DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

by Jane Bunker

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CHAPTER XV—Continued.

—16—

Billy charged monsieur's confession to a private account that was growing large. Personally I felt I liked the man the better for it—I read it as the effort to shield the girl and minimize her part in the affair. And in that I was right; Billy looked at it differently. "Conceited cuss!" he later confided. "Wanted to take the whole credit to himself."

"Oui, madame," monsieur went on, and all the while I felt him searching my face for a sign of what I had accomplished with Mrs. Delario. "Nossing can be safer—I argue—zan a fancy slipper. It is not worn on ze steamer in ze cold of winter, and madame have so assure me zat her baggage, because of her so good cousin, is pass wisout difficulty. And who would accuse madame of"—he gave me a knowing look and finished ambiguously—"of to smuggle zoze valuable papers zat do not concern her? Ah, no—it would be incredible wisout to see zem—and we have take care zat zey are not seen! And to accomplish zis we have put zem where zey are almost but not quite seen. I have explain all zis to Claire and she have understand parfaitement. Oui."

The smugness with which he delivered himself of this was really amusing, and I couldn't help a smile, which encouraged him to add—at the same time looking piercingly at me—with a deprecating shrug:

"And just at ze moment of beautiful completion madame carries off one of zoze slippers—we know not which."

All of us laughed and the tension that had been quite plainly felt in our little company broke.

Claire went on to tell us how, in Antwerp, she had occupied a room communicating with Mrs. Delario's the day before they sailed, and how papa had taken Mrs. Delario out to see the great Rubens in the cathedral and she—Claire—pleading a headache, had remained behind and had gone through Mrs. Delario's things so she could tell her father what there was they could use; had discovered the slippers and had taken them to her room and shown them to her father that night and he said they "would do admirably," and she had got them back while Mrs. Delario was asleep.

But it wasn't easy to put the box into the slipper when it came to the point. Mrs. Delario keenly felt the obligations of her charge and proved a far too devoted chaperon. At last the chance arrived and the box was stowed. What, then, was the poor child's consternation to hear me twitting Mrs. Delario into wearing the slippers!

"She nearly had me then!" Claire confided with noticeable glee at her own ability to cope with the situation. "I got the box out just one minute before she came into our stateroom. But this fright made me so ill I couldn't stay at table that night."

"I should think so," said Billy, and gave a sly glance in my direction that said, "I take back all I said about her last night—she wasn't really in it at all. It was all the old scoundrel of a 'mossoo.'"

Claire seemed ready to end here, but I wasn't ready to have her. What was I to tell monsieur? My turn was coming in a minute, and what was I to say? I kept on with Claire. "Then so far as you know, the box came through the customs house in one of those slippers? And what were you to do after that?"

The words were hardly out of my mouth when the front bell rang and George handed in a telegram addressed to monsieur.

Monsieur tore open the yellow envelop and rapidly scanned the message; frowned; hesitated; started to speak and stopped; looked at me inquiringly; asked if there was a telegraph office near and when I told him where it was excused himself from our company to "send an immediate and urgent reply" and instructed Claire to answer every question I might care to put and with that he hurried off with the curt ceremony of one who expects to be back on the quarter-hour stroke.

There was, however, but little more I needed to discover from Claire; still there was one thing, and I asked her bluntly, "Your father came over ahead of us on a faster steamer? He was on the wharf in disguise when we arrived?"

She blushed furiously and stammered, "Y—yes—he was there," and added hastily: "But I didn't know he was there. He told me there would be someone—to take charge—when I gave the signal that everything was all right—"

"Oh, there was a signal!"

"Of course. I had to let the other one know who had the box—"

"You mean you had to let your father know?"

"It was papa—but I didn't see him."

"What did you have to let him know?"

"Whether it was you or Mrs. Delario."

"How did you manage that?"

"I set my little handbag on top of the suitcase—that said the box was there. Then I drew off my glove—that said, 'in a slipper.' It wasn't very hard to remember."

"And you had given the signal when I picked up the slipper?"

"Yes—and I was so frightened. I didn't know but papa would be killed."

"And you went home with Mrs. Delario and tried to see if she had the right slipper?"

"Yes—but I never found out—"

She looked as if she were dying to ask, "Have you found out?"

