

CHAPTER XXV

JUDGMENT

A telegram from Major Doyle corroborated Le Drieux's assertion that Jack Andrews had arrived at the port of New York via the Princess Irene on January twenty-seventh. A report from Lawyer Colby stated that he was now so thoroughly posted on everything pertaining to pearls that he could easily confound the expert, Mr. Isidore Le Drieux. There the matter rested for three days, during which the Stanton girls continued their work at the studio and Uncle John's nieces busied themselves enjoying the charms of the ideal Hollywood climate. Then came the news that the judge would call Jones for examination at nine o'clock on Friday morning, the thirteenth.

"Friday, the thirteenth!" said Patsy with a grimace. "I hope Ajo isn't superstitious."

"That combination proves lucky for some people," replied Arthur, laughing. "Let us hope that Jones is one of them."

"Of course we shall all go to see what happens," said Beth, and to this there was no dissenting voice.

Maud obtained a letter from Jones to Captain Carg, asking him to be on

hand, and this she dispatched by a safe messenger to the yacht Arabella. She also told Goldstein to have his operator in attendance with the film. Finally, a conference was called that evening with Mr. Colby, at which the complete program of defense was carefully rehearsed.

"Really," said the lawyer, "there's nothing to this case. It's a regular walkaway, believe me! I'm almost ashamed to take Mr. Jones' money for conducting a case that Miss Stanton has all cut and dried for me. I'll not receive one half the credit I should had the thing been complicated, or difficult. However, I've learned so much about pearls that I'm almost tempted to go into the jewelry business."

Friday morning was bright and cool--one of those perfect days for which Southern California is famous. Judge Wilton appeared in court with a tranquil expression upon his face that proved he was in a contented mood. All conditions augured well for the prisoner.

The prosecution was represented by two well known attorneys who had brought a dozen witnesses to support their charge, among them being the Austrian consul. The case opened with the statement that the prisoner, Jackson Dowd Andrews, alias A. Jones, while a guest at the villa of the Countess Ahmberg, near Vienna, had stolen from his hostess a valuable collection of pearls, which he had secretly brought to America. Some of the stolen booty the prisoner had disposed of, it was asserted; a part had been found in his possession at the time of his arrest; some of the pearls had been mounted by Brock & Co., the Los Angeles jewelers, at his

request, and by him presented to several acquaintances he had recently made but who were innocent of any knowledge of his past history or his misdeeds. Therefore the prosecution demanded that the prisoner be kept in custody until the arrival of extradition papers, which were already on the way, and that on the arrival of these papers Andrews should be turned over to Le Drieux, a representative of the Vienna police, and by him taken to Austria, the scene of his crime, for trial and punishment.

The judge followed the charge of the prosecution rather indifferently, being already familiar with it. Then he asked if there was any defense.

Colby took the floor. He denied that the prisoner was Jackson Dowd Andrews, or that he had ever been in Vienna. It was a case of mistaken identity. His client's liberty had been outraged by the stupid blunders of the prosecution. He demanded the immediate release of the prisoner.

"Have you evidence to support this plea?" inquired Judge Wilton.

"We have, your honor. But the prosecution must first prove its charge."

The prosecution promptly responded to the challenge. The photograph of Andrews, taken abroad, was shown. Two recognized experts in physiognomy declared, after comparison, that it was undoubtedly the photograph of the prisoner. Then Le Drieux took the stand. He read a newspaper account of the robbery. He produced a list of the pearls, attested by the countess herself. Each individual pearl was described and its color, weight and

value given. Then Le Drieux exhibited the pearls taken from Jones and, except for the small ones in the brooch which had been presented to Mrs. Montrose, he checked off every pearl against his list, weighing them before the judge and describing their color.

During this, Judge Wilton continually nodded approval. Such evidence was concise and indisputable, it seemed. Moreover, the defense readily admitted that the pearls exhibited had all been in Jones' possession.

Then Colby got up to refute the evidence.

"Mr. Jones," he began, "has--"

"Give the prisoner's full name," said the judge.

"His full name is A. Jones."

"What does the 'A' stand for?"

"It is only an initial, your honor. Mr. Jones has no other name."

"Puh! He ought to have taken some other name. Names are cheap," sneered the judge.

Colby ignored the point.

"Mr. Jones is a resident of Sangoa, where he was born. Until he landed at San Francisco, fifteen months ago, he had never set foot on any land but that of his native island."

"Where is Sangoa?" demanded the judge.

"It is an island of the South Seas."

"What nationality?"

"It is independent. It was purchased from Uruguay by Mr. Jones' father many years ago, and now belongs exclusively to his son."

"Your information is indefinite," snapped the judge.

"I realize that, your honor; but my client deems it wise to keep the location of his island a secret, because he has valuable pearl fisheries on its shores. The pearls exhibited by the prosecution were all found at Sangoa."

"How do you account, then, for their checking so accurately against the list of stolen pearls?"

"I can make almost any pearls check with that list, which represents a huge collection of almost every size, weight and color," replied Colby.

"To prove this, I will introduce in evidence Captain Carg of Sangoa, who

recently arrived at Santa Monica Bay with the last proceeds of the pearl fisheries of the island."

Captain Carg was on hand, with his two sailors guarding the chest. He now produced the trays of pearls and spread them on the desk before the amazed eyes of the judge. Le Drieux was astounded, and showed it plainly on his face.

