THE DIAMOND THIEVES

TWELVE DETECTIVE STORIES By ARTHUR STRINGER

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V.--The Boob from the Burdock Patch ing three steps of the stairway, eling-ting to the banisters and watching him

t altogether blame them, when to think it over. For it doesn' like easity to see a girl lying fia back in the sun, blinking up at ne of heaven as though she were wami holding converse with the

But it wasn't converse I was after les and tan, I had to have them and I'd only two days to get them in with repeated applications of tincture of fron, braided my hair up close and tight and addraed my feet with a pair "easies". And, pped, I made my way back to the land of my birth.

I went back to the city looking s uch like the Queen of the Rubes that one-legged small boy leaned against the Subway klonk and called aloud to world: "Say, Dutch, did youse pipe boob from th' burdock patch?

I had the consolation of knowing that my destination was a rooming-house at a certain number in East Twentyfourth Street, where my arrival had m laboriously prepared for. Under ordinary circumstances

ourse, the prospect of being a slavey lave proven anything but appealing But in this case the circumwere far from ordinary. Inctor Sloan, in fact, had announced eame Twenty-fourth Street rooming-house, conducted by Mrs. Munger, held a certain old German who answered to the name of Otto steld and that while nothing Mnite as yet was known as to Schoen feld's activities, there seemed to b substantial reasons for investigating that mild-mannered old Ger man and his manner of life.

was all I knew. But it was Mrs. Munger, I soon found was not the type of woman to make my sak an over-luxuriously easy one. Un her soft and billowy form, I saw coided a heart of granite. Beside four long flights of stairs to climb were beds to make, halls to be awept, washings to be carried to the roof, towels to be ironed, bells to be swered and a hundred and one other odd errands to be run. I was installed in a sulphur-colored cubbyhole on the

this, however, I offered no objec tion, for the one other occupant of that oor was a mild-mannered old ist by the name of Schoenfeld.

As for Otto Schoenfeld himself, he thy as a springbok. He vanished like approach. It wasn't until my third day as a slavey, in fact, that I got a good look at him.

It wasn't until the fourth day that had a chance to visit his quarters, mbing the three long flights with a frugal parcel of laundry for which I sort of wheel, I knew, that was used was instructed to collect thirty-two by diamend-cutters, just as the fixingts. I could hear the hum of machiness as I repeated my knock on his and thus holding it firmly while its door. I could also hear the sound of facets were being ground. being withdrawn as old Otto

ly boxed spectacle-lenses. Somewere to go at once to that top-floor

rt order, from the mountainous Mrs. Munger, to wash Schoenfeld's windows. He held out a coin to me and asked me If I'd first run out to a Third Avenue ery and buy some cuttle-bone for

my return with the cuttle-bone enfeld was all ready to receive me. Then he locked me inside, ed out that he wanted me to be cially eareful of his photograph ates on the window-sills.

Installed under this bench was as a receptacle for glass chips and the refuse in general. On the bench ooth-rimmed grindstone eted with the dynamo, with a dainly an automatic grindingof for shaping and polishing lenses. Against the opposite wall stood a

were hung highly complex charts human eye, and a couple of calopticione, together with an adannouncing:

on later in the day I communi

ier two days slipped by, howbefore I had a chance. It precollars to be delivered to the lie acrobat residing therein tead of taking that how to the loor back I climbed to the top of se and knocked on Otto Schoen

sary portion of wrapping-paper.
By noon this was on its way to the inspector's office. Before night an an-"Watch that man like a bawk."

closely, and in doing so made a number of discoveries. One was that the old was two much simpler things-just German had a habit of slipping out late at night and remaining away for a couple of hours! Another was that I darkened two of my front teeth the different-sized plate-holders which he kept in a row on his window-ledge were not there for the printing of photographs. The order of their arrangement, in fact, was altered day by day, and my immediate inference that they were being used as an ingenious sort of signaling to the back

window of some room or office on the north side of Twenty-third Street. I also discovered that certain messengers showed every evidence of a desire to avoid undue observation. But my most urgent need, I began

