

CHAPTER XIX

MAUD MAKES A MEMORANDUM

My mother used to say to me: "Never expect to find brains in a pretty girl." Perhaps she said it because I was not a pretty girl and she wished to encourage me. In any event, that absurd notion of the ancients that when the fairies bestow the gift of beauty on a baby they withhold all other qualities has so often been disproved that we may well disregard it.

Maud Stanton was a pretty girl--indeed, a beautiful girl--but she possessed brains as well as beauty and used her intellect to advantage more often than her quiet demeanor would indicate to others than her most intimate associates. From the first she had been impressed by the notion that there was something mysterious about A. Jones and that his romantic explanation of his former life and present position was intended to hide a truth that would embarrass him, were it fully known. Therefore she had secretly observed the young man, at such times as they were together, and had treasured every careless remark he had made--every admission or assertion--and made a note of it. The boy's arrest had startled her because it was so unexpected, and her first impulse was to doubt his innocence. Later, however, she had thoroughly reviewed the notes she had made and decided he was innocent.

In the quiet of her own room, when she was supposed to be asleep, Maud got out her notebook and read therein again the review of all she had learned concerning A. Jones of Sangoa.

"For a boy, he has a good knowledge of business; for a foreigner, he has an excellent conception of modern American methods," she murmured thoughtfully. "He is simple in little things; shrewd, if not wise, in important matters. He proved this by purchasing the control of the Continental, for its shares pay enormous dividends.

"Had he stolen those pearls, I am sure he would have been too shrewd to have given a portion of them to us, knowing we would display them openly and so attract attention to them. A thief so ingenious as Andrews, for instance, would never have done so foolish a thing as that, I am positive. Therefore, Jones is not Andrews.

"Now, to account for the likeness between Andrews, an American adventurer, and Jones, reared and educated in the mysterious island of Sangoa. Ajo's father must have left some near relatives in this country when he became a recluse in his far-away island. Why did he become a recluse? That's a subject I must consider carefully, for he was a man of money, a man of science, a man of affairs. Jones has told us he has no relatives here. He may have spoken honestly, if his father kept him in ignorance of the family history. I'm not going to jump at the conclusion that the man who calls himself Jack Andrews is a near relative of our Ajo--a cousin, perhaps--but I'll not forget that that might explain the

likeness between them.

"Ajo's father must have amassed a great fortune, during many years, from his pearl fisheries. That would explain why the boy has so much money at his disposal. He didn't get it from the sale of stolen pearls, that is certain. In addition to the money he invested in the Continental, he has enough in reserve to expend another million or so in Patsy Doyle's motion picture scheme, and he says he can spare it easily and have plenty left! This, in my opinion, is a stronger proof of Jones' innocence than Lawyer Colby seems to consider it. To me, it is conclusive.

"Now, then, where is Sangoa? How can one get to the island? And, finally, how did Jones get here from Sangoa and how is he to return, if he ever wants to go back to his valuable pearl fisheries, his people and his home?"

She strove earnestly to answer these questions, but could not with her present knowledge. So she tucked the notebook into a drawer of her desk, put out her light and got into bed.

But sleep would not come to her. The interest she took in the fate of young Jones was quite impersonal. She liked the boy in the same way she had liked dozens of boys. The fact that she had been of material assistance in saving his life aroused no especial tenderness in her. On his own account, however, Jones was interesting to her because he was so unusual. The complications that now beset him added to this interest

because they were so curious and difficult to explain. Maud had the feeling that she had encountered a puzzle to tax her best talents, and so she wanted to solve it.

Suddenly she bounded out of bed and turned on the electric light. The notebook was again brought into requisition and she penciled on its pages the following words:

"What was the exact date that Jack Andrews landed in America? What was the exact date that Ajo landed from Sangoa? The first question may be easily answered, for doubtless the police have the record. But--the other?"

Then she replaced the book, put out the light and went to sleep very easily.

That last thought, now jotted down in black and white, had effectually cleared her mind of its cobwebs.