THE DIAMOND THIEVES

TWELVE DETECTIVE STORIES By ARTHUR STRINGER

VIII.—A STRANGER IN THE HOUSE

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

Balmy Rymal, special agent and operative for the Jewelers' Protective nce, in New York, writes these stories for the information of Winkie, Winkfred Ealand, to prove to him that although appearances were against her, she always loved him. Balmy was dismissed from a Mapital, where she was training, because she let Angelo Parento, a young who had killed his sweetheart and wounded himself, escape. She learns that he became a gem thief. As an object lesson for a group of gem thieves, Inspector Bloom, of the Alliance, gave Balmy the job of ling the third biggest diamond in America. She was then to be arrested, tried and sent to just and immediately released. In the attempt at this sham rabbery she chloroforms the owner of the diamond, who is later found dead, and the stone is gone from the safe when she poes to it. The stone is later recovered from Curate Sam, a well-known pem thief. Then begins a battle of wits between the gem thieves and the representatives of lose and order, and each one of these stories tells. is a forceful manner the outcome of one of these interesting encountgra. Toosey Attrill to a stool-pigeon for the Alliance.

lliac-colored room, waiting for the ifth wealthiest woman in America. And I had not their awaiting Mrs. -Belpont for exactly thirty-five stes. I was still waiting with my steh in my hand, like a timekeeper & track side, when a quick rustle

f ellic made me look up. I naw myself being inspected by and nervous woman with narrow sellbones and an Iron Duke nose. She was at least fifty. And I knew at es that I was face to face with Mrs den-Belpont.

"You're the young lady from the ies Department?" she demanded he spoke briskly, pausing only a moment, apparently to digest her shock at finding a hireling of the law in a Duff-Gordon trock and a Tappe hat. "Searcely." I amended coreening my real feelings behind a rather languid

elévating her thinly penciled eyebrows. "I'm Miss Rymal," I said. "And I wis sent here from the Protective

"But you were to come on the twonfty-five train and Hoskins was sent to meet you," she announced with a note of latent reproof.

"Yes." I smilingly retorted. "But, you see, it was with the servants' rryall. And I rather faucled that you'd overlooked that I might be crowding the new second cook and the

I had the satisfaction of seeing her start, at the none too muffled rebuke maid to be here some time before

But in a moment's time she was ompletely mistress of herself. "Miss Blanchan attends to those things," she explained. "Miss Blanchan is my sec-

"Then she ought to be dismissed," I promptly announced.

"I can give you precisely fifteen inutes," was the unruffled statement of Mrs. Obden-Belpont.

"That will be sufficient, I think" I told her, still smiling. Maving scored a point I could afford to be magnanim-

"Then how did you get from the station?" asked the still abstractedeyed woman,

"A very kind old gentleman in flanis seemed to waken to the humor of the lavaillere left." he cituation and brought the here in a tan-colored canoe-readster. That, I might add, was exactly three-quarters of an hour ago."

at must have been Ferrie," she districtly observed, and then—"Ad-iral Trever Ferris. And crowding a miral must have seemed more a novelty than a cook in a

I had the qualified satisfaction of wing I'd forced the claws through

But this isn't what were here to ik over, is it?" suggested my hosters. In will you be good enough to tell me at you know of this case?"

"I'd prefer that you tell me," I "I'll explain it very briefly. Natalie is to be married here

"Miramar' next Friday at high noon is to marry Captain Lloyd Sher-The arrangements are not, of

who knows about it?"

In all of Toosey Attrill. Integer of the thought of Toosey Attrill. Integer of the themsening of call-this look on his troubled face.

I was rattling on to Winkie and the young man on my left when a rather than the thought of t gifts have, of course, been com-

dollars at the most. But its historic value is quite another matter. It was

an antique Florentine ring, once in the

ossession of Lorento de Medici."

Who discovered the theft?" "Whom do you suspect?" The ques

tion seemed to startle her. "I have fixed my suspicion on ne particular person as yet," she announced with quite unnecessary dig-

"And you are willing to let about this in my own way?" "I'd prefer having some slight inkhally averred.

"It would make my work much easier if no one in the house knew

why I an here."
This seemed to stick in her Then you already have a suspicion as to as to who the guilty person is?"

