



# DEEP SEA DIAMONDS

BY CHARLES E. LEWIS

**E**XCITEMENT was at fever-heat throughout the city. The importing brokers of Maiden Lane were in a frenzy. Police and detective headquarters were beehives of activity. The fourth attempt within a year to smuggle a veritable fortune in diamonds of unusual size and incomparable brilliancy into this country had proved successful.

My chief had summoned me into his private office.

"Bond," said the chief, "that gang of smugglers have got another one on us. That makes four times in a year, with everybody on both sides of the Atlantic constantly on the watch. *We've all failed.* I'm going to put you on this case and if you succeed it will be the biggest and best thing that ever happened to you. Get expense money from the cashier and get started."

While never permitted to assist on any of

these cases before, I had spent considerable time thinking out possible solutions and I had noticed that each time the contraband diamonds appeared the *Cambria* had docked the day previously. I didn't presume to suggest this to my superiors in the service. A "new" man had best never lose sight of his "newness," older men not caring for the opinions of the inexperienced in matters of this sort. Yet I was sure

I saw some connection between the arrival of this particular ship and the appearance of the diamonds.

Working on this deduction and having absolutely free rein over my own actions, I immediately engaged passage for the next sailing of the *Cambria*, determined to stick to her till I discovered something, or proved to myself the fallacy of my theories.

Though I kept my eyes and ears open

constantly I discovered absolutely nothing that so far justified my trip. As a slight variation to ship's discipline, the captain invited me into his quarters one evening for an after-dinner cigar and a chat. I turned naturally the conversation to the diamond smuggling at the earliest opportunity.

"Captain," I asked, "have you ever noticed any one among your passengers who might in your opinion be the custodian of these gems?"

"No one whatever, Mr. Bond," he replied, "although I have of course realized that they might be aboard here with me."

"Might it not be," I persisted, "one of the crew of the ships, some one so low in the ranks as to be almost beyond suspicion?"

"Hardly, I should say," he answered; "you see such a man would not be apt to have liberty after arriving in port to carry through such a scheme successfully. No, I think the authorities will find, if in fact they ever find out anything, that the guilty parties are in a higher sphere of life altogether."

As the big liner drifted up to the dock in Southampton, I took up imposition a few feet from the end of the gangplank and watched closely every one who left the ship. The usual hurry and bustle of customs' inspection was gone through with, but nothing of interest to me developed until just as I was about to pass down the plank. Just at this moment, the steward of the ship appeared carrying a large and somewhat carelessly wrapped package. He stopped beside an inspector on the dock and spoke a few words; the inspector glanced perfunctorily at the contents of the package and the steward left the dock.

While there was nothing really irregular about this something prompted me to keep the man and package in sight, and I followed after the steward, remaining half a block or so behind him. He threaded his way up and away from the docks into the commercial district, turned into a narrow thoroughfare and finally entered a small tailoring establishment.

I had hardly had time to get past the entrance, when he reappeared, empty-handed, and retraced his steps. I am not easily influenced by presentiments but for some reason my interest in that package became almost a mania, so strong it was useless to disregard it, and I determined to adopt "waiting tactics" and see if anything further

occurred.

During the afternoon a "fly" drove up to the tailor's containing a young lady, stylishly attired and somewhat prepossessing. The driver entered the store and reappeared almost at once, with a package strongly resembling the one brought earlier in the day by the steward.

On the argument that, as the package had come from the *Cambria* it might be returned to the ship, I took up my stand near the lower corner of the block and resolved that nothing should drive me out of sight of the shop during business hours until the time of sailing. For five days I held my position from early till late, eating such things as a nearby cook-house afforded but never leaving my post for a moment.

Just at eleven o'clock of the day the *Cambria* sailed—high tide at two o'clock—the same fly drove up with the same young lady inside. The driver reached within the vehicle and brought forth a package wrapped differently from the one he had called for but of about equal bulk. He left this within the shop and immediately drove off again. I made note that the number of the carriage was 2044.

I was on the point of starting for the shop to try to get a peep from close range at the package and the contents, if I could think up a pretext, when, as if timed to a nicety, the steward of the *Cambria* turned the corner of the street. He entered the shop, stayed almost no time at all, reappeared with the identical package just brought by the fly and started back the way he had come. I was close at his heels.

As he was crossing the dock proper, edging through the gate, I made an effort to pass him, at the same time quickly but firmly grasping the end of the package nearest to me as it protruded from under his arm. and placed upon it my initial "B" with a ring around it. The steward glanced hurriedly about and I asked his pardon for my clumsiness in bumping into him. Without further delay he passed directly on board the ship using an entrance exclusively for the use of the crew. Still pervaded with an overpowering feeling to keep that package at least within reaching distance. I applied for return passage and was fortunate enough to secure first-class accommodations just canceled by wire.

I met the captain for the first time after we

had been under way several hours and he seemed more than surprised to see me returning so soon.

"Why, I thought you were in London or Paris, by this time, buying all the pretty things in sight," he exclaimed.

I made an excuse, explaining that a cable awaiting me at the hotel in London, ordered my immediate return. I professed to be somewhat worried over the unusual incident.