I was so afraid she would that I ended the cross-examination hastily by asking her what she heard from her mother and signaled Billy to chip into the conversation and make talk as fast as he could; and after she'd replied about her mother—that her grandfather was still dying and her mother dared not leave—she turned to Billy as though she had really only just then become aware of his presence, and they soon were chattering away like magpies and the blushes were mostly on Billy's cheeks. For which he might be forgiven. He was just twenty-two and she was just sixteen; but in three years—dear me, what a beauty she was going to be—what a man-killer!

I left them to themselves, going to my bedroom on some pretext or another while one quarter of an hour followed another, and still monsieur did not return. At nine Claire began to be restless; at quarter after she blurted out, "Do you suppose anything has happened to papa?"

I had been supposing it for half an hour—he'd had time to make twenty trips to the telegraph office and back—but I managed to say reassuringly, "Why, what could happen?" and Billy supported me with a fine courageous, "Nothing could have happened—he's a man—he knows how to take care of himself," and was rewarded with a look. Even at sixteen Claire's looks were valuable—Billy wouldn't have sold that to another fellow for a ten-dollar bill.

The elevator rumbled up, and I cried, "There he is—I think."

George presented me with two notes and the information that an automobile was downstairs waiting.

I handed one note to Claire, tore open the one addressed to me, and read:

I'm sending a car for my daughter. Will you ask Mr. Rivers to escort her to the hotel? It is necessary that I say some few words to you alone. I beg you to await me.

It was signed, "H. de Ravenol."

I had barely finished this when I heard Claire give a cry, "Mamma is dead!" and I looked up just in time to see her throw out her arms and swoon away at my feet.

People faint away in this story like the heroines of a mid-Victorian romance, but I can't help it. Anyway, I warned you there was another faint coming, which faint was, under the circumstances, natural enough.

To be exact, Claire swooned at my feet via Billy's arms. The intention was all on his side, however—he caught her as she was regardlessly going and let her down. A light burden.

"Got any smelling salts? Quick if you have. Some water, if you haven't," he ordered.

I couldn't help an inward snort at the cool way in which he took the proprietorship of the situation in my house—a snort tempered with good-natured elderly amusement at his impetuosity and its justifiable cause. He was nearly as pale as Claire and dreadfully agitated. But I was already running to the bathroom for the water to revive her, as twenty-four hours previous I'd run for water to assuage the ammoniacal agonies of her dear papa.

Billy was on his knees. From under one protruded the note that had caused the damage. I went down on my knees and applied the wet towel. Billy fished forth the note and without compunction read it aloud.

My child: (It was in French) Return to the hotel immediately. Ask Mr. Rivers to escort you. VOTRE PERE.

Nothing very nerve-shattering and not a word about her mother; so evidently she'd been expecting something and this had keeled her over on general principles.

"What was in yours?" demanded Billy.

I reached out and got it off the table where I'd thrown it and gave it to him. "Nothing about her mother," said I. "This getting her away is just a dodge to see me alone."

"You're not going to!" Billy exclaimed, with some dismay.

I sopped at Claire's face and answered: "I don't know—it depends on how soon he comes."

"I wouldn't—it isn't safe for you."

"You come here the very first thing in the morning, and if I don't answer your ring—"

Claire just then stirred, and we thought she was coming to, but she relapsed again, and Billy doubled up his fists and made a motion toward the front door, indicating that if I didn't answer he would break it in.

"That's it—and the very first thing in the morning. I don't know what else to do—and—" I leaned over Claire anxiously, and whispered to myself rather than Billy: "This is pretty bad."

"Where's that ammonia?" he demanded, making a wry face and adding in a whisper: "Do you suppose she knows?"

"Of course not," I retorted. "You don't suppose he was such a fool as to tell his own child how we 'done him' last night! It's in the kitchen, where we left it."

"Well, she'll never know from me—and I hope she'll never know from you," admonished Billy, rising from his knees and searching my face for the assurance.

I responded with something very like a glare—Billy was really taking quite a bit on himself just then—I hope I knew without being told by a boy who went to school to me what the common decencies of the case were! But all I said was: "Please get it."

A few drops of ammonia on the towel and she gasped. Then she murmured: "Oh, mamma," in tragic accents, and relapsed again. I was about to send Billy to the nearest doctor he could get in captivity, when the bell rang—George wanted to know when the young lady would be ready—"the shuffer's waitin' an' he's in a hurry."

Billy—who answered the ring—snapped out: "Let him wait—it's what he's paid for. Go down and tell him we're coming."

He slammed the door, for a moment forgetting Claire, and she started up at the noise with her cry: "Oh, mamma!" and then seeing me: "Oh, you!"

