Diamond Cut Diamond

By JANE BUNKER

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CHAPTER XVI.—Continued.
—18—

"Oh, well—it doesn't matter anyway," I soothed. "Just tell him again I'm not at home, and if he says anything more repeat it—and keep on repeating it till he goes, for I won't see him. But, George"—this I said sternly—"if you bring that man up—after what I've said to you—you needn't say good morning to me next Sunday."

George understood the allusion—I always give him a quarter on Sunday morning when he brings the paper up. He grinned and departed.

"Now, what new dodge is this?" I cogitated, carrying the paper to my study and examining it in the light. The writing was distinctly foreign—French or German in the "r's." The "mademoiselle" also suggested a foreigner.

The bell rang. I sat down. The bell rang again. I put my feet on a hassock, turned up my nose slightly, smiled and sat still. The door was pounded—not furiously, but with evident determination—and the bell rang again.

At this I thought I'd better show a sign of life, so I went and called through without opening.

"Stop that noise!" I commanded angrily. Noise stopped.

Both persons waited for the other to say something. As the opposite side didn't I called through again, "Who is it?"

"Police detective."

The words were hissed through in a stage whisper, and I noticed a foreign accent on "police." I thought I might as well look at him, anyway—which I did through the crack without removing the chain-bolt. I saw a rather short, very slight man—pongee colored, to be accurate—with an intelligent, honest-looking face, but very common clothes—cheap ready-made overcoat and hat. Yet the man had very much of an air about him.

"Well?" said I in as unwelcoming a tone as I could.

"I wished to see you about Mademoiselle de Ravenol—the young lady who crossed in the steamer with you."

"Well?" said I.

"She has disappeared."

"Well?" And this last from me left him quite in the air, as I saw by his frown. However, he made a fresh start:

"Mademoiselle de Ravenol crossed in the same steamer with you about two weeks ago, did she not?"

"She may have."

"Her name is on the passenger list with yours—I have the list here"—he produced some papers, but apparently did not find that he had the list, and with a gesture of impatience appealed to me—"I am correct, am I not—she crossed with you on the same steamer?"

"What have I to do with that?" I asked curtly, wondering what he was driving at; for of course I knew Claire hadn't disappeared since last night, and if she had he wouldn't be asking me about the steamer. "Dozens of people crossed on the same steamer with me."

"Naturally," he admitted, trying to be pleasant. "But this Mademoiselle de Ravenol—she crossed in your care, did she not?"

"She did not."

"She did not?" he asked in a surprised sort of way, as if he thought I was lying. "In whose, then, may I ask?"

I merely shrugged, as though to tell him, "Find out for yourself." Seeing it he did not pursue that line but tried this: "You saw a good deal of her on the steamer, did you not—talked with her frequently?"

I ignored this last and told him, "But I have no information to give you! Nothing at all. She did not come over with me—I had no charge of her—no responsibility for her actions on board the steamer, or for her being met or not met or anything else."

"Certainly. I understand." He gave the door a little push as a hint to me. "But do you not see that you might furnish me with a valuable clue?" He gave the door a harder push, and as it clicked on the chain-bolt he repeated, "If you allow me to enter that we may discuss this in private—"

I thought I saw myself letting a strange man enter with all those diamonds loose in a box with pens! And at the thought of them I saw that this might be only another plot of monsieur's!

I looked at him in a way that made him think I was considering my responsibilities, and then I asked as casually as I could, "But at what time did she disappear?"

"Ah, that is the question—when?" he cried, giving a tragic—or what he meant to be tragic—gesture to show how utterly the girl had vanished.

And he stopped to consider what he should tell me next, and I, seeing no chance to catch a clue for myself, added, "If you are simply free-lancing in the case I should not feel justified in discussing her with you—but if her father is employing you—if it is he who has put the case in your hands—that is a different matter, and I see no objection to telling you all I know."

He took the bait, hook and sinker! "It is her father who has placed the matter in my hands," he replied convincingly; and at the same time he gave the door a shove as if to say, "Now you must let me in!" and dropping his voice to a whisper: "You will understand also why the greatest secrecy must be maintained!"

"Oh, of course. Now, when did she disappear?"

I got this off in a tone to indicate that I was thawing out. Not lost on him! He answered with a quick but vague, "Shortly after landing."