"I have concluded that it is what we call an inside job" I said. "How many servants have you here?" She did a quick sum in menta arithmetic

"Seventeen of my own. Then there's Gwendelyn de Haven's maid and Hallie Raleigh's and Ferrie's man. That makes twenty, not counting the chauffeurs and the seven men Mr. Obden-Belpont keeps on the yacht. But I have already told you that all of my servants are above suspicion," asserted the mistress of that manorial retinue I was tempted to remark, with a sigh. that they always were above suspicion

n a case like this. "Then that leaves only the guests." I said in my most matter-of-fact man

er.
"I'm afraid they, too, will have to be included in my list of exemptions," she "If you are willing to leave this case entirely in my hands," I said, "I'd like to be free to move about without emstart, as I had intended to make her barrassment. So I'll telephone for my

> "And you mean to say, you-"I mean to say that I propose staying at 'Miramar' as your guest until this case is entirely cleared up if you choose to have it cleared up.

I coul see her fine old face harden. "Really, you know--" But that was as far as she got

Her speech was cut short by a sudder "Mother, Uncle Gwynne's emerald is

gone!" came from a reedy young voice from the doorway. The next minute i girl of twenty entered the room.
"Gone?" school the 'nother.

"I had Miss Blanchan bring the emerald and the Morgans' lavailiers that just came this morning out to the them both on the round willow there. And when we came back, in two or three minutes, there was only

"Have you spoken to the servants about this?" asked Mrs. Obden-Belpont

as her eye met mine.
"I spoke to Benchley, mother, but he's been busy telephonin- to the caterer and knows absolutely nothing about it."

The older woman stepped across the com and touched an electric bell.

"This is my daughter, Mies Rymal." she said with a smile which, I'm afraid was just a little forced. "Miss Rymal is to be our guest during the next few rays, Natalie and while I'm sure she'll stand that we can't give her a great deal of our time, under the circumstances, I do hope we can make her visit a pleasant one."

That will be charming, of course said the abstracted bride-to-be. She was already turning away when a maid in a service cap and apren entered the

"Hortense, will you please show Mine Rymal to her room, the first room in the Lorillard wing," said the mistress you are anticipating another?" the Lorliard wing, said the mistration and talk to Miss Rymal," he said, is scarcely how I should of Miramar with her suave smile, and talk to Miss Rymal, he said, it," corricted the lady, "Td "And tea is being served on the terrace, "while I go and get my bird-glasses, stating that I'm extremely Miss Rymal, in half an hour. I hope You know Miss Rymal, of course-stating that I'm extremely you will be able to join us there. And well, if you don't it's time you did." to prevent any such occur- you will be able to join us there. And being repeated. I can't have Hortense," added Mrs. Obden-Belpont, being repeated. I can't have working about this. "connect the extension there so that an extremely delicate girl and Miss Rymal ran telephone into the city like into the chair at my side with a sort of what in the name of God-is-

tere. Earlier in the week, I'm is well and finnel and manning silk clustered about the willow tower table and the week about the willow tower table and the scenario of things been laid out on the top of a plane in the music room. They even left alone there, for a few and twenty. For I really believe and is will and a fan like a horse. I display and Miss Bianchan to restant the scenario of that cluster of anish may been and women than I would have been of a collection of gangeters awaiting me on the darkest corner of the little shell of a teacup balanced on the bedief awaiting me on the darkest corner of Hell's Kitchen. Bo I dissembled my fall brown hand I couldn't possibly be called sampling grace.

The next two days were anything liked her for the wagonette. As I sat there watching Winkie with house circuit, and, using the decomposition of the little shell of a teacup balanced on this big brown hand I couldn't help restricted the little shell of a teacup balanced on this big brown hand I couldn't help restricted the most good. I also most the couldn't possibly be called sampling grace.

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marked a man who promptly arose from one of the club-chairs in front of me. I at once saw that it was my eld friend. Admiral Trevor Ferris. It seemed natural enough that he should give me his chair and then explain that that sae and said: "I don't see. Gray Eyes, a deer-hound was ornamental but not overly intelligent. Then a younger man on my right began enlarging on the intelligence of the Zeitler pointers, and a fat man further around the circle spoke of the cleverness of the Elim-view seout-dogs, and that reminded me of what I'd seen the dogs in the New Tork Police Department do, and before I knew it I had that entire circle intening to my description of how a police dog could be trained to make and arrest by overtaking a prisoner and holding him.