to realise, was to obtain admission to that old German's workroom. It could never be done, I also discovered, by means of my "spider." since an espe cially intricate spring-lock guarded tha in an East Side rooming-house would precious door. Even Mrs. Munger key. It wasn't until I carried the old fox's fresh bed-linen up to him and stood waiting to carry away his.owr soiled sheets and pillow-slips, that caught sight of his key-ring on the littered work-table. I was chewing gun at the time. I knew I had only a moment or two, before the old man emerged from the bedroom. But sidled over to the table, turned over the key-ring, picked out what I knew to be the key I wanted, and promptly palm of my hand. Having had a key

made from this impress, I entered the

room the next evening after the old

I sat down on his work-stool and looked more carefully over the grinding-wheel, studied out its connection with the dynamo-shaft, and discovered a connection which I couldn't quite ac count for. So I got down on my hands and knees, peered under the table, and found a swivel-shelf adjusted there hidden from the casual eye by a fringe of pinked elicioth. This shelf, I next discovered, awung outward and revealed an auxiliary shaft and bevel gearing which connected with the dynamo on the one hand and on the other with a second grinding-wheel gave every promise of proving about as This second wheel was much smaller than the one above the table. But the adow, I found, at the first sign of most important feature about it I saw. lay in the fact that it didn't operate in a vertical position, as did the wheel or the table-top. It was geared and adjusted to run in a horisontal position. It was also geared to revolve at a verhigh rate of speed. And this was the

Otto Schoenfeld, I saw, was an optician only on pretense. His vecatie His work, I soon discovered, involved as a tens-grinder was merely a blind the continuous receipt and despatch of He was a diamond cutter. Working in secret at such a calling plainly implies mes they came by messenger, and that his work was illicit. And I saw es they came by registered in a breath what it all meant. He was special delivery. But always they were a "fence" for diamond thieves. The elivered personally at Otto Schoen- lenses which were almost daily coming feld's door. It was impressed on me, to him by mail and messenger were not lenses at all, but stolen diamonds pries out of their settings, forwarded to an expert who examined them under a microscope, removed all distinguishing myself presented with a chance of even marks frm them, probably split them if so much as penetrating the enemy's in-trenchments. My chance came with a completely disguised them by re-cutting, and sent them out into the world again, to be sold freely and fearlessly. The Alliance office had been right. The mild-eyed German had been a man well worth watching.

wax was used for embedding a stone

d herself on seeing through that caught the sound of heavy steps as-but she went without a murmur, cending the stairs. It sees the As I stepped out of that door, after ing in a panic to my room, where tumbled into bed, clothes and all.

I could hear the old German unlock his door and move cautiously above his room. I could hear him step out into the narrow hallway again and apparently stop at the stairhead to listen. Then he moved stealthfly toward my an electric dynamo, a huge galvanised own door, which was without a lock, can with a funnel on its top obviously and pushed it an inch or two further to catch drip, and a lidless bread-box open. I knew he was listening there His heavy breathing, in fact, was at advertisement, not only of some secret excitement but also of the fact that he had climbed the stairs at a rate of all drip-can adjusted above it. This speed which was exceptional with him. So I satisfied his straining ears by producing as regular and senerous an imitation of snoring as I was able.

The next night Schoenfeld went out earlier than usual. I felt that my chance had come, and proceeded to act on that conviction.

Once the old German was well out of sight I was bolted in his room and renewing my search of his possession there. And nothing presented itself to reward that search until from under a white enameled iron bed I unearthed an iron-bound box about the size of a steamer-trunk. Its huge wrought-tron lock was a formidable-looking one, but so old-fashioned in it simplicity that up to the second floor back with a five minutes with my "spider" had con quered it and I was able to lift back the

> It was not until I delved below the tray that I discovered anything of im-Then things began

I first unearthed an automatic plate with a box of cartridges beside it. Then ed forbearance, as he handed came a small pair of jeweler's scale back to me. I gaped at him and a diamond-gage. Then came rows and backed away. But once of small manila envelopes, dozens and was relocked I had the sat-dozens of them, each one dated and of seeing the wrapping-paper bearing a number and an inscription which I was unable to decipher. But I ground than I did, and this, I remem carefully lifted out one of these an- bered, would always be a disadvantage

HET thought I was mad. The and foreinger slightly stained with oil velopes and peeked into it. It held a natives of that one-horse town And before I presented the box to its beautifully cut diamond of the first clearly took me for a nut. And rightful owner I'd torn away the necestable water, about three carats in weight altogether blame them, when I sary portion of wrapping-paper.

