected. Believe me, Lady Sarah, we are both innocent.”

“The bracelet could not have gone without hands to take it, Gerard,” replied Lady Sarah. “How else do you account for its disappearance?”

“I believe there must be some misapprehension, some great mistake in the affair altogether, Lady Sarah. It appears incomprehensible now, but it will be unraveled.”

“Ay, and in double-quick time,” wrathfully exclaimed the Colonel. “You must think you are talking to a pack of idiots, Master Gerard. Here the bracelet was spread temptingly out on a table, you went into the room, being hard up for money, fingered it, wished for it, and both you and the bracelet disappeared. Sir,” turning sharply round to the officer—“did a clearer case ever go before a jury?”

Gerard Hope bit his lip. “Be more just, Colonel,” said he. “Your own brother’s son steal a bracelet!”

“And I am happy my brother’s not alive to know it,” rejoined the Colonel, in an obstinate tone. “Take him in hand, Mr. Officer: we’ll go to Marlborough Street. I’ll just change my coat and—”

“No, no, you will not,” cried Lady Sarah, laying hold of the dressing-gown and the Colonel in it; “you shall not go, nor Gerard either. Whether he is guilty or not, it must not be brought against him publicly. He bears your name, Colonel, and so do I, and it would reflect disgrace on us all.”

“Perhaps you are made of money, my lady. If so, you may put up with the loss of a two-hundred-and-fifty-guinea bracelet. *I* don’t choose to do so.”

“Then, Colonel, you will; and you must. Sir,” added Lady Sarah to the detective, “we are obliged to you for your attendance and advice, but it turns out to be a family affair, as you perceive, and we must decline to prosecute. Besides, Mr. Hope may not be guilty.”

Alice rose, and stood before Colonel Hope. “Sir, if this charge were preferred against your nephew; if it came to trial, I think it would kill me. You know my unfortunate state of health; the agitation, the excitement of appearing to give evidence would be—I—I cannot continue; I cannot speak of it without terror; I *pray* you, for my sake, do not prosecute Mr. Hope.”

The Colonel was about to storm forth an answer, but her white face, her heaving throat, had some effect even on him. “He is so doggedly obstinate, Miss Seaton. If he would but confess, and tell where it is, perhaps I’d let him off.”

Alice thought somebody else was obstinate. “I do not believe he has anything to confess,” she deliberately said; “I truly believe that he has not. He could not have taken it, unseen by me: and when we quitted the room, I feel sure the bracelet was left in it.”

“It was left in it, so help me Heaven!” uttered Gerard.

“And, now, I have got to speak,” added Frances Chenevix. “Colonel, if you were to press the charge against Gerard, I would go before the magistrates, and proclaim myself the thief. I vow and protest I would, just to save him; and you and Lady Sarah could not prosecute me, you know.”

“*You* do well to stand up for him!” retorted the Colonel. “You would not be quite so ready to do it, though, my Lady Fanny, if you knew something I could tell you.”

“Oh! yes, I should,” returned the young lady, with a vivid blush.

The Colonel, beset on all sides, had no choice but to submit; but he did so with an ill-grace, and dashed out of the room with the officer, as fiercely as if he had been charging an enemy at full tilt. “The sentimental apes these women make of themselves!” cried he, in his polite way, when he had got him in private. “Is it not a clear case of guilt?”

“In my private opinion, it certainly is,” was the reply; “though he carries it off with a high hand. I suppose, Colonel, you still wish the bracelet to be searched for?”

“Search in and out, and high and low; search everywhere. The rascal! to dare even to enter my house in secret!”

“May I inquire if the previous breach, with your nephew, had to do with money affairs?”

“No,” said the Colonel, turning more crusty at the thoughts called up. “I fixed upon a wife for him, and he wouldn’t have her; so I turned him out of doors and stopped his allowance.”

“Oh!” was the only comment of the police officer.

## II.

It was in the following week, and Saturday night. Thomas, without his hat, was standing at Colonel Hope's door, chatting to an acquaintance, when he perceived Gerard come tearing up the street. Thomas's friend backed against the rails and the spikes, and Thomas himself stood with the door in his hand, ready to touch his hair to Mr. Gerard, as he passed. Instead of passing, however, Gerard cleared the steps at a bound, pulled Thomas with himself inside, shut the door, and double-locked it.

Thomas was surprised in all ways. Not only at Mr. Hope's coming in at all, for the Colonel had again harshly forbidden the house to him and the servants to admit him, but at the suddenness and strangeness of the action.

"Cleverly done," quoth Gerard, when he could get his breath. "I saw a shark after me, Thomas, and had to make a bolt for it. Your having been at the door saved me."

Thomas turned pale. "Mr. Gerard, you have locked it, and I'll put up the chain, if you order me, but I'm afeared its going again the law to keep out them detectives by force of arms."

"What's the man's head running on now?" returned Gerard. "There are no detectives after me; it was only a seedy sheriff's officer. Psha, Thomas! There's no worse crime attaching to me than a slight suspicion of debt."