During my first visit to the captain's quarters he excused himself for a few moments, going into another apartment and bidding me make myself "entirely at home." This I did, by strolling about the cabin looking at such things as caught my eye. Passing near a large armchair on the farther side of the room, I noticed the captain's uniform coat lying across the back. Apparently he had just unwrapped it, for a large, crumpled piece of manila lay beside the wastebasket.

I don't know what prompted it but I picked up and glanced hastily over this paper. *In one corner the letter "B" with a ring around it, caught my eye!* This then was the solution of the great mystery.

The captain returned shortly and, preparatory to going on deck, put on the uniform coat I had just noticed. As he swung into it, I saw one of the lower buttons hanging loose as if about to come off. Thinking to do him a favor I stepped over to him, and taking light hold of the button remarked, "You came pretty near losing that one, captain. Better have it sewn on again."

The captain straightened up suddenly, glared at me a moment with fierce intensity, then went ashy pale. Turning away and with but a poor attempt to regain his natural manner he replied, "Why—yes—it seems to be—er—a bit loose. Really nothing at all—of no consequence—thank you just the same."

When he again faced me, however, the button seemed to be equally as firmly attached as any of the others, but a fleck of white appeared just at the inside rim.

I was favored with no more invitations to join the captain who seemed to avoid me whenever possible. The remainder of the voyage was completed without incident.

When the ship docked at New York I worked on a theory of my own and kept a sharp lookout for the steward. I had an idea that that uniform

coat might take another trip and, if it did, I wanted to know it. About two hours after the *Cambria* reached her berth just as expected the steward came up the dock with the captain's coat thrown carelessly across his arm but without wrapping or cover of any sort.

I caught up with him and engaged him in conversation. Meanwhile as though it were a habit I picked gently at one of the buttons and attempted to turn it.

*It yielded to my hand!*

With a careless remark that this was a new style of button, I attempted deliberately to unscrew the top of the button, while the stern objections of the steward rang in my ears. Displaying my authority and ordering him to be quiet, I forced him back into a doorway and continued work on the button. With a turn or so more the top or cap of the button came off in my hand. The interior was padded with raw cotton; which accounted for the fleck of white I had noticed in the captain's cabin. Removing this cotton with a thumb and finger I discovered a large, perfectly cut diamond nestling close down in the cap on another layer of the cotton.

Without parley or further discussion of the matter, I placed the steward under arrest and led the way directly to Pinkerton Headquarters. The door of the chief's office stood ajar and the chief was alone. I closed the door and snapped a pair of handcuffs on the steward, saying, "Here, chief, is the first link in the chain of the capture of the diamond smugglers."

"Well, well, Bond, this is great!" replied the chief; "now let's have the facts and details, quickly."

"This coat," I replied, "is the property of the captain of the *Cambria*, of which ship this man is steward. He will tell you where he was going to take it, which will no doubt disclose the seat of operations in this country. If you'll have the driver of cab 2044 in Southampton, England arrested, you'll pick up the thread on the other side of the water. The captain himself can be taken on board the ship at once."

That is about all there was to it. The captain was taken into custody and confessed his part in all four attempts to smuggle gems into the United States without payment of duty. The destination for the diamonds in this country proved to be a

small, obscure tailor's shop, very similar to the one in England. The keeper of this was also arrested, together with the driver of the fly, on cable instruction from the chief of the Pinkerton Agency.

The young lady in England, who always accompanied the package containing the coat, proved to be the daughter of a foreman in the diamond mines of South Africa and she it was who took the coat to her apartment, arranged the diamonds within the buttons and returned it to the tailor's, whence it was taken back to the *Cambria*.

After his arrest the captain of the ship made a statement in which he said the scheme was suggested by the foreman's daughter in England. He consented to his part in the plan since the method of transporting the gems was so out of the ordinary that it was likely to excite no suspicion, while the mere fact of his coat being occasionally sent to a tailor's—the operation being entirely open and aboveboard—would pass even the most critical eye, a fact proven correct enough on four occasions.

Several days after the first excitement was over and during an interview in which the chief had "talked salary" most satisfactorily to me he said, "How did you get on the track of the whole

thing, anyway, Bond?"

"Don't know sir, exactly—something just told me to take that ship to England. The rest sort of came out by accident you might say."

"It's a mighty good thing for you, young man," he replied. "Your name is all over the world now as the latest Hawkshaw and I'm mighty glad you're in the Pinkerton fold. We've been talking it over here and have come to the conclusion that a vacation for a month is coming to you. Now what are you going to do first?"

"I'm going to telephone to the Bronx, sir," I said. "With the increased salary and a vacation ahead of me—for both of which I thank you—there is another young lady to be taken into custody. But that's more of a personal matter than anything else."

"Well, don't take too great chances," he said; "remember to proceed with a detective's methods. If you're sure you're right—go ahead with my best wishes. But don't be too hard on her when you make this last arrest," concluded the chief with a twinkle in his eye.

"It's a serious case—this last one, chief—there ought to be a 'life sentence' in it," I replied.

And there was.