And each envelopes I looked into contained one or more of these stones Beside them I saw an old cigar-box a much-handled box with faded label

and a dog-eared revenue stamp ench cling it. It was a humble enough look So I watched Otto Schoenfeld more ing container. But I blinked involun tarily as I lifted the lid, for it flashed back the light in a thousand broke prisms and I realized as I stared down at it that I was looking at several hundred cut diamonds, diamonds of all shapes and sizes, some of them pure white, some a capary yellow, some cut rose and double rose, with two or three cut briolette.

> Under a little German textbook or high explosives that I stumbled across something which brought a catch in my breath and a little tingle of triumpl up and down my backbone.

My discovery was nothing more than its orderly pages were entered lists of stones received, with dates, and among the addresses I found such names as Angelo Pareto, Samuel Everson, August Zwack, Fidelo Forcarino, Marie Des champs, and William Relistab, each established as a trafficker in stolen jewels and each with his present whereabouts duly revealed. There, be- along my spine.

ing to the banisters and watching him at each step. It wasn't until I reached the hall floor-that he either moved or

roweled Latin intenstion. "I make one seg meestak, I t'ink!"

There was a note of irony, of m ery. I'm sure, in that apology of his But it wasn't this that caught my at-It was more the soft and panther-like quickness with which n stepped past me, down the stairs, took

I knew, as I heard the street doo close that the cat was out of the bag. could no longer pose in that house as a boob from the burdock patch. I was discovered. Pareto and Schoenfeld were working together, hand and glove anything that was to be would have to be done before those two came together,

I made a pretense of preparing for bed, but it was a pretense and nothing slide. Then I unearthed my revolver and slipped it under my pillow. Sleep, I knew was out of the question. I sai on my hard little bed with its hundred and one bumps and waited for the unexpected.

And the unexpected-came. It cam in the form of a stealthy step to my Soor. It was a mysteriously studied step, a step that sent a little shiver

"You vill haf more from me ven dis is ofer, dan Mrs. Munger vill efer gif you." He shuffled back toward the door, he though the entire matter were finally settled. "So now I vill bring de troonk and fix dat lock-belt on die

yet heavy tread passed along the little hallway wondering what my course of action ought to be. Then I heard him shuffling back along the hall, and whispering for me to turn on the light.

toddled across the room to my iron bed, put down the chest, and carefully pushed it under the bed. Then he reached into his coat pocket and lifted out a screw-driver and a wrought-from draw-bolt. Beaching into another pocket he took out some screw-nails. held the bolt against the edge of my door, and proceeded to fasten it there. On the frame of the door he scrawed a loop of trop into which this bolt could slid the bolt back and forth several times to make sure that it worked.

He had come in through the narrow door sideways, for he was carrying the oak chest by its two fron handles. He Then he closed the door and

"Lock yourself in-so-and it vill be all right," he said with a reassuring smile. And before I could say another word to him he had slipped out through the door and disappeared within his own quarters.

I promptly closed and bolted my door, crossed to the bed, and cautiously pulled the mysteflous chest a little out

caught the sound of steps advancing up through the house I heard Otto Schoenfeld's door open and the snap of the spring-lock which told me it had been swung shut again. I recognised the stealthy shuffle as the old German crossed to the head of the stairs and listened there for a moment or two, But I took advantage of that I could not see it clearly but or two, But I took advantage of that I could see it clearly enough to understoom to scurry up the remaining the door which I had come to know tolerably well in my daily activities with hirs. Munger's clother-banket.