"I'm sure I trust not, sir; only master will have his own way."

"Is he at home?"

"He is gone to the opera with my lady. The young ladies are upstairs alone. Miss Seaton has been ill, sir, ever since the bother, and Lady Frances is staying home with her."

"I'll go up and see them. If they are at the opera, we shall be snug and safe."

"O, Mr. Gerard! had you better go up, do you think?" the man ventured to remark. "If the Colonel should come to hear of it——"

"How can he? You are not going to tell him, and I am sure they will not. Besides, there's no help for it: I can't go out again, for hours. And, Thomas, if any demon should knock and ask for me, I am gone to—to—an evening party up at Putney; went out, you know, by the side door."

Thomas watched him run up the stairs, and shook his head. "One can't help liking him, with it all: though where could the bracelet have gone to, if he did not take it?"

The drawing rooms were empty, and Gerard made his way to a small room that Lady Sarah called her "boudoir." There they were: Alice buried in the pillows of an invalid chair, and Lady

Frances careering about the room, apparently practicing some new dancing step. She did not see him. Gerard danced up to her, and took her hand, and joined in it.

“Oh!” she cried, with a little scream of surprise, “you! Well, I have staid at home to some purpose. But how could you think of venturing within these sacred and forbidden walls? Do you forget that the Colonel threatens us with the terrors of the law, if we suffer it? You are a bold man, Gerard.”

“When the cat’s away, the mice can play,” cried Gerard, treating them to a *pas seul*.

“Mr. Hope!” remonstrated Alice, lifting her feeble voice, “how can you indulge these spirits, while things are so miserable?”

“Sighing and groaning won’t make them light,” he answered, sitting down on a sofa near to Alice. “Here’s a seat for you, Fanny; come along,” he added, pulling Frances to his side. “First and foremost, has anything come to light about that mysterious bracelet?”

“Not yet,” sighed Alice. “But I have no rest: I am in hourly fear of it.”

“*Fear!*” uttered Gerard in astonishment.

Alice winced, and leaned her head upon her hand: she spoke in a low tone.

“You must understand what I mean, Mr. Hope. The affair has been productive of so much pain and annoyance to me, that I wish it could be ignored forever.”

“Though it left me under a cloud,” said Gerard. “You must pardon me if I cannot agree with you. My constant hope is, that it may all come to daylight: I assure you I have specially mentioned it in my prayers.”

“Pray don’t, Mr. Hope!” reproved Alice.

“I’m sure I have cause to mention it, for it is sending me into exile: that, and other things.”

“It is the guilty only who flee, not the innocent,” said Frances. “You don’t mean what you say, Gerard.”

“Don’t I! There’s a certain boat advertised to steam from London-bridge wharf tomorrow, wind and weather permitting, and it steams me with it. I am compelled to fly my country.”

“Be serious, and say what you mean.”

“Seriously, then, I am over head and ears in debt. You know my uncle stopped my allowance in the spring, and sent me—metaphorically—to the dogs. It got wind; ill-news always does; I had a few liabilities, and they have all come down upon me. But for this confounded bracelet affair, there’s no doubt the Colonel would have settled them; rather than let the name of Hope be

dubiously bandied by the public, he would have expended his ire in growls, and then gone and done it. But that is over now; and I go to take up my abode in some renowned colony for desolate English, beyond the pale of British lockups. Boulogne, or Calais, or Dippe [sic], or Brussels; I shall see: and there I may be kept for years.”

Neither of the young ladies answered immediately; they saw the facts were serious, and that Gerard was only making light of it before them.

“How shall you live?” questioned Alice. “You must live there as well as here: you cannot starve.”

“I shall just escape the starving. I have got a trifle; enough to swear by, and keep me on potatoes and salt. Don’t you envy me my prospects?”

“When do you suppose you may return?” inquired Lady Frances. “I ask it seriously, Gerard.”

“I know no more than you, Fanny. I have no expectations but from the Colonel. Should he never relent, I am caged there for good.”

“And so you have ventured here to tell us this, and bid us good-by?”

“No! I never thought of venturing here: how could I tell that the bashaw would be at the opera? A shark set on me in the street, and I had to run for my life. Thomas happened to be conveniently at the door, and I rushed in, and saved myself.”

“A shark!” uttered Alice, in dismay, who in her experience had taken the words literally—“a shark in the street!” Lady Frances Chenevix laughed.

“One with sharp eyes and a hooked nose, Alice, speeding after me on two legs, with a polite invitation from one of the law lords. He is watching outside now.”

“How shall you get away?” exclaimed Frances.

“If the bashaw comes home before twelve, Thomas must dispose of me somewhere in the lower regions: Sunday is free for us, thank goodness. So please to make the most of me, both of you, for it is the last time you will have the privilege. By the way, Fanny will you do me a favor? There used to be a little book of mine in the glass bookcase, in the library; my name in it, and a mottled cover: I wish you would go and find it for me.”