"Yes—I'm here," I soothed, and thought she was going off again and gave her a good smart swat with the towel and a good sharp, "Claire!"

In spite of our assurances, it was a good half-hour before she was anything like all right and we got a coherent account from her and found she only thought something had happened to her mother. It was a full three-quarters of an hour before she was ready to leave.

I was more than half-minded to go with her, and but for monsieur's explicit note—which I read again after Claire came to her senses—I should not have let her go off that way, even with Billy, though I knew that so far as devoted perfect care went, he'd give it to her as well as I. More acceptably, mayhap!

I had a growing uneasiness that monsieur's surreptitious return for words alone with me marked a change in the current of events. Had he already discovered without my help that Mrs. Delario had the diamonds? Had he seen her since I left the house? And was he prepared to drop on her with the law? Certainly I had already noticed he had about him the air of something he hadn't the night before when he threw himself on my mercy and implored me to help him.

He'd shed his pleading attitude—that was how I summed him up in my new impression; and when a person does that it's either because he doesn't care or holds the whip! I was bound to see him and find out; and Claire

Claire Swooned at My Feet.

and Billy went away together, Billy wearing a grim do-or-die, trust-me-absolutely expression on his round young face connoting appreciation of his grave responsibility.

When I'd seen them off in the elevator and closed my door I smiled. I wasn't sorry that Billy was getting a wholesome nearness to the real thing in women, albeit a very young one—but time would rapidly remedy that difficulty; and as for Claire—well, Billy was her first young man and I knew her ideals wouldn't suffer any through him. He might be a trifle rough and unpolished on the outside, but he was true blue.

There were three low raps at my door. Or was it my door?

I listened—I must have been mistaken—though I'd only barely closed it and was turning out the hall electric. The elevator that was taking Claire and Billy down was still on its way. Could monsieur have walked up?

The raps were repeated—unquestionably on my door. Without waiting—or even thinking to call through and ask who was there—I threw the door open.

Mrs. Delario whipped in and closed it behind her.

Her face was almost concealed by a heavy black veil, but I recognized her and cried out, "Why, Mrs. Delario!" in utter amazement. What under the heavens had brought her there?

She laid a black-gloved finger on her lips to signify silence; she thrust something in my hand; she opened the door and whipped out as she came, shutting it in my face.

She hadn't uttered a word—she had barely caused a sound; even the door closed behind her noiselessly. I tore it open as my first impulse—when I got my breath—thinking she'd be waiting for the elevator. In the few seconds of my astonishment she had gone.

I checked a call to her—"Mrs. Delario"—and listened for descending footsteps on the stairs but heard nothing.

I sank into a hall chair, quite unnerved—coming on top of what I'd been through that day, I feel I'd have had a justifiable cause for a faint on my own account; only I didn't swoon. I kept asking myself: If it weren't an apparition how did she know which door to knock at? I have no door-plate and she'd evidently not asked George—he was taking the car down with Claire and Billy at the moment Mrs. Delario popped in. It didn't occur to me at first that she'd probably seen me, from the corner of the stairway, close that door after saying goodby to the others. There had been three raps—classic apparitions always, I believe, rap thrice when they wish to enter your abode—they do not condescend to push a button; and then she'd noiselessly whipped in and put something in my hand—

I became conscious of a hard object in my fist; opened the fist and beheld—the fatal box.

You could have knocked me over with a feather! Impossible that she'd brought it back! I dashed for the dining room where the light was and pulled off the cover of the box. There lay the diamonds!

With a sweeping gesture I flung them on the table—in one fell swoop I'd been tumbled off my lofty perch and had become a victim once more—just a disconcerted, worried victim, responsible for the fate of nations!

And having thrown them down—one of them fell off the table—I snatched them up—monsieur would return at any minute for that private interview with me, and now what was I to tell him? I no longer had the gem-free conscience of an hour ago—I had the diamonds!

But I might have saved my agonies—monsieur did not return that night—he had other fish to fry.

The canny cleverness of monsieur's next move gave me when I knew it such keen intellectual joy that I forgave him everything.

He had argued it out thus: Either I should succeed or I should fall with Mrs. Delario. If I failed it would be for one of two reasons: either she denied all knowledge of the diamonds, or she had confessed to me yet had been able to bind me to secrecy. But in either case he would read my success or failure in my face the moment he greeted me.

My face was a blank. He hadn't expected to find it that way, but so it was—not a hint did I give him, first when I opened the door, or later while I talked with Claire. In fact, inside of fifteen minutes he became convinced that so far as I was concerned my mission was a failure and I was hedging for time and unwilling to confess it.