"You don't say!" I exclaimed, wishing to seem shocked and trying to keep back a laugh at the way he'd given himself away. But the next moment I realized that the fellow could have no possible connection with monsieur.

It came over me with a rush that this was a plot against Claire herself! Was it to kidnap her and hold her for ransom? Her California grandfather, now dying, was reputed many times the millionaire. Or was this the counterplot of some other nation against Germany for the possession of Mexico?—an effort to strike at De Ravenol, the emperor's messenger, through his daughter and put a spoke in the treaty?

I experienced a positive shock as this situation burst on me. I must get rid of this detective immediately, yet not let him guess what I was now fairly certain of, so I told him with affected cordiality, "I see just how it is—and that you wish to keep this secret as long as possible. I'm sorry—but it isn't convenient for me to receive you at this moment."

"Can you make it this afternoon?" he asked.

"Not very well—unless you wish to meet a reporter from one of the big dailies." I gave him a look that said, "That's what I'm trying to avoid for you."

He started slightly and hastily begged me, "Do not let the press get hold of this! I have spoken to you in confidence—I felt I might trust you."

"Certainly. Tomorrow at nine will be safe I think. Shall I expect you?"

I saw he was about to demur at this, but the rumbling of the elevator, coming nearer and nearer, had attracted his attention. The top of the car showed up at our door.

"Nine," he whispered, giving me a signal to be silent; and with that he slipped noiselessly to the stairs—the way he had come up—and disappeared.

The car door opened and Billy jumped out. I hastily undid the chain-bolt and he bounded in with a "What do you think?" and dragged me along the hall, out of earshot of the door, and then cried in an excited whisper, "Your 'mossoo' has flew the coop!"

Billy flung his hat on the table and repeated his words—"Your 'mossoo' has flew the coop—do you hear?" for

"Your 'Mossoo' Has Flew the Coop."

I had been too astonished to say anything when I heard them the first time.

"Gone—bag and baggage! Evaporated! Took a carriage and told the driver the Waldorf."

"Then he's not gone very far," I remarked, without thinking, only to have Billy ask scornfully:

"Do you suppose I haven't been there already? I tell you he's lit out for parts unknown—that's the size of it, and I want to know what for! He left the hotel at seven in the morning—seven, mind you, before anybody was out of bed. He hadn't registered at the Waldorf by eleven—and he hasn't registered at any of the other big hotels. I got a hunch he's got some new scheme on and there's no use looking for him in New York. Do you imagine he would go to Washington on his own hook—with his daughter and all—and lay the case before the president? I mean to lay a case before the president—trust little old 'mossoo' to tell only what he wants known!"

"Suppose he has!" I cried, and then I added, "That would be almost too good to be true."

"Yes—I feel that way—I kind-a don't seem to feel that he did—my hunch doesn't say he did. But say—I've been figuring it out coming up on the sub—your 'mossoo' is laying a new trap for you and Mrs. Delario. He knows one of you two women has got the diamonds—he knows it in his boots, no matter what you say—and anyway you have. He knows you've got 'em—that you're bound to keep 'em—and wouldn't dare sell or tell. See? That's where he's got you; and he knows you're both of you shaking in your boots."

"I'm shaking, all right—I've had my fill of diamonds!" I admitted bitterly.

"And that's how he argues. He's only got to give you a new scare of some sort—and wait. And I bet you, too, you get your scare inside an hour!"

"Perhaps I've had it already!" I cried, suddenly recollecting my mysterious detective, whom I had forgotten in this new development of affairs, and I told Billy the story. But when I came to my suspicions that it was Claire the man was after Billy flopped down all in a heap on the d[illegible] might be. [illegible]e sat there, squeezing his middle and glaring at the floor. Suddenly Mrs. Thing-down-stairs began rendering her Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" of a pig on ice, and Billy jumped up in irritation and paced the floor. I was glad of her performance—it was a gratuitous contribution to the safety of conversation in my own flat.

"Tell me again everything your detective man said," commanded Billy. "And you're sure he's a tec.?"

"I'm not sure of anything," I returned. "I had nothing to go on but what he said and what I guessed. He may have been a fancy burglar—a literary burglar, after my last novel; such things have happened." I saw Billy's lip curl at this frivolous suggestion, but I ran on. "He may be a gentleman crook—someone on the steamer whom I didn't know but who noticed I had an interest in the girl and is using it now to get in here and map the grounds so he can come back and rob and murder me."

