

The KING of DIAMONDS.

By Louis Tracy.

Author of "Wings of the Morning," "The Pillar of Light," Etc.

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CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

Then he groped his doubtful path to the mantelpiece where he had left a candle and a box of matches. His boots crunched as he went on what he knew to be mostly diamonds, and he stumbled over the mattress in front of the fireplace. Yes, the candle was there. So far so good. The tiny gleam lifted the black curtain, and he surveyed his domain. A single glance showed him that all things remained exactly as he left them on Saturday morning. The packet of letters rested on the broken chair, the old sack was stuffed into the window and the rope that never to be forgotten rope—dangled from the hook to which he had fastened it.

The sight brought a lump into his throat. He sank to his knees, pressed down by a sense of superior power. "Mother," he said humbly, "forgive me and ask God to forgive me for what I would have done were you not watching over me."

In the spiritual exaltation of the moment he almost expected to find that sweet face peering at him benignantly from out the dim background. But he could not see her, and he rose, revived by this spoken communion with her. He had no shadow of doubt as to her presence. God to him was the universe and his mother the unquestionable means of communication with the Providence that governed his life. He would die rather than abandon that belief. Were it dashed from his mind he was quite certain that his wealth would vanish with it. It was no haphazard accident which had sent the diamond index meteorite bounding from the sky. He was despairing, dying, his mother appealed for him, and behold! The very elements that control the world obeyed a mighty behest.

He began to work methodically. In the first place, he lit a fire, for the evening was chilly; then he shook his mattress and swept the floor, gathering into a heap all the tiny particles with which it was littered. These he collected in a piece of newspaper and folded them into a parcel, which again he enclosed in a stouter sheet of brown paper, finally tying the whole with a yard of string he carried in his pocket.

There were hundreds of tiny diamonds in that insignificant package and not a few the size of small peas. As a matter of fact, he discovered subsequently that the net result of his sweeping brought him in over a \$1,000. Having examined every nook and crevice of the apartment by the aid of the candle, he satisfied himself that nothing remained which would indicate to the most curious eye any event out of the common having occurred in that humble dwelling.

It was typical of Philip's implicit faith that he did not unlock the back door until his interior task was ended. He knew that his meteor was untouched.

There was no wind without. The candle, feeble as its rays were, illuminated the small yard sufficiently to reveal its debris of white stones and darker lumps of metal. More newspaper was requisitioned, but after utilizing the twine on his parcel of clothing he ran short of string.

He coolly went up the stairs, unfettered the rope with which he had intended to hang himself and loosened his stiff strands. Soon he had an abundance of strong cord, and four bulky packages were added to the first small one.

They were heavy, too, weighing several pounds each. In placing them side by side close to the wall beneath the front window he suddenly realized an unforeseen difficulty.

If these shreds of matter—the mere husk, as it were, of the meteor—were so ponderous, what would be the weight of the meteor itself? How could he hope to lift it from the hole in which it lay, how convey it from Johnson's place to a new and safer habitation? He might as well endeavor to move an unwilling elephant.

The thought chilled him. For the first time since his parting interview with Mr. Abington, Philip experienced a dread of failure. With something of panic in his blood, he snatched the candle and ran hastily into the yard. He knelt and held the light low in the excavation. Then he cried aloud:

"What! Am I so ready to lose faith in mother?"

For the huge metallic mass—so big that it would not enter the bore of the

largest cannon known to modern gunnery—was split asunder in all directions. It seemed as if it were about to rock at him. The rain and steam had done their worst work. It was even possible that he would not need the quills, but would be able to pick out each separate chunk with his hand.

Instantly he put the thought into execution and succeeded in picking several pieces to the yard level. He noted that they were soaked with the dull white pebbles, some being the size of a man's egg. He could not help comparing them in his mind's eye with the collection now lodged in Johnson's safe. If those were worth \$50,000, these must be of fabulous value.

Any other person in the wide world might have been excused if he pinched himself or winked furiously or took out the gold filled tobacco pouch for careful inspection to assure himself that he was not dreaming. Not so Philip. The only dominant feeling in his brain was one of annoyance that he should have doubted for one single instant that means would be given him to secure absolute and undisputed control of his treasure.

But there remained the problem of weight. His original idea was to wrap the actual body of the meteor in the stout sack he obtained from O'Brien and then inclose all his valuables in a tin trunk which he would purchase next morning. Any ordinary trunk would certainly be spacious enough, but its phenomenal weight would unquestionably evoke more comment than he desired, and it would need two strong men to lift it.