Colby now borrowed the list, and picking up a pearl from the tray weighed it on Le Drieux's scales and then found a parallel to it on the list.

This he did with several of the pearls, chosen at random, until one of Le Drieux's attorneys took the expert aside and whispered to him. Then Le Drieux's expression changed from chagrin to joy and coming forward he exclaimed:

"Your honor, this is the collection--the balance of it--which was stolen from the Countess Ahmberg!"

The judge looked at him a moment, leaned back in his chair and nodded his head impressively.

"What nonsense!" protested Colby. "These trays contain twice the number of pearls included in that entire list, as your honor may plainly see."

"Of course," retorted Le Drieux eagerly; "here are also the pearls from the necklace of Princess Lemoine, and the London collection of Lady

Grandison. Your honor, in his audacity the defense has furnished us proof positive that this prisoner can be none other than the adventurer and clever thief, Jack Andrews."

It was in vain that Colby declared these pearls had just come from Sangoa, where they were found. The judge cut him short and asked if he had any other evidence to advance.

"These pearls," he added, indicating the trays, "I shall take possession of. They must remain in my custody until their owners claim them, or Captain Carg can prove they are the lawful property of the prisoner."

Consternation now pervaded the ranks of the defense. The girls were absolutely dismayed, while Uncle John and Arthur Weldon wore bewildered looks. Only Jones remained composed, an amused smile curling the corners of his delicate mouth as he eyed the judge who was to decide his fate.

On the side of the prosecution were looks of triumph. Le Drieux already regarded his case as won.

Colby now played his trump card, which Maud Stanton's logic and energy had supplied the defense.

"The prosecution," said he, "has stated that the alleged robbery was committed at Vienna on the evening of September fifteenth, and that Jack Andrews arrived in America on the steamship Princess Irene on

the afternoon of the January twenty-seventh following. Am I correct in those dates?"

The judge consulted his stenographer.

"The dates mentioned are correct," he said pompously.

"Here are the papers issued by the Commander of the Port of San Francisco, proving that the yacht Arabella of Sangoa anchored in that harbor on October twelfth, and disembarked one passenger, namely: A. Jones of Sangoa."

"That might, or might not, have been the prisoner," declared the prosecuting attorney.

"True," said the judge. "The name 'A. Jones' is neither distinguished nor distinguishing."

"On the evening of January twenty-sixth, twenty-four hours before Jack Andrews landed in America," continued Colby, "the prisoner, Mr. A. Jones, appeared at the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Continental Film Manufacturing Company, in New York, and was formally elected president of that organization."

"What is your proof?" inquired the judge, stifling a yawn.

"I beg to submit the minutes of the meeting, attested by its secretary."

The judge glanced at the minutes.

"We object to this evidence," said the opposing attorney. "There is no proof that the A. Jones referred to is the prisoner."

"The minutes," said Colby, "state that a motion picture was taken of the meeting. I have the film here, in this room, and beg permission to exhibit it before your honor as evidence."

The judge was a bit startled at so novel a suggestion but assented with a nod. In a twinkling the operator had suspended a roller-screen from the chandelier dependent from the ceiling, pulled down the window shades and attached his projecting machine to an electric-light socket.

Then the picture flashed upon the screen. It was not entirely distinct, because the room could not be fully darkened and the current was not strong, yet every face in the gathering of stockholders could be plainly recognized. Jones, especially, as the central figure, could not be mistaken and no one who looked upon the picture could doubt his identity.

When the exhibition was concluded and the room again lightened, Le Drieux's face was visibly perturbed and anxious, while his attorneys sat glum and disconcerted.

Colby now put Goldstein on the stand, who testified that he recognized Jones as president of his company and the owner of the majority of stock. The young man had come to him with unimpeachable credentials to that effect.

The girls were now smiling and cheerful. To them the defense was absolutely convincing. But Le Drieux's attorneys were skillful fighters and did not relish defeat. They advanced the theory that the motion picture, just shown, had been made at a later date and substituted for the one mentioned in the minutes of the meeting. They questioned Goldstein, who admitted that he had never seen Jones until a few days previous. The manager denied, however, any substitution of the picture. He was not a very satisfactory witness for the defense and Colby was sorry he had summoned him.

As for the judge, he seemed to accept the idea of the substitution with alacrity. He had practically decided against Jones in the matter of the pearls. Now he listened carefully to the arguments of the prosecution and cut Colby short when he raised objections to their sophistry.

Finally Judge Wilton rose to state his decision.

"The evidence submitted in proof of the alleged fact that the prisoner is Jack Andrews, and that Jack Andrews may have robbed the Countess Ahmberg, of Vienna, of her valuable collection of pearls, is in the judgment of this court clear and convincing," he said. "The lawyer for the defense

has further succeeded in entangling his client by exhibiting an additional assortment of pearls, which may likewise be stolen property. The attempt to impose upon this court a mythical island called Sangoa is--eh--distinctly reprehensible. This court is not so easily hoodwinked. Therefore, in consideration of the evidence advanced, I declare that the prisoner is Jack Andrews, otherwise Jackson Dowd Andrews, otherwise parading under the alias of 'A. Jones,' and I recognize the claim of the Austrian police to his person, that he may be legally tried for his alleged crimes in the territory where it is alleged he committed them. Therefore I order that the prisoner be held for requisition and turned over to the proper authorities when the papers arrive. The court is adjourned."