Lady Frances left the room with alacrity. Gerard immediately bent over Alice, and his tone changed.

“I have sent her away on purpose. She’ll be half an hour rummaging, for I have not seen the book there for ages. Alice, one word before we part. You must know that it was for your sake I refused the marriage proposed to me by my uncle: you will not let me go into banishment without a word of hope; a promise of your love to lighten it.”

“O Gerard!” she eagerly said, “I am so glad you have spoken; I almost think I should have spoken myself, if you had not. Just look at me.”

“I am looking at you,” he fondly answered.

“Then look at my hectic face; my constantly tired limbs; my sickly hands; do they not plainly tell you that the topics you would speak of, must be barred topics to me?”

“Why should they be? You will get stronger.”

“Never. There is no hope of it. Many years ago, when the illness first came upon me, the doctors said I might grow better with time; but the time has come, and come, and come, and—gone; and only left me a more confirmed invalid. To an old age I cannot live: most probably but a few years: ask yourself, Gerard, if I am one who ought to marry, and leave behind a husband to regret me, perhaps children. No, no.”

“You are cruel, Alice.”

“The cruelty would be, if I selfishly allowed you to talk of love to me; or, still more selfishly, let you cherish hopes that I would marry. When you hinted at this, the other evening, the evening that wretched bracelet was lost, I reproached myself with cowardice, in not answering more plainly than you had spoken. I should have told you, Gerard, as I tell you now, that nothing, no persuasion from the dearest person on earth, shall ever induce me to marry.”

“You dislike me, I see that.”

“I did not say so,” answered Alice[,] with a glowing cheek. “I think it very possible that—if I could allow myself ever to dwell on such things—I should like you very much; perhaps better than I could like anyone.”

“And why will you not?” he persuasively uttered.

“Gerard, I have told you. I am too weak and sickly to be other than I am. It would be a sin, in me, to indulge hopes of it: it would only be deceiving myself and you. No, Gerard, my love and hopes must lie elsewhere.”

“Where?” he eagerly asked.

Alice pointed upwards. “I am learning to look upon it as my home,” she whispered, “and I must not suffer hindrances to obscure the way. It will be a better home than even your love, Gerard.”

Gerard Hope smiled. “*Even* than my love: Alice, you like me more than you admit. Unsay your words, my dearest, and give me hope.”



“Do not vex me,” she resumed in a pained tone; “do not seek to turn me from my duty. I—I—though I scarcely like to speak of these sacred things, Gerard—I *have put my hand on the plow*: even you cannot turn me back.”

He did not answer; he only played with the hand he held between both of his.

“Tell me one thing, Gerard: it will be safe. Was not the dispute about Frances Chenevix?”

He contracted his brow; and nodded.

“And you could refuse her! You must learn to love her, for she would make you a good wife.”

“Much chance there is now of my making a wife of anyone!”

“Oh! this will blow over in time: I feel it will. Meanwhile——”

“Meanwhile you destroy every hopeful feeling I thought to take, to cheer me in my exile,” was his impatient interruption.

“I love you alone, Alice; I have loved you for months, truly, fervently, and I know you must have seen it.”

“Love me still, Gerard,” she softly answered, “but not with the love you would give to one of earth; the love you will give—I hope—to Frances Chenevix. Think of me as one rapidly going; soon to be gone.”

“Oh! not yet!” he cried, in an imploring tone, as if it were as she willed.

“Not just yet: I hope to see you return from exile. Let us say farewell while we are alone.”

She spoke the last sentence hurriedly, for footsteps were heard. Gerard snatched her to him, and laid his face upon hers.

“What cover did you say the book had?” demanded Frances Chenevix of Gerard, who was then leaning back on the sofa, apparently waiting for her. “A mottled? I cannot see one anything like it.”

“No? I am sorry to have given you the trouble, Fanny. It has gone perhaps, amongst the ‘have-beens.’”

“Listen,” said Alice, removing her hand from before her face, “that was a carriage stopped. Can they be come home?”

Frances and Gerard flew into the next room, whence the street could be seen. A carriage had stopped, but not at their house. “It is too early for them yet,” said Gerard.

“I am sorry things go so cross just now with you, Gerard,” whispered Lady Frances. “You will be very dull, over there.”

“Ay; fit to hang myself if you knew all. And the bracelet may turn up, and Lady Sarah be sporting it on her arm again, and I never know that the cloud is off me. No chance that any of you will be at the trouble of writing to a fellow.”

“I will,” said Lady Frances. “Whether the bracelet turns up, or not, I will write you sometimes, if you like, Gerard, and give you all the news.”

“You are a good girl, Fanny,” returned he, in a brighter accent, “and I will send you my address as soon as I have got one. You are not to turn proud, mind, and be off the bargain, if you find its *au cinquieme*.”

Frances laughed. “Take care of yourself, Gerard.”

So Gerard Hope got clear off into exile. Did he pay his expenses with the proceeds of the diamond bracelet?

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