This portion of his plan needed to be entirely remodeled, and he was now more than ever thankful that the \$50,000 save one expended, reposed in his pocket. With money, all things, or nearly all things, were possible.

Owing to the cramped space in which the meteor lay, it was no small task to bring it to the surface in sections, but he persevered. By strenuous endeavor he accumulated an astonishing pile of iron ore studded with diamonds, looking not unlike almonds in a brown cake, and the guttering candle held low down failed to reveal anything else in the hole. There was a good deal of debris at the bottom, and the depth was now over four feet. To reach to its full extent he was compelled to jam his head and shoulders into the excavation and feel blindly with one hand, so he rightly concluded that a final examination might be left until daylight.

By this time he was hot and covered with dirt. He stripped, washed himself in front of the fire and changed into his new clothes.

He did not possess a looking glass, but he felt sure that he presented a remarkably different appearance when attired in a neat serge suit, a clean shirt and respectable boots. His first impulse was to thrust his discarded garments into the fire, but sentiment prevailed, and he folded them into a parcel.

Then he extinguished his candle and went out. To his exceeding surprise he discovered that it was nearly 9 o'clock. Time had indeed flown.

The shops in the Mile End road open early and close late. He entered a restaurant where he was unknown, passing, as a matter of policy, the coffee stall of his kindly helper of those former days now so remote in his crowded memories. After eating a hearty meal, for which he was thoroughly prepared, he tendered a sovereign in payment.

The proprietor barely glanced at him, Philip was now well dressed, according to local ideas, and his strong, erect figure, his resolute face, added two or three years to his age when contrasted with the puny standard of those as set by the poverty stricken East End.

He had forgotten to buy a necktie and a new pair of stockings. These omissions he now rectified, and he also purchased a warm, dark gray traveling rug, several yards of druggist, a ball of twine and a pair of scissors. A couple of stout but worn leather portmanteaus caught his eye.

"Those are cheap," said the salesman quickly, "only 15 shillings each."

"I'm not sure I can afford so much," said Philip hesitatingly, for the rug alone cost £1 10s.

"They're a real bargain—real leather. They were never made under £3 each."

"Oh, very well. I will take them."

He produced £3, got his change and walked away with his goods without causing any wonderment. The shopman was only too glad to have such a customer at that late hour.

Philip now knew that he was fairly safe, but he decided that a billycock had given him a more mature appearance than a cap. This alteration being effected, he hurried off to Johnson's place and reentered his domicile with an incipient worthy of note.

Very carefully, with the help of druggist, scissors and twine, the two small

would hold the remainder of the meteor.

As the next morning would find him occupation enough, he decided to do as much as possible that night. Three times he sallied forth and returned with a good sized valise. He paid prices varying from £2 10s. to £3 15s. and always bought secondhand goods.

He had locked and strapped the fourth of his goodly array of traveling bags when he fancied he heard a footstep in the mews. Such an occurrence would have troubled him not a jot a week ago. Tonight it was extremely disconcerting.

Notwithstanding the weight of the packed portmanteaus, especially the larger one, he lifted each bodily in his



He glanced at the window and saw a face.

arms and ran with it into the tiny scullery. On the front window there was no blind, only a small, much worn curtain covering the lower panes, and he did not want any stray looker in case in at him and discover a large quantity of luggage in such a disreputable hole.

When the fourth bag was deposited in the dark recess of the scullery he paused for an instant to listen. There was not a sound. Through the window he could dimly discern the roof of the deserted stables opposite.

He bent again to the task of packing the fifth portmanteau and was placing in it the last parcel of ore and diamonds when some of the heavy contents fell through one end where the druggist wrapping had been hastily folded.

Shaking the package on the floor as a grocer beats down the contents of a sugar bag, he picked up the fallen specimens and put them in, one by one. A large lump of ore had fallen apart when it dropped. Inside there was a huge kernel, a rough diamond quite as large as a hen's egg.

Philip smiled as he recalled his bonst to Isaacstein. He examined the stone critically and realized that if it were flawless it must be one of the marvels of creation. Without experiencing any positive motive he slipped this unique specimen into his pocket and went on with the reconstruction of the damaged parcel.

At last he finished. The portmanteau was lying open on the floor when the thought occurred to him that he might have avoided the hurry and trouble of carrying these heavy articles into the scullery if he had nailed a couple of yards of his druggist across the window.