He was prepared for my failure—his chance of trapping her lay in his seeing her before I could communicate with her after seeing him. With a fake telegram, delivered by George at a preconcerted moment to serve as monsieur's excuse to leave the house, and also as a pretext to leave Claire in the house, keeping guard over Billy and my self—none of the three of us suspecting it—monsieur had taken his waiting automobile and swooped down on Mrs. Delario!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

GOES FAR BACK IN HISTORY

Smyrna, One of the Oldest Cities of the World, Has Little of Its Glories Left.

Smyrna, one of the seven cities of the Christian church in Asia Minor, claims to be one of the oldest cities in the world. Its known history runs back to 6,000 B. C., and it may have flourished in the unrecorded ages before that remote time. Charles Dudley Warner says of it:

"One of the most ancient cities on the globe, it has no antiquity; containing all nationalities; it has no nationality; it is an Asiatic city with a European face; it produces nothing, it exchanges everything."

The Aeolians preceded the Greeks, who made it an eastern center of early culture. It had declined and all but fallen when Alexander, after taking Sardis, released it from the yoke of the Lydians, and, acting upon a suggestion said to have come to him in a dream, decided to restore it. It also fell under Roman, Mongol, and finally, Turkish domination.

It was under the Lydians that it was split into a series of communities, which effectively tied its political and military hands, so that it cut little figure in the golden era of Hellenic culture. The new Smyrna, rebuilt by Alexander, was moved about three miles south of the older site. It is 200 miles southwest of Constantinople. It is one of the seven cities that lays claim to Homer, whose identity with the older Smyrna seems very well founded because the Meles river, with its cave nearby that formed the Homeric "den and study," flowed lazily by the ancient city, though its waters since have been diverted to other and disputed channels.

Famous Woman.

The first hand that touched our American Rock of Ages, the bowlder that we call Plymouth Rock—was the hand of a woman on December 25, 1620. Well-grounded tradition has it that upon the little Mayflower, nearing the shores of Plymouth, after its fearful voyage, the first of its storm-wrecked company to leap ashore were Miles Standish and Priscilla Mullins, the Puritan maiden. During the appalling hardships of the transit a maiden's love and faith had burned, undimmed, cheering others in despair. Significant indeed that her trembling hand grasped first the rock of America's great future. She has been further immortalized by Longfellow in his "Courtship of Miles Standish."

Old Superstition Groundless.

The old superstition that the early departure of summer birds portends an early and severe winter, and the kindred notion that the moving of wild geese and ducks southward at high altitudes is the forerunner of a storm have been exploded by the investigations of government scientists. Birds may depart from northern latitudes because of a sudden drop in temperature, but they do not know and cannot know what the weather conditions will be en route or in the winter homes to which they go. Disasters to bird life in the semi-annual migrations are proof of this.

The Bread of Persia.

Native bread today in Persia is very little different from that of a thousand years ago. The oven is built of smooth masonry in the ground, and many of them have been used for a century. The dough is formed into thin sheets about a foot long and two feet wide and pressed quickly against the side of the oven. It bakes in a few minutes.

ADJUSTABLE COLLARS AND CUFFS OF FUR

The tailored suit is about the most adaptable piece of property in the wardrobe; at home in any clime and rarely out of place in any gathering. Clever women understand how the addition of the right accessories make it fit in with almost any sort of background and this is valuable knowledge for the woman who travels.

A suit that is to do duty anywhere should be made of any of the all-year-round woolen goods, as serge, gabardine, Poiret twill, broadcloth and the like. If it is simply and smartly made so much the better—it lends itself readily to different furbishings and matches up with them. For mild climates and warm weather lace collar and cuff sets add daintiness and richness to the tailored coat.

Collar and cuff sets of fur stand ready to fortify the same suit that has rejoiced in the company of lace, when its owner makes an excursion into the cold. These are tacked on and can be easily put on or off. Two sets appear in the picture above each designed to suit the style of the coat with which it is worn. The suit at the left, minus the fur collar and cuffs, proves to be interesting. It has something new in the way of designing to offer with its sloped panel at the front of the coat and the flat straps that are set over the underarm seams. Lest they be overlooked a row of buttons calls attention to them and these buttons, according to the present demand, match the suit in color. The coat buttons up to the neck and there are pockets at each side under the sloping panel. This panel is bound with a narrow braid. The skirt is also an example of clever designing. It appears quite narrow but an inverted plait at each side conceals its real width while it is comfortable for walking. The fur set is of the skunk pelt, but fox or any of the long-haired skins would answer as well.