My attention, as I did so was attached by the winking of a flash-all my power on the fingers clustered

window-sill arrangement of plate-frames and of the fact that even in that uncertain light I might be visible to some unknown accomplice signaling from that office-building. So crouched there behind a sheltering chimney-tier, in the shadow of a wall

My eyes had got more used to the darkness by this time, and uncertain as was the light along that broken tier of roofs, I could make out wha was taking place so close to where I lay hidden. I could see the roof deck foor swing back and the heavy figure slowly shoulder out through it. I knew at a glance that it was Otto Schoen a long and narrow laundry-bag, tied at the top. In his right hand, which held doubled up close to his chest. he held an automatic, and as he backed stealthily out through the narrow door his attention was directed toward some threatening him from within the house But that threatened interference, apparently was something only of the instant. For the next moment dropped the bag to the roof, swung the door shut, and wedged it in that posttion with a screwdriver which he took from one of his pockets. Then, after was only four or five feet into space, pressing his ear against the door for as far as the level of the next root. several moments, in an attitude of But I was uppermost when we struck listening, he caught up the laundrybag again and crept along the roof antil he came to where the clothes-He crept back to a row of three chimlet it hang there by the clothe notion rope in between two chimney bricks where the mortar had been torn away. Then I saw him cut off the few inches of rope that pro- bag up from its hiding-place. evidence would remain to show the

way carefully to the back of the roof. in fact, I could see the answering wink fiashes, suddenly stopped and Otto filled with equally iridescent pebbles Schoenfeld himself crept cautiously and a notebook filled with orderly rewe back to the roof door and leaned for- of names and addresses. And I knew ward with his ear pressed against its as I dropped these back in the sootsurface. For below stairs certain more covered bag, that my night hadn't be or less interesting things were plainly an altogether wasted one. I had won taking place. I could hear the sound I had obtained what I had been sent of sudden and shattering blows. like after! those an axe would make in smashing in a door, followed by shouts and calls, wreck along the side wall against which and the thump of hurrying feet. It I leaned; a showering of broken lense: journded to me remarkably like a police glistened along the floor; bedding an mid. Schoenfeld was sitting on the boxes and clothing lay scattered about; roof and engaged in solemnly removing and, as though to give articulation to his shoes. This done, he pulled his that scene of ruin and disorder, Mrs. acrewdriver wedge away from the door Munger's lugubrious walls rose loader where it had held that door shut, than ever from below stairs, picked up his shoes, and pussyfooted cautiously across the roof until he of a decent woman," she lamented ame to the very wall-coping against which I pressed. He clambered gruntingly over the coping, within ten feet where I lay holding my breath. With his gase still fixed on that door he reached into a pocket and took out his automatic, which he placed carefully n the top of the walf coping. I knew better than to move. It was the man on the other side of the wall, in fact, who did the moving. He had caught up his shoes in one hand, and his pistol in the other, and was apparently about to adventure further along those uneven housetops when the roof-door through which he had so recently passed swung open with a thump. A flashlight suddenly exploded on the darkness, a much stronger flash than that used by the German. It wavered and danced inquiringly about the empty roof for a moment then went out as suddenly as it had appeared. And still again I lay in my sheltering shadow, scarcely daring to breathe. Then I was startled by a small sound that was made by a pair of heavy shoes being placed on wall directly over my head. By rising one elbow I could just see the tops of them. And I was hoping gainst hope that the automatic would be placed there beside them. But the seconds took place. So I quietly reached up and lifted one of the shoes from its threw that shoe lightly and stiently ou

ater I could hear the faint thud of

Then I reached up and took por

I backed away, instinctively, until I came to the foot of the stairs that led to the roof-hatch for here the shadow was deepest and a way to the open stood closest being me. Then I took advantage of that avenue of escape. I went up, those narrow stairs, step by step, holding my breath, for at the same time that my straining ears caught the sound of steps advancing up position it was necessary for the through the house. My attention, as I did so was attention as I brought its heavy heel down with tracted by the windows of the about the pistol-stock. These fingers, Twenty-third street office-building factor in the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the settle-stock attention at the second time I had the second coping-tile as the blow fell. As struck the second time I had the entisfaction of seeing the automatic knocked blow was strong enough, in fact, to send it rattling to the roof-tin, where dropped out of sight.