It was not too late even now to rectify this defect. He glanced at the window to ascertain how much material he should cut off and saw a face—an evil, brutal, suspicious face—peering in at him over the top of the curtain.

CHAPTER IX.

It would be idle to deny that Philip was startled by the sight. No braver or more resolute boy breathed. But the silence, the mystery, the ghastly aloofness of Johnson's Mews—lent a sinister aspect to an apparently formidable enough under circumstances, but absolutely threatening and full of danger to one situated as he at that moment.

He never remembered seeing the man before, not that this repellent physiognomy was of a type to be soon forgotten. A bullet head, with prominent, bloodshot eyes, a strong, cruel mouth, a large nose, badly broken—a certain strength of character in features—these were the tokens writ legibly on the countenance glaring intently at the boy from without.

The two gazed at each other for an appreciable time. The man's face wandered from Philip's face to his costume and then rested on the open portmanteau at the boy's feet. There was in his expression an air of astonishment—a certain glowering bewilderment—as of one who had stumbled unawares upon some object of such potential value that the finder could hardly believe it to be true. He was thinking, wondering, debating, with himself. The goggle eyes seemed to see more than the brain was inclined to credit.

Philip despite his alarm felt that the right course was to resent this impudent prying into his affairs.

"Hello, you?" he shouted. "What do you want?"

The man grinned. He seemed to be about to answer when he suddenly turned his head and looked down the yard toward the entry.

Instantly he swung round and vanished noiselessly with the silent alertness of a cat, for the boy heard no sound. He simply disappeared in the darkness, and Philip, who knew every inch of the ground, realized that his

most unpleasant visitor had not only eluded him to the further obscurity of the mews, which formed a cul-de-sac, but also was either in his stocking feet or wore something over his boots to deaden any possible clatter on the paving stones.

Here was a nice thing, his habitat discovered by some tramp or criminal skulking in the untenanted building marked out for the house breakers within a few days. It was too bad. He was sorely annoyed that he had not thought sooner of the potentialities of the window when the interior of the house was illumined by a candle and a ruddy fire. How long had the man stood there watching him? He had certainly seen some portion of the contents of the last portmanteau. Had he also witnessed the removal of the others to the pantry?

Philip's experience as a newspaper vendor told him that all London was now familiar with his own personal appearance as well as with the semblance and value of his meteoric diamonds. The white stones, the clumps of iron ore, had been described minutely by clever journalists, who complemented Isaacstein's cleverness with facts gleaned from encyclopedias and interviews with portmanteaus.

Most probably this man had read four articles about him, for the evening was such as to bring every current of the life of every penniless vagrant in the kingdom. Indeed, the careful scrutiny bestowed on his face and clothes bore out this suspicion. Had he not changed his garments the stranger would have known his identity beyond all question. As it was, the man was puzzled and disturbed at the very moment he was about to say something. What had happened to cause him to run away? What had he seen or heard? Above all, how much did he know of Philip and his affairs?

Well, the door was locked, and it would be folly to go out again that night. The house was absolutely unapproachable save by the front. Philip resolved to remain awake until daybreak. O'Brien's spade stood against the fireplace. It was a formidable weapon, and he would not hesitate to use it if forcible entry was attempted. He must sit quietly in the dark, listening for each sound and threatening boldly when he heard any one endeavoring to open door or window.

He sighed, for he was very tired, but the vigil was imperative. He dropped the druggist and seissors and bent again over the portmanteau. The packing operations might as well be finished now, and indeed when the light was extinguished it would be better to keep away from the window, through which a sudden thrust with an implement might do him an injury.

He took his discarded clothes and arranged them on top of the last parcel of ore and diamonds. Then he reached out for the small bundle of documents resting on the chair behind him, intending to place them in a little pocket in the flap which already covered one-half of the bag.

At that instant he again heard footsteps. Of course a very few seconds had elapsed since he first caught sight of the living specter without. The Jean recorded at such length whistled through his active brain with lightning speed just as the knowledge now came that the footsteps proceeded from the entrance to the mews and not from its extremity, while their firm regularity betokened the advent of some person who had no special reason to conceal his movements.

The boy listened breathlessly. The oncoming reached his door, passed it, stopped opposite the window, and then another face peered over the curtain. This time it was a policeman. For an instant their eyes met in mutual astonishment. Then the policeman came so close that his helmet rested against a pane of glass. He grinned affably and cried:

"How! I want to speak to you."

