

# The Diamond Coterie

By LAWRENCE M. LYNCH

(E. M. Van Deventer)

Author of "A Woman's Crime," "John Arthur's Ward," "The Lost Witness," "A Slender Clue," "Dangerous Ground," "Against Odds," Etc., Etc.

(Continued)

"At first, it consisted of four; himself, a city pawnbroker, known as Ezras, who regretted and negotiated the sale of the stolen goods, and who is as keen a rascal as ever escaped justice, and two noted cracksmen, who had headquarters in the city, and were famous in their day, but who were compelled to withdraw in the midst of their high career, one dying of a malignant fever, the other being killed by a woman.

"To replace these departed worthies, Ezras, who was always on the alert for pals and who had had various crooked dealings with Jerry Belknap, brought

this gentleman and Mr. Lamotte, or Lucky Jim together.

"Belknap proved the right man in the right place, and was soon admitted into the Coterie. Next to come under the favorable notice of Ezras, was John Burrill, who had come over from England, bringing with him some ill-gotten gains, and who set himself up in New York as a swell cracksmen.

"Now, Burrill, the English boor, had an ambition. In this easy-going America, he hoped in some way to build himself into an aristocrat, and to shine as one of the lords of the land. To this end he hoarded his share of all the spoils, and, adding it to the sum brought from England, he began to find himself a rich man.

"Meantime, Mr. Lamotte had speculated a little too freely; he had built a mansion, and built his factories. He had been living like a prince, and some of his late ventures had failed. Something must be done. And then his eye fell upon Burrill; he coveted the Englishman's hoarded dollars.

"He found it easy to persuade Burrill to come to W—, ostensibly to take the position of overseer at the factories; really to be more readily duped by Lucky Jim. Burrill came; he saw how his comrade was respected and bowed down to by all W—. He had always admired Lucky Jim for his gentlemanly polish and his aristocratic manners; and he now concocted a scheme for his own aggrandisement. The Lamottes had made themselves aristocrats, they should make an aristocrat of him.

"You all know the result; John Burrill divorced his wife; Jasper Lamotte sold his daughter.

"While Frank Lamotte felt tolerably sanguine of winning the heiress of Wardour, the Wardour jewels were left unmolested. But when a rival came into the field, they determined to have the jewels, even if they lost the heiress.

"Accordingly they planned the robbery and the elopement, and you all know the aftermath.

"Miss Wardour, you once offered a reward for the arrest of the robbers who invaded Wardour Place, not to recover your diamonds, but for the sake of justice. It is for the sake of justice and for the future safety of peaceable citizens that I have run the Diamond Coterie to earth. For, be it known to you, ladies and gentlemen, that Miss Constance Wardour, like the wise young lady she is, took her jewels to an expert, one fine day long ago, and had them all duplicated in paste; and while Jasper Lamotte and his clique were industriously carrying into safe hiding these paste diamonds, the real Wardour jewels were reposing safely in the vaults of a city bank, and they repose there safely still!

"When Jasper Lamotte went to the city, two days before the killing of Burrill, he went to dispose of some of those paste jewels; and, not until then, did he learn how the heiress of Wardour had outwitted him.

"Miss Wardour, the career of the Diamond Coterie is at an end.

"Old Ezras has long been under our eye. Last night I sent a telegram which will cause his instant arrest; and there are enough charges against him to insure him a life sentence, had he yet seventy years to live.

"John Burrill has passed beyond our reach. Frank Lamotte, too, with all his sin and selfishness, has passed before a higher tribunal. There remains only Jerry Belknap and Jasper Lamotte.

"To Jerry Belknap I have promised protection—not because he deserves the same, but because in no other way could I avail myself of his services; and to make my chain of evidence complete I needed his testimony. He will go out to the frontier, and never appear in New York.

"And now, perhaps, you can comprehend why I brought that charge of perjury against Jasper Lamotte. For his wife's sake, for his unhappy daughter's sake, for the sake of Evan Lamotte, who implored me, while going to give himself up to save another, that I would not let further disgrace bow his mother's head to the dust—for the sake of these unfortunate victims, I would let Jasper Lamotte go free, so far as we are concerned. I have seen him, and I gave him two alternatives to choose from. He could remain and be arrested as the head and front of the Diamond Coterie, or he could take passage on board the first ship bound for Australia, to remain there the rest of his natural life. He chose the latter, and I have appointed my agent, 'Smith the book peddler,' as his guardian, to see that he carries out his contract to the letter.