I sat there quite at my ease rather flattered because a brick-colored Apolic was all the while trying to talk to me around the corner of Ferrie's fiannel shoulders, at the same time that the same that the shoulders, at the same time that the shoulders, at the same time that the shoulders, at the same time that the same time that the shoulders, at the same time that the same time that the shoulders, at the same time that the same time that the shoulders, at the same time that the same time that the same time that the shoulders, at the same time that the same time to time, now, I not time account to time account time

shoulders, at the same time that the young man who liked Zeigler pointers kept forstalling the footman in balancing lumps of sigar on my sauder rim.
This seemed to annoy a languid-eyed young lady in organdis who drifted ever in our direction and meltingly, yet pointedly asked me where I'd ever come to know so much about police

had time to answer the question my-

town Miss Rymal, that you once tried your hand at settlement work," he blandly interposed.

"Only as an amateur," I just as glibly fabricated. I had only time to register a vague impression that whose name I later found to be Gwendolyn De Haven, was in some way my enemy and would be well worth watching. For just then I ginneed up and saw another figure advancing toward us across the close

It was a very dapper figure, for all its height, a figure in soft gray fiannel, with a comfortable looking cheviot shirt and white buckskin phoes. What made me suddenly sit up was the fact that the newcomer was Winkfred Baland himself. There, not more than ten steps away

from me stood my Winkie, calmly shaking hands with three summery looking girls who coped about him like wood-pigeons. Then he moved on and stopped short as though he had been

Winkie and I Looked at L

each other Long and thoughtfully

For his eyes had most unmis- still again my attention went back to

house wires.

faced me.

takably failen on me, the self-obliterating Miss Blanchan. I was just wondering what to do to and I decided, as I say there, to find

when Admiral Ferris got up out of his maiden lady. I also felt rather inter

club-chair and swung the newcomer ested in Gwendolyn De Haven. And about by his clow. "Sit down here I also decided, as I sat there, to tele-

the der-hounds which trotted confidently up beside me.

"Fine animals, eh" off-handedly remarked a man who promptly arose
from one of the club-chairs in front of
me. I at once saw that it was my old
friend, Admiral Trevor Farris. It
even lifted my hand (just a little

thoroughly looked over the wall-safe,
which proved a portly enough vault.
for which a Tudor fireplace had been
sacrificed. The entrance to this, protosted by a four-tumbler combination
look, was rather cleverly controlled.
But after Pd persunded Mrs. ObdenBut after Pd persunded Mrs. Obdenthat safe I secretly wired a mat in
tront of the safe door and had it conheated with a busizer beside my own
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Then I saw Winkle at a slightly closer range than I had expected, for it so happened that I was seated that night at dinner between him and Rear-Admiral Trevor Ferris. I'd thought for one foolish moment that Winkle might like me in my unexpected Queen-of-But in that I made the mistake of my life. Instead of melting with admiration, he looked me over with a cool and scoriac eye, relapsing into a morose and troubled silende from which the fluffy debutante made repeated but ineffectual attempts to

rouse him. That dinner was far from being all play to me, for I kept going up and down that double line of prattling



and-she-thing of the human tribe could become once you looked at it through the cool light of reason,

The making ready for these rites was still converting certain parts of "Miramar" into a cross between a greenhouse and an oriental basear, and below stairs was a humming beenive of activity. But the house itself seemed impossible and I was glad to slip impossible and I was glad to slip away into the consoling quietness of luncheon proved an extremely dreary affair. Ferrie, I found, had flitted off to Newport the night before. So it gardens. I was homesick for somewas with considerable surprise that I ran across him under a clump of maples late that afternoon. He was neldglass in his hand, and seemed intent on a study of the asure heavens above him when I interrupted his seance. He stood for quite a long time staring off, through the heavy foliage. "That's most remarkable," he said as he slowly put down his glasses. "I'm there - perisorous canadensis, you

"A bird?" I asked as I sat down on a rustic bench past which a tiny brook gurgled and danced.

"Yes, a bird," he said as he sat down In front of me on a collapsible camp-stool of steel and canvas. "Sometimes

"No; that's all we know positively.
And I wasn't told of the second thert.
That makes things more serious."
"Tell me about Gwendolyn De
Haven," I ventured.
"Tengagethian be

Then Miss Blanchan?" I continued.

Again he shock his head.

"Then how about Benchley?"

He smiled almost commiscratively.