Instinctively grasping the essential fact that his best policy was one of ready negligence, Philip sprang toward the door and unlocked it. He stood on the step. The constable approached.

"I hope I didn't startle you," he began, "but I just looked in on the off chance."

"I am very glad indeed to see you," interrupted the boy. "I am leaving here tomorrow. Just now, while I was packing some of my belongings, a very nasty looking man came and peeped in at me in the same way as you did."

He backed into the house. The policeman half followed him, his quick glance noting the open portmanteau and its array of old clothes.

"Just now?" he questioned. "Do you mean some time since?"

"No, no. Not half a minute—a few seconds ago."

"But where can he be? He hasn't left the mews or I must have seen him. I crossed the road, and no one came out in so short a time."

"Well, he is somewhere in the place. He had a horrid appearance—a man with a broken nose. He made me jump, I can assure you."

"A man with a broken nose? By Jove! I'm looking for a party of that description. A rank wrong 'un. Robbery with violence and a few other little things. What sort of a man was he? You saw his face only, I suppose?"

The constable stepped back into the paved court. A rapid twist of his hand sent a vivid beam of light dancing over ruined tenements, discolored doorways and shattered windows.

"A tall man," said Philip, "taller than you, for I could see his chin over the string of the curtain. He had a big face, with eyes that stuck out boldly."

"It's Jocky right enough!" cried the constable. "Now, where can he have got to? He's an ugly customer to tackle single handed," he added to

"Won't you wait a bit until I get some help?" said Philip anxiously. The man appeared to debate the point. The nearest constable was an acting sergeant, newly promoted. If he were summoned, the odds of a smart capture would be his by right of seniority.

"No," answered the constable stubbornly. "If he is here, I will handle him myself."

Again his lamp swept the small area of the mews and revealed no living object. He quickly unfastened his belt, took off his greatcoat and readjusted belt and lamp again.

"Now I'm ready for him," he grinned. "Put my coat inside, boy, and stand at the door yourself with the candle in your hand. If you see anything, yell out to me."

Philip obeyed. These preparations for a deadly struggle appealed to his very soul, for his healthy mind had been of late generally content to be a highwayman or a pirate in imagination and slay rather at planning the unkindest cut on a gleam bristling with hostile cannon.

The policeman, feeling for the loose strap of his truncheon, commenced a careful survey of the mews. He had not gone five yards when there was a loud crash of broken glass. The building at the other end of the yard possessed a couple of windows facing into another enclosure at the back. Obviously the broken named Jocky, unseen himself, had observed the constable's movements.

Realizing that discovery was imminent, he was effecting a strategic movement to the rear.

The policeman instantly abandoned his cautious tactics. He ran toward the door of the house whence the sound came. It resisted somewhat, but yielded to his shoulder. He disappeared inside. Philip, after closing his own door, also ran to the new center of interest, shielding the candle with one hand lest it should blow out.

Quick as he was, he missed the first phase of a Homeric combat. The violent Jocky, felled by an unmolested iron bar in his attempt to escape, tumbled like a maulman on the policeman. There was no sort of parity between them. Cursing the luck that had revealed his hiding place, the man, an ex-convict with the frame of a gladiator, sprang at his pursuer suddenly from an inner room.

The policeman had a second warning. It was something, but not enough to give him an advantage. He got his truncheon out, but simultaneously his assailant was on him with a ferocity of a catamount. They closed in bone breaking endeavor, and before they were locked together for ten fearful seconds the officer of the law bitterly regretted the professional pride which sent him single handed into this unequal strife.

For he was physically outclassed, and he knew it, and there is no more unerring knowledge can come to a man in such a supreme moment. Nevertheless he was a brave man, and he fought with all the resolution that is born of the consciousness of justice and moral right. But Providence is on the side of big battalions, and Jocky was taller, heavier, very much more active. Moreover, liberty is as potent an incentive



He picked up the truncheon and brought it down on Jocky's hard skull.

as law any day, and law was being steadily throttled when the pale gleam of Philip's candle lit up the confines of the ruinous level about which the two men stamped and lurching and wrestled.

At the precise moment of the boy's entrance the policeman's knees yielded, and he fell, with his remorseless antagonist uppermost. Philip, gazing at them wild eyed, almost fell, too, for his left foot rolled on the constable's staff.

Being fashioned of the stuff which founds empires—on the principle that instant action is worth a century of diplomacy—he picked up the truncheon and brought it down on Jocky's hard skull with such emphasis that the convict emitted a queer sort of cough and collapsed limply on top of his conquered adversary.