"Oh, don't joke," he begged disconsolately. "This is awfully serious. Why couldn't this man—you say you think he's a foreigner—why couldn't he be the emperor's follow-up? Now why?"

"He could."

"Say—that's what he is! And 'mossoo' got wind of him last night and scooted for the tall timbers! The emperor wouldn't just hand 'mossoo' a box of diamonds like that and tell him just to take 'em and present 'em with his compliments—they don't do things that way over here. He'd send a second man to see that the first man did his job according to contract. And why isn't this the man?"

It did look possible—though I couldn't still see why he had begun his acquaintance with me—telling me a lie about Claire. While I was wondering over it, Billy remarked, "Poor De Ravenol has got his troubles all right. He knows the old man's after him and he's lost the goods. Say, you can afford to pity him now."

A wave of utter despair swept over me. I know of nothing more unhinging than the facetious nonchalance of the young male in face of a serious situation. I was ready to weep. I was saved from it by the ringing of the front bell.

I put up the chain-bolt before I opened it—I had sense enough for that—and then I cried: "You!" and received a sharp, "Ssh! Let me in, quick."

It was Mrs. Delario. When I saw her, you could have knocked me down with a feather. I let her in and whisked her into my bedroom and shut the door on us. My first thought was Billy—he had naturally looked down the hall when I went to the door—and I knew he'd guess immediately who it was; but though I had told her the part he had already played in our adventure she hadn't met him and I had the presence of mind not to spring him on her till I'd found out what she came for. She had caught sight of him and now spoke in a whisper.

"You can't guess what's happened!"

"What next!" I gasped, almost in a whisper.

"Monsieur has simply dumped Claire back on my hands and decamped—without a word of real explanation!"

"Oh, never!"

"It's what he's done! And I'm in the worst pickle! What does it all mean? He came last evening and told me he'd just seen you and you told him I had the diamonds—"

"What a lie!" I burst out involuntarily.

"And then this morning—before I'm even out of bed—this comes by a messenger." She had drawn out a letter from her bag; she took it out of the envelope and handed it to me, remarking at the same time, "There was fifty dollars in it." The letter read:

"Dear Madame Delario:

"I was unable to return according to promise because of telegraphic communication notifying me that my wife—Claire's mother—is probably ill with a fatal illness and I am leaving for California immediately. My child knows nothing of her mother's illness and the reason of my so sudden departure. I am concealing it from her by saying that it is diplomatic business which calls me away. It would be cruelty to subject her so sensitive nature to anxiety and shock of long journey when she could not hope to see her mother alive.

"I implore you in human kindness take pity on her once more and shelter her for a few days, keeping from her the knowledge of this calamity that threatens her. I shall communicate with you in a few days. My gratitude," etc.

"And Claire followed it in an hour!" Mrs. Delario whispered.

"Did he bring her?"

"No—he sent her in a carriage. Of course he didn't bring her! He didn't take any chances of my refusing to keep her for him."

"Poor child!" I exclaimed. "She was devoted to her mother—it will be a terrible blow to her."

Mrs. Delario sniffed at me—taking the letter from my hand and glancing at it before she answered: "You don't think for a minute there's anything the matter with Claire's mother, do you?"

"There isn't?"

"Why, of course not! . . . Oh, I know," she answered the question she must have read in my face. "I psychometrized this note as soon as I got it. That man can't deceive me—I feel 'scheme' and 'plot' all over it."

She held it a moment in a testing sort of way, running her fingers back and forth over it, then placed it in my hand, asking: "Can't you feel the occult influences?" and looked as if she expected me to reply that I could feel the occult influences, plain as anything. Which I couldn't. She seemed disappointed and put the letter into its envelope and that into her hand-bag, remarking: "It's part of a scheme he's working. I haven't made out the rest of it—I'm not clear on it yet, though I know it's something—tricky."

"And you think he didn't go to California?"

"I'm sure he didn't—I can't see a journey for him—I mean an immediate journey. There are journeys all around him—he travels a great deal—but I don't see anything for today—for tomorrow; there's nothing like that near. But I do get the word—clairaudiently—'Hiding.' That doesn't help things very much for