The very plain and elegant suit at the right of broadcloth has a long coat, rounded at the front with curved, inset pockets. These are bound with braid and finished with arrowheads. This coat slopes downward toward the back while the coat in the suit at the left shows the back extended abruptly and considerably longer than the front. For this suit the shawl collar and deep cuffs are of sealskin. Beaver, squirrel and other short-haired furs are used in the same way.

HATS FOR SUNNY CLIMES

Resort hats, which make their appearance in the early winter, bring to our eyes the utmost in the art of the milliner. Every knowing woman who journeys to sunny climes to get away from the cold seems to make up her mind to own the very best millinery that she can get and resolves that, in the matter of headwear, comparison shall not be odious to her. And there is plenty of chance for comparisons, for the throng of people heading south increases every year.

All sorts of hats are prepared in advance for these tourists and, taking them by and large, the street hat, otherwise known as the tailored hat, is the most important member of the distinguished company.

A group of pretty hats for sunny climes shown above include three beauties. At the top a dress hat of georgette crepe has many a prototype in all the light and lovely colors that gladden the season. It has a wide and graceful brim and a round crown covered with blossoms of the cosmos flower in velvet. Its owner will rejoice in it, knowing that it is a perfect bit of millinery.

Just below at the left is a glorified sailor hat of light satin having its brim bound at the edge with a fancy braid. An old-time flower wreath of small garden roses and white daisies with their foliage wanders round the crown and falls over the back of the brim. In vain the millionairess will undertake to find a more perfect example of the milliner's art. The description of these hats may make them seem simple but the choice and combination of colors in them, the perfect shapes and faultless craftsmanship bespeak great artists.

The remaining hat is a semidress affair with an odd crown of straw braid and a curved, droopy brim. The top crown overhangs the side crown at a saucy angle. A sash of wide velvet ribbon encircles it and a single end falls from the back. Against the ribbon small metallic roses are set in foliage embroidered in chenille on the velvet. These and daisies made of ribbon alternate about the crown.

Where do all the beautiful hats go? Well, many of them go to resorts where they enjoy a glorious if brief career in summer lands.

Julia Bottomley

Mink Gains Popularity.

Mink seems to have entered on a renewed epoch of popularity, but mink which is a fur of a new order without a vestige of reddish cast which used to be its most notable characteristic. It is now dyed a rich deep brown and is quite as beautiful as sable.

Lace on Handkerchiefs.

Never, it is safe to say, since the quaint days when a festive handkerchief was the piece de resistance of the toilette to be carried conspicuously in the hand or tucked with studied display in the belt, never since then have there been so many lace edged handkerchiefs displayed in the shops. Point lace, Belgian lace, Venetian, Carrick-macross and particularly valenciennes are all employed for both wide and narrow borders on the most fragile of linen handkerchiefs.

Side Pockets a Feature.

The gayest of skirts are being shown in the belt, never since then have there been so many lace edged handkerchiefs displayed in the shops. The big side pockets are a feature.

What Women Say

Danville, Va.—"From my earliest childhood Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets and the 'Golden Medical Discovery' have been used by my people. My mother depended upon these remedies whenever her children seemed listless or sluggish, and I am sure they saved her many a doctor bill.

"When I was developing into womanhood I took the 'Favorite Prescription,' and I have used the 'Golden Medical Discovery' and 'Pleasant Pellets' whenever I have felt the need of a tonic, and when constipated or distressed with sluggish liver.

"I consider Dr. Pierce's medicines the very best remedies on the market."—Mrs. J. H. Kime, 760 Patton St.

Fredericksburg, Va.—"At one time I became all run-down, weak and nervous, suffered with nausea. My mother advised me to take Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription and it soon stopped all nausea and built me up, and I felt well during the remainder of the time. I also had a very fine, strong, healthy baby.

"We have also used Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery and 'Pleasant Pellets' in the family. They are very excellent remedies."—Mrs. W. T. Layton, 909 National Boulevard.

Indigestion, Pain In Heart

Danville, Va.—"I used to suffer with dreadful spells of indigestion so that my heart would pain me, I would bloat up so with gas. Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery and Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets relieved me at once and eventually cured me of this suffering. At the same time I was bothered a great deal with woman's trouble, for which I took Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, and was entirely restored to perfect health and relieved of all pains."—Mrs. Alice Ferrell, 703 Greca St.

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