Then the boy was horrified. The two lay as still that he imagined both were dead. It is one thing to help the law, but quite another to kill a man. He did not want to be a murderer as well as a millionaire, not knowing then the qualities which go to form these varieties of genius homo are strangely alike.

He gazed at them as in a trance, but relief came when he heard them breathing sternly. At last, after a pause that apparently endured unnumbered minutes, the constable weakly rolled himself free from the bulky form of his would be slayer and sat up.

He inflated his lungs vigorously. Then he managed to gasp:

"Thank you! You've saved my life!"

He pressed his ribs with both hands and gingerly felt his throat. He stood up. His lamp was still alight, but a quantity of oil had run over his tunic and trousers.

"By Jove, boy, you are a brick," he said, and his voice was under control again.

Philip answered not a word. His eyes were glued on the prostrate form of Jocky. The policeman understood his fear and laughed.

"Don't you worry about him. He'll do a stretch all right. I would have given him a harder one than that if I got a swing at him."

His words were quickly justified. The fallen man growled unintelligibly and moved. With a rapidly born of much practice the officer handcuffed him. There must have been some sense of familiarity in the touch of the steel bracelets, for the recipient of this delicate attention stirred uneasily.

"You knocked him silly," grinned the policeman, "but he will get his wits back in a minute or two. Can you bring him a drink of water? It won't do me any harm either."

Philip hurried away to comply with this request. His mind was relieved now and with the backward swing of the mental pendulum came the reflection that the least said is the soonest mended with the case the better.

He filled a small tin cup at the cullery tap and ran with it to the scene of the capture. The constable was gently shaking his prize and addressing him by name.

"Jocky! Jocky Mason! Put your self together. This way for the Old Bailey."

"If you please," said Philip, "I would be very greatly obliged were my name not mentioned at all with reference to this affair."

The policeman, whose senses were normal again, was instantly impressed by the boy's grand manner. His accent was that of the son of the University. And how many boys of his age would have struck so straight and truly at a critical moment?

"Well, don't you see, that will be rather difficult," was the answer. "It was you who told me where he was, and the man himself knows that without somebody's help I could not have arrested him. There is no need to mince matters. I have you to thank for not being laid here stiff."

Philip said no more. To press his request implied a powerful motive. The stars in their courses must have conspired that day to supply him with excitement.

Mason eagerly gulped the water held to his lips. Then he tried to raise his right hand to his head. Ah! He understood. A flood of oaths began to pour thickly from his mouth.

"That's better," said the constable encouragingly. "Now, up you get! It's no use, Jocky. I won't let you kick me. You must either go quietly or I will drag you to the street over the stones, and that will hurt."

The man glared dully at his captor. With the apathy of his class, he knew when he was beaten and became submissive in demeanor. Philip, holding his candle aloft, marveled at his own temerity in hitting this giant, oxlike in size and strength.

Mason wobbled his head and craned his neck awkwardly.

"Go give me that crack on the nut?" he asked.

"The roof dropped," was the jocular reply.

"Not it. I'd yer damn, sailor. I was on yer afore ye could see yer stick. Ye was fairly beated until somebody ghted me wiv a well on the skylight."

"Never mind, Jocky. I'll hurt you to think just now. Come on."

But the ex-convict became sensible of the unwelcome light in the deserted house and slowly turned his head until his glance rested on Philip.

"Why," he roared, with an imprecation, "that's the bloomin' kid 'oo found the diamonds. I seed 'im a-countrin' of 'em. White stones, the paper said, an' bits of iron, too. A trunk full of 'em. 'E 'as one in 'is pocket as big as an egg."

The policeman laughed. So did Philip, shrilly, with ready acceptance of the cue.

"Come along, Jocky. You're wood methered. I'll not put a pint of coffee at the station just to show there's no malice," said the constable.

"The water was too strong for him," put in Philip.

The ex-convict began to protest, but he wanted words in swearing. The "sailor" grasped him by the arm and marched him down the yard, saying over his shoulder:

"Pull that deer to. I'll come back for my coat in half an hour."

Philip followed, but in a sea of perplexity. He heard Mason's frantic expostulations to the policeman—what was an extra stripe to the loss of untold wealth—that youngster was richer than Rothschild, the papers said. The small lot he showed in the police court were worth £50,000—and he had tons more.