Our next movement was a prompt even though an essentially ludierous one. We each rose to our feet, facing each other deross that narrow wall-top which came scarcely to me waist. And we each eagerly and reached out for the other

I knew there could and would be no half-measures in that house-top fight with Otto Schoenfeld. And my knowledged heyed me up to keep on fighting. fighting like a wildont, even after we had fallen to the roof together and the old scoundrel was doing his best to get a stranglehold on my throat. I became dimly conscious that we were relling over and over, like two wrest have gone to the mat. I dimly remembered that we were on a house some five stories above the street level. Then I shut my eyes, and gave up all effort, for I could feel my revolving body roll off the edge of things an drop into space.

It dropped into apace, but, luckily, it that roof, and I rolled free of my opponent without coming to a stop.

Then I sat up, dazed, a little pussied line swayed in the night bresze. The by the fact that this opponent of mine next moment I saw him cut this did not start in pursuit of me. I clothes-line away from its stanchions scrambled to my feet, groped my way to where I saw a clothes-line as neys in one that stood at the easterly on the roof, and fumblingly untied that edge of the house-roof, pushed his bag line. Then I crept over to my enem down inside the middle chimney and and tied first his feet together and the line. Then I crept over to my enemy s-line, his hands together behind his back. after wedging the upper end of the Then I clambered back across the roof, climbing the wall-coping, crossed to the chimney that held the laundry-bag. and carefully drew that soot-covered truded, so that even in daylight small staggered in through the roof-door and down the narrow steps, where Mrs. spot where he had so ingeniously but Munger was seated on the top step of oluntarily repeated a device which the house-stairs, weeping over is supposed to be peculiar to Santa wreckage of her top fleor rear. which Then my heavy-footed friend felt his had swept through it.

But I was more interested, just then There I saw him reach into his pocket in my laundry bag, and I promptly sat and lift something out. What he now down on the very step so recently vaheld in his right hand was a pocket cated by the incoherent Mrs. Munger, flashlight and with it he was plainly and investigated the contents of that signaling to the window of his un- bag. It held, I found, dozens and known confederate. The next minute dozens of small manila envelopes, a worn cigar-box filed with small stones of a corresponding light in the fourth which glittered and shone in the baid or window. Then the series of electric light, two cardboard boxes

Otto Schoenfeld's door lay a battered

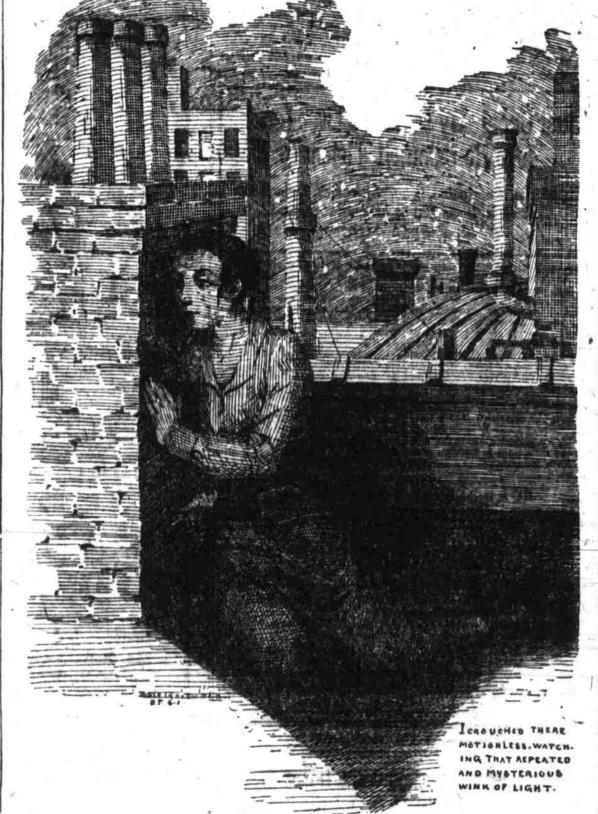
"Yuh come batterin' down the door aloud, "who's always tried to keep a to the point if yuh'd arrest that young girl up there who's stealin' and pickin her fill of other folks' belongings! That's what you'd be doin'!"
"What girl?" demanded a voice

which made me suddenly sit up. For I knew it was the voice of Sloan himself.