"It's quite clear you don't know the redoubtable. Benchley as—as we've come to know him. It would be a bit abourd to sacrifice a forty-four-year record for honesty, a life state of about the integrity for a three or four hunlute integrity for a three or four hun-dred dollar trinket."

dred dollar trinket."

"That's what I've felt all along," I agreed. "And at the name time that's why it has impressed me as an inside job. It's really the sort of smatchpatty sneak-thieving that a weakling of a mental defective might be guilty."

lings in her retinue!" he proclaimed.
"That's what I've been at consider able pains to verify." I acknowledged.
"Then that taken us back to the guesta, after all," he said with a chuckle.

there?"
"I've been wondering about roung Baland," he ventured, in a hesitating sort of way. "Hasn't it struck you that he's rather worried-looking and lil-at-

Then he looked at me out of the corner of his shrewd old eye. "How well do you know him?" "I don't think I know him at all." I

finally acknowledged. Then I turned and asked point blank: "De you think he stole those jewels?"
"I am sorry to have to say it." he muttered without looking at me, "but I know of something he has stolen."
"What?" I demanded. Dat Rear-Ad-

miral Ferris didn't answer that ques-tion. Instead, he caught up his field-glasses and leveled them through the

glasses and leveled them through the sun-filtering leafage.

Not long afterward as I returned agroes the glowing green terrice I saw under the cool shadow of the carriage entrance a big plum-colored sedan ornamented by two human caryatids in plum-colored uniforms. One of these figures suddenly circled the car and semestimes as the figures suddenly circled the car and semestimes as the carming open the plum-colored door. At sir, of all the jay family, whom I've often enough seen stealing from cances me.

"You haven't succeeded very well, have you?" she remarked. Her tone was very quiet. It made me think of a knife-blade buried in rose leaves, "Why not?" I asked.

"Because a diament."

"Why not?" I taked.
"Because a diamond bar-pin, I find, has just been stolen from my daugh-ter's room," quietly retorted that magter's room," quietly retorted that mag-isterial figure. And the plum-colored factorum swung shut the plum-colored door and left me staring rather emptily after that glistening equipage as it wove its purring way out along the winding gravel drive.

About the third jewel robbery at "Miramar," I found, there was little that was novel and still less that was known. The night brought nothing new nor did the morning. "Miramar." in fact, was preoccupied with a bigger movement than the one which had ushered me in through its cobble-stone gate-pillars. And all day long the ever-shifting army of preparation tnew bas amen.

"Bay, Balmy." Toosey remarked after an observation of certain of these activities, "I wouldn't be that bride for all the flash junk that ever came out of the Elmberiey Mines." "Toosey, what's the matter with

"It mi't me. It's the house." "What's going to happen to this

"There's going to be a death in it," was her selemn-noted reply. "What makes you say abourd things like that?" was my none-too-patient

inquiry. "Balmy, when a bird files into a house, that means death! It never fails. And a bird flew into this house. And what's more, I saw it."

There were times when Toosey was

own heart. And I wanted to be alone.

Yet to be alone, apparently, was the one comfort denied me, for as I struck deeper into that wooded, solitude I

found myself confronted by at least two unmistakable signs of human intwo unmistakable signs of human in-trusion. One was a steel-rodded col-lapsible campated and the other was a paly of held-glasses. As I advanced desper into the woodland I spotted a walking-stick standing upright in the ground. On i. hung a brown Norfolk jacket. It plainly belonged to Rear-Admiral Trevor Ferris. But there was no Ferris in sight.

no Perrie in sight.

'I had taken that Jacket up, during my inspection, and fully intended to hang it back over the walking stick in front of me on a company of the following stool of steel and canvan. "Sometimes in the ground by its served called the Whisky-Jack, or the Venison in the ground by its served in the ground by its things carefully wrapped up in it. One was a diamond bar-pin. The other was an emerald in platinum setting. And the third was an antique Floren-

should have preferred avoiding. It was Winkfred Reland.

His morosely questioning eyes embarrassed me almost as much as the memory of what I was carying in my right hand. And in trying to conceal that embarrassement I exagerated it.

"What is it?" he akked staring quite pointedly at my tightly closed fist.

The black joy of hurting him surged through me at that brust command. I opened my hand and disclosed the three stolen pleces of jestelly. And I knew by his face that he understood exactly what they were.

"Where did you get thous?" he asked after a full mement of silence.

"I stole them," I said, looking him straight in the eye.

straight in the eye.

straight in the eye.