It was all of no avail. Certainly the constable had never heard such queer reasons advanced for stopping an arrest, but Mason was obviously dazed for the time—muttering about the story which everybody talked of. He would change his tune when he learned to whom he was indebted for his capture.

The boy walked behind them mechanically, shading the candle with his hand. He was so absorbed with his tumultuous thoughts that the first indication he received of anything bizarre in his appearance was the giggling of a girl who saw him standing in the arch of the mews carefully shielding the flickering wick.

He blew it out. A clock in the small jeweler's shop opposite showed the time—ten minutes past 11. In that part of London, a busy field of men and women of the working class, he had no chance of removing his belongings be-

fore the policeman returned. What would happen if the friendly constable believed Jocky Mason's excited statements? True, Philip had no reason to fear the law, but with exposure might come other troubles. Would any one advance a claim to his meteor? Mr. Abington hinted at such a thing. He paid no rent for his house; he might be turned out instantly—refused permission to remove anything except his few unsalable household goods.

Assuredly he was in an awkward predicament. Of course there was a chance that the policeman would continue to laugh at the convict's folly. If he did not, there would certainly be complication. Could he avoid them by any means? Where was there a safe hiding place for his diamonds until next day? Would mother inspire him again as she had not failed to do during so many strange events? Would her spirit guide his footsteps across this new quicksand on whose verge he hesitated?

A few doors to the left was O'Brien's shop. The old man crept into sight, staggering under the weight of a shutter. Good gracious! Why had he not thought of this ally sooner? Some precious minutes were wasted already.

"Arrah, Phil, phwar in the world!" "Wait just the least bit, Mr. O'Brien. I have some portmanteaus that I want to store for the night. Do let me put them at the back of your shop. My place is not very safe, you know."

"Sure, boy, that's a small thing to ax. Bring 'em on, an' welcome."

With the speed of a deer Philip dived into the mews. He carried the two lesser bags without extraordinary difficulty and deposited them behind O'Brien's counter. The third was almost too much for him, as the weight was all in one hand, but he got it there, breathless with the exertion.

He had to open the fourth and tear out the stuffing of paper. When filled with the packages taken from the fifth, it was beyond his power to lift it, so he dragged it bodily along the mews and into the shop.

A passerby offered to help him. "No, thanks," he managed to say, though the effort to speak calmly took away his remaining breath. "I am only taking it to the shop there."

The man glanced at the shop—it was a marine store dealer's—a place where lead and iron and brass found ready sale. He passed on.

"The forlorn ex-convict, who did ye get the ligant leather trunks an' phwar's in them?" inquired the astonished pensioner.

The boy bravely called a smile to his aid. "I have a big story to tell you one of these days, Mr. O'Brien, but I have no time tonight. These things will not be in your way until the morning."

"The devil a bit. If things go on as they are, there'll soon be room enough in the poor old shop. To think after all these years that a murderin' thief in the war office!"

Philip was safe. He rapidly helped his friend to put up the shutters and rushed back to No. 3. Even yet he was not quite prepared for eventualities. He ran upstairs and gathered a few articles belonging to his mother, articles he never endeavored to sell even when pinched by hunger.

The last dress she wore, her boots, a hat, an album with photographs, some toilet accessories from the tiny dressing table, the coverlet of the bed on which she died—these and kindred mementoes made a very credible bulk in the deserted portmanteau.

He gave one glance at the hole in the back yard as he went to the coal house for a fresh supply of coal. That must remain. It probably would not be seen. In any case it remained inexplicable.

He was steepling the fire when a tap sounded on the door, and the policeman entered, followed by an inspector.

CHAPTER X.

"THIS is the boy, sir," said the policeman.

"Oh, is that him?" observed the inspector, sticking his thumbs into his belt and gazing at Philip with professional severity.

Philip met their scrutiny without flinching. He leaned against the wall with his hands in his pockets, one fist clenched over the pouchful of gold, the other guarding a diamond bigger than the Koh-i-Noor.

"I am sorry I have only one chair, gentlemen," he said apologetically.

"That's all right lad," said the inspector. "The constable here tells me that you very pluckily helped him to capture a notorious burglar. The man was hiding in this mews, and it seems you first saw him looking in through your window. What were you doing at the time?"

"Packing my portmanteau."

"Oh, packing your portmanteau?"

"Yes. That is it."

He stooped and nonchalantly threw it open. His clothes and boots and some of the other contents were exposed to view. The inspector laughed.

"Not many diamonds there, Bradley."

"No, sir. I told you Mason was talking rubbish."