"And now there is one thing more: After Burrill's death Jasper and Frank Lamotte made a search for certain papers supposed to have been upon the person of the dead man. They never found

them, for the reason that I, as Brooks, had relieved Burrill of the care of these same papers weeks before, substituting for them blanks, which no doubt, Burrill had hidden somewhere, in one of his fits of drunken caution. These papers define distinctly such portions of the Lamotte property as in reality belonged to Burrill; and if I am not mistaken in Mrs. Lamotte and her daughter they will wish no share in it. I will put these papers into your hands, Mr. O'Meara, to be held for future action."

## CHAPTER XLVII.

"Clifford," says the heiress of Wardour, standing beside her lover, one winter day, not long after the extinction of the Diamond Coterie, "Clifford, I have been to Mapleton to-day, for the first time since—"

"She pauses abruptly, and her lover draws her closer to his side.

"Since the drama ended," he finishes. "You have been to Mapleton, beloved! Tell me about it."

"There's something I wish to tell you, Clifford; something that, in full, Mr. Bathurst generously kept out of his story when he told us the rest; something that is known only to Mrs. Lamotte, Sybil, Evan, Mr. Belknap, Mr. Bathurst, and myself, but which I think I had better tell you now."

"I am listening, Conny."

"Well, when the robbers made off with my paste diamonds, I made up my mind to make the most of the business, and let everybody think me a loser, hoping thus to possess myself and my diamonds in peace and safety. But when Mr. Bathurst had talked to me a second time—I believe that man can see straight through people—he had my secret at his tongue's end and he warned me to be very cautious and not to tell any one the truth concerning the diamonds. In spite of this, one evening, when some imp possessed me I told Sybil Lamotte. I shall never forget her strange manner nor her wild words. Clifford, that awful mistake of mine almost made Sybil a murderess."

"Constance!"

"Listen, dear! Sybil had trooded over what I had told her. Trouble was unsettling her mind. She had some valuable jewels; she went with her mother to the city, and while there, had the real stones replaced by paste, as I had done, and received two thousand dollars for her diamonds. In some way she had found out that Jerry Belknap was a man to be bought; she obtained an interview with him, and offered him two thousand dollars if he would get John Burrill out of her way!"

"Good heavens!"

"Don't interrupt me, Belknap agreed to remove Burrill, and received five hundred dollars in advance. He sent to the city for a ruffian, one of his tools. The man came, but Mr. Bathurst had his eye upon him. On the night of the murder this ruffian was hidden outside of the saloon, waiting to follow and waylay John Burrill when he should go home. The boy detective, George, was hidden and watching the ruffian. When Burrill came out of the saloon, the ruffian, supposing of course that he was going home, hurried on ahead, crossed the bridge, and secreted himself in the hedge. The boy, George, was far enough behind to see that Burrill was not going home, but he was acting as directed by Mr. Bathurst, and so followed the ruffian. Think of it, Clifford! While Sybil's paid assassin lay in wait for his victim, Sybil's brother was saving her soul from guilt, by taking a crime upon his own. But for Evan's knife, poor half-crazed Sybil would have been a murderess, and this I knew in part from the first, and that is why I said that the true slayer must not be punished. Until they brought Evan Lamotte into court, I believed that Sybil was the guilty one."

"And you could not betray your unfortunate friend? My true-hearted Constance!"

"I had promised Mrs. Lamotte not to betray her, but was nursing myself to dare all and save you, when poor Evan threw himself into the breach, and saved us all three. You must know, Clifford, that Mr. Belknap made a full confession to Mr. Bathurst, when he found he could do no better. And Mr. Bathurst, knowing that I was aware of Sybil's dealings with Belknap, told me everything."

"And this is what Bathurst meant when he said that Sybil believed herself guilty. I thought he referred to some of her insane ravings."

"So they all thought. But it is best as it is. There is no need to tell this sad story, unless it seems best that Ray Vandeyck should know it."

"Poor Ray, Conny, if the time ever comes when Ray and Sybil meet again, she will tell him her own story."

"Constance bent over the glowing coal a moment, and then lifting her face she said in a hushed voice:—