"Hadn't I better take these?" he asked after a long silence. "It would make it easier for you, wouldn't it?" and I noticed that the note of iron has gone out of his voice.

I laught I a little, but poor Winkie couldn't see the humor of the situation. I watched him in silence as his big brown hand took possession of them. It was in silence, too, that I went along at his side as he emerged from the

It was in silence, too, that I went along at his side as he emerged from the pergola and started across the lawn.

About the tan-duck garden I noticed tea was being served. I could see Winkie cross over to Natalis and draw her to one side. There was wonder in her pallid little face, and the three stolen jewels in the cup of her hand, as she turned back to the canopy and its company.

and its company, "Moher," she cried. "They've beet found!"

"They have been returned," an-neunced Winkle with a face like a mask, "strictly on the understanding that no questions are to b' asked."

I was watching Winkie's face se close that I failed to notice Ferrie as he joined us.

"We've found the thief," explained

Gwendelyn De Haven.

"And just who was the thief?" remarked the russet-faced old Admiral.

"You can say I was," Winkle annaunced

"Not by a long shot," promptly in-terrupted my old friend. '; was an accomplice of mine."
"What accomplice?" demanded Winkle, perplexed by the tranquility of

Trevor Ferris, crowing me with his kindly old smile of complete understanding.

And for the second time that day Winkle and I looked at each other long and thoughtfully.

A BOGUS MALF-DOLLAR.

A man who looked seedy and bunged up boarded a trolley our and laid his

"Old chap, let me give you a tip. If a little old woman with an iron jaw tries to board your car today ring the bell and leave her behind." "But why should I?" was queried in

reply. "Because she was riding on this route yesterday and some conductor passed a bogus half-dollar on her. She was so mad about it that didn't sleep any last night, and an hour ago she put on her hat and walked out. She is going to board every car on the line. She will take you by the necktie and give your head and neck a twist and domand a good half-deliar of you. Don't you look guilty and gasp for breath and try to stammer out some excuse. If you do she will think you are the man, and you will go to the hospital for two weeks before she gets through with

The conductor assured the man that he would spend the rest of the day looking for the little old woman, and that if he saw one he would ring the bell for the motorman to start up at a gait twenty miles an hour.

WHAT AN ARMISTICS IS. Mr. Jones was reading his news-

paper and Mrs. Jones was reading another, when she suddenly looked up and asked: "My dear, what is an armistice?" "An armistice is is " slowly re-

plied Mr. Jones, but came to a halt. "Is what?" demanded Mrs. Jones.
"Well, I dunne as I quite understa t, but it is this way: When two nathey bring about what is called an armistice."

Wes. I know, but what is it?" per sisted Mrs. Jo "Why they stop fighting and killing and go to jawing and differing. One is as bad as the other, and one lasts about as long as the other, and one disturbs the world about as much as

whether they fight on or have an armistice." Mrs. Jones road on for a few minutes about the Paris armistice and then re-

"Mr. Jones, I agree with you!"

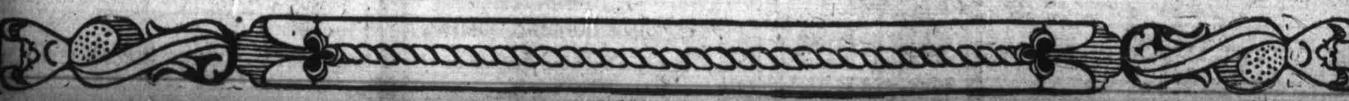
two I brought over myself for Mrs. was a diamond bar-pin. The other Obden-Belpont."

The sound of that name seemed to cause him to lapse into misnes. After a minute or two he turned to me.

"Who day it?" he abrupily demanded. "Did what?" I asked. "Carried off that De Medici ring?"

The handsome old face grew suddenly furrowed. "Then there have denly furrowed. "Then there have the empty golf course and been two thefter" he said.

"I thought you know that. Are any came face to take with the one man I a salvage value of \$11,000,000.



phone in to Bloan's office that night for two or three dictaphones and a

field-bridge for listening in on the

It wasn't until dinner was almost

over that Winkle swung about and

"What are you doing here?" he said

quietly, yet with a note of finality that

was anything but pleasant.
"I'm doing what everybody else here

was all the satisfaction I would give

"Bo it seems!" he said, with what couldn't possibly be called knightly