

## Case of the ACCOMMODATING JEWELER

In helping a young socialite purchase a surprise engagement ring, he learned ruefully that the surprise was on him

CUSTOMERS ARRIVING in chauffeured limousines were no novelty to employees of the exclusive Fifth Avenue jeweler; they were accustomed to dealing with New York's wealthy socialites. But the new custom-built Cadillac that drew up one day shortly before noon was different.

There was an air of affluence about the car, the smartly liveried chauffeur, and the young man who stepped out. Faultlessly groomed, he had a distinctive appearance despite his obvious youth. His right arm was in a black silk sling.

"I'd like to see the president of the firm," he said, opening a gold case and handing the salesman an engraved card. The name was recognized at once, and the youth was ushered into the office of the head of the store.

He, too, recognized the name. Son of a wealthy society family, he had been mentioned recently in the newspapers—once when he was injured in an automobile accident, again when gossip columnists predicted his engagement to a socially prominent local girl.

"I'd like your advice in selecting an engagement ring," the young man said. "And I'd like to avoid publicity."

The executive was glad to help. He ordered diamond solitaires brought to his office for the young socialite's inspection. The youth merely glanced at the rings in several trays that were set before him, but finally one diamond caught his eye.

"That's it," he cried. "I must have that one."

The jeweler beamed; the price tag was \$39,000.

The jeweler wrote as the affluent young man dictated — "Darling: I have a wonderful surprise for you. Please give the bearer your personal check for \$8,000 . . ."

The young man frowned when he glanced at his checkbook. It showed a balance of slightly more than \$31,000. That was no problem, the jeweler assured him; the balance could be charged.

"No, that won't do," the socialite said. "It's too much like buying on credit. I must pay the whole thing."

The executive suggested telephoning his mother, but the young man shook his head. "She never talks on the telephone," he explained. "She's hard of hearing and rather sensitive about it."

He'd have to think of something else. "I have it," he exclaimed. "I'll send her a note to give the money to my chauffeur. May I have your pen and some paper?"

The jeweler produced a sheet of his personal stationery and held out his pen. The young man started to reach for it, smiled wryly, and indicated his injured arm. "I can't even write a note. Now, what am I to do?" His brow was furrowed for a moment, then he had another happy idea. "I'll dictate the note and you write it."

The jeweler smiled. "Of course," he said. He wrote as the young man dictated:

"Darling:

I have a wonderful surprise for you. Please give the bearer your personal check for \$8,000, made out to 'cash.' Please do this and don't ask any questions. I'll tell you all about it at dinner this evening."

That should do it, the young man thought. He would send his chauffeur, who would deposit the check in his bank. "You can get the ring ready and I'll pick it up tomorrow," the socialite said. "And now, we must celebrate. You must have lunch with me."

"But this isn't signed," the jeweler said. "How stupid of me! Just sign it 'Bill.'"

That was easy enough; the jeweler's name was William and he often signed his name as Bill. He added this to the note and it was handed to the chauffeur.

Then the two men left for lunch. At the young man's insistence, they stopped at a cocktail lounge for drinks. They lingered while the groom-to-be told of the wonderful girl he was going to marry. Finally, they went to a good restaurant for a leisurely lunch. Most of the afternoon had passed before they parted.

That evening, when the jeweler reached home, his wife was bubbling with curiosity. "What is this surprise? I can hardly wait to hear."

"Surprise? What surprise?"

"In your note." She held out a sheet of paper. "You wrote this, didn't you?"

He nodded and sank into a chair.

"I did as you told me," his wife said. "I gave that chauffeur a check for \$8,000. I tried to phone you, but you were out to lunch. For \$8,000, it ought to be a big surprise."

"It is," he said.

He knew then that he had been the victim of a clever confidence game. Instead of taking the note to the wealthy matron, the "chauffeur" took it to the jeweler's wife, who recognized her husband's handwriting and his signature.

The "chauffeur" cashed the check while the supposed socialite kept the jeweler occupied.



ILLUSTRATION BY S. HALL