"I saw Evan. He is just fading out of life. Oh! it was so fortunate that there was no resistance to the humane ones who sought to help him out of that gloomy prison. Sybil never leaves him for a moment. What must her feelings have been when she learned that Evan had saved her from a life time of remorse! I could see by her face—such a poor, pale, sad, utterly changed face—that she knew all; everything. But Mrs. Lamotte's courage is wonderful. Old Mr. Schuyler, Sybil's grandfather, is dead, and he has left Mrs. Lamotte his property; but so tied up that Mr. Lamotte

could never touch a dollar. Mrs. Lamotte says that when it is over—Evan's life, you know—she shall take Sybil and go to live in her old Maryland home. They will not touch a penny of John Burrill's money; it is all to be transferred to his wife, to be held in trust for her little boy. The woman is going back to England as soon as the transfer is made. And now do you know what I see in the future? I see poor Evan laid away under the snows. I see the memory of John Burrill sunk in oblivion. I see Sybil Lamotte coming slowly back to life and hope and happiness, under the kind blue Maryland skies. I see Mrs. Lamotte, her pride softened and chastened, and a look of serene content upon her face. And I see Ray Vandeyck making his way southward some day, and standing before Sybil with his heart in his eyes. I see—"

"You see enough. Leave Ray and Sybil face to face; you and I can guess the rest. Do you also see Doctor Clifford Heathercliffe resuming his practice in W—, as if nothing had happened? For that's what his newly appointed tyrant has bidden him do. Do you see a certain fair lady, transformed into Lady Heathercliffe by and by, and sailing away over the seas to bewilder the dwellers of Heathercliffe Towers with the brightness of her eyes, and, in spite of the Diamond Coterie, to blaze forth upon the 'nobility and gentry' of Hampshire in all the splendor of the Wardour diamonds? All this shall come to pass beloved; and, since it has gained me the fairest, bravest, truest wife in Christendom, I can even rejoice in the persecutions and the hatred of the Diamond Coterie. If John Burrill had not mistaken me for Herbert, on the night when the feud began, he might now be living, perhaps, and you and I be far apart; so, at the last, Herbert Heathercliffe, in his grave, has done me a service. I do look like him, Conny, and it's small wonder Burrill knew me for a Heathercliffe, and made capital out of my altered name. But all that is past. My darling, now we have only to forgive the dead and the erring, to forget the shadows and sorrows of the past, and to say, 'God bless our friends in need;—God bless Bathurst, king of his kind; God bless the O'Mearas; God bless the beautiful darling who outwitted the Diamond Coterie, and who wears the Wardour diamonds and the Wardour honor with regal grace!'"

## THE END.

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**NEWS NOTES.**  
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**Montreal Gazette:** Sir Donald Smith, in an interview in the London Graphic, expresses the opinion that the union of Canada and Newfoundland was bound to come. It will not come till after the Liberals go, however, it is feared. Liberals in the past have shown capacity for building nothing but debt. Nation building is beyond them.

Sir Charles Tupper and Mr. Foster are the two most industrious members of the House of Commons. Sir Charles is most always in his place and he seldom leaves the House till the hour of adjournment which is generally after midnight. He is back at ten or half-past ten in the morning to attend the sittings of the railway committee, which is a parliament of itself and which he never misses. He sits by the table closely scrutinizing every clause of every bill, and taking a more active part in the proceedings than any other member except the Minister of Railways. It will be seen that the opposite leader claims no immunities by reason of age. His old age has yet its toil as well as its honor.

Few people are aware that the Dowager Empress of Russia saved her husband's life on two occasions. One day, when in the Emperor's dressing-room, she observed that on his dressing-table lay a curious-looking little jewel-case; something about its appearance aroused her curiosity, and, taking it up, she became aware that it was extremely heavy. Without saying a word she went into her room, and placed it carefully in a basin of water; then sending for the prefect of police, whose duties ked him much about the palace, she begged him to have it examined, and it was discovered to be one of the most marvellous infernal machines ever invented by the ingenuity of man. The second occasion on which the Empress was directly instrumental in stopping murder occurred in the Winter Palace, when she heard a slight noise which indicated the presence of some stranger in the Czar's study. Without betraying the slightest anxiety, she begged her husband to come and speak to one of the children. He did so. She locked the door, and only gave up the key to a party of soldiers, who found, when they entered the apartment, that someone had just escaped through the window.

The United States will be represented at the Queen's Jubilee with exceptional distinction, worthy of the unparalleled historical event and the exalted character of the Sovereign, causes many manifestations of pleasure. The announcement that one of the finest ships of the American navy would take part in the review at Spithead, and that Admiral Miller and General Miles would be present at the jubilee ceremonies had already been received with favorable comment by the English press. The appointment of Mr. Whitlaw Reid as special envoy has led to fresh expressions of this satisfaction, as is shown by the cordial references to it in many of the London and Provincial journals. While the jubilee has been designed to be primarily an Imperial event, with the colonies in the highest places of honor, every court in Europe will be represented with great distinction, and the action of President McKinley's administration in honoring in an exceptional way the gracious Sovereign who has always been the sincere friend of America, will be heartily appreciated in England and tend to promote good feeling.

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