I was still sitting there when Sloan appeared, short of breath, with wear and disgust on his heavy-lined face. "Well, this is a fine night's work isn't it?" he demanded, in a tone of I merely ont there grinning down at

him. "What's wrong with at ... "Nothing, of course, "he retorted with heavy scorn "except that you Wilkins bungled his raid, and Schoen feld got away, and the whole bunch of Diamond Thieves has given the Alliance the all-night laugh again! That's the only thing that's wrong with it!"
"Aren't you leaving something out?" quietly asked of him.

What?" he barked. "This," I said as I swung the laundry-bag toward him. "And Otto Schoenfeld, who's tied down up there on the second roof. And if you can trust Wilkins and Doyle to go to the the Twenty-third Street office building backing on this dump, you'll probably gather in a stick-up or two who've been ray-catting there for our German friend! And I wish you'd order me a taxi, for I feel like a welter-weight who's taken the count, and am rather



fore me were the names that Sloan and his agents had spent fruitless weeks in trying to find.

safe for me to carry it away?

i thought it over, there on my knees healde the open trunk, and decided to estore the book to where I had found it. I carefully replaced the tray relocked the trunk, and pushed it back to its earlier position beneath the white enameled bed. I breathed more freely when I was out of that room and safely back in my owh. There I made ready for the street, for I realized that I had important business shead of me that night.

found that another person was coming up those stairs and coming as noiselessly as I was trying to go down hem. This other person was a man but I'd been unable to catch sight of

"Escusa, mees, but you know of mar sall' Schoenfeld ?" I remained silent for a moment, and

then nodded my head in assent. For as I heard that suave and full-toned voice ask its question I knew even before I saw the outlines of the clive-skinned face in the clearer light from the hall-

face to face with Angele Pareto.
"Then where mus' I go finds heem?"
Then he suddenly stood stock still, and the smile died away from his olive and earnestly,
I also saw that he stood on higher

The next movement took the form a knock on my door, a carefully moderated and yet a distinct knock. It I wanted that book and that list more became louder and more determined as than anything else. But would it be it was repeated. And I could bear an anxious and somewhat gutural voice

What do you want?" I demanded "I vant to speak mit you please. retorted the somber figure so close to me. "Listen, legtle one. Vill you hel; an oldt man in trouble?"

"What can I do?" I asked. "I hat worked hard, leetle one. worked many years, and I has saved vat I could. Tonight I belief, somebody vin come to rob me of vat I haf! Vat leet!e I haf is in a troonk in my room. Somebody vill come to rob me of dat leatle One ding you can do. You can keep dat troomk of mine here, mit you. Here under your bedt, it will be safe. And den I vill not be robbed!"

It took a moment or two for this t sink in. The only trunk I had eight of in Otto Schoenfeld's rooms had beer the fron-bound chest of oak. And that iron-bound chest held everything which had brought me as a spy into that

"But I haven't even a lock on my "I vill put one on" was his I backed away from him a little. wish I was home," I said, with a well

simulated sob of distress.
"I vill help you go dere yen trouble is ofer," he announced savy and intimate whisper, there's Mrs. Munger," I still cointed out. "She will send me away

from its hiding-place. The first dis covery I made was that it was securely locked. My second discovery was that the keyhole of the huge lock had been filled with sealing-wax and while still fluid with a seal of oddly inermingled initials.

As soon as I had dressed I moved the trunk out, to test its weight. As I did so a sudden question crossed my mind. How was I to be certain that It The fact that its lock had been so carefully sealed may have been only s trick-and the man against was campaigning had shown himself extremely resourceful in tricks. I remembered a pair of nall-sciesors sultense, got them out and with them cut and goused away the sealing-was that covered the lock-front. Once I'd cleaned out that keyhole I got busy with my apider. In two minutes I had the lid open, and the way of lenses and mailing boxes lifted away. The automatic pistol was gone, the rows of manila envelopes were gone, the boxes notebook with its orderly rows of ad-dresses was also gone. That tricky old scoundrel had duped me, had foeled me to the queen's taste. And it was ten to one that I'd lost all chance of redeeming the situation.

I crept out to the old German's door, cautionaly tried it, and found it still ocked. Then I stood at the head of

As did so I heard a sound, like that of a street-door being opened and closed. And at aimost the same time sound as it struck the street pavement I heard a second sound, only this one sion of the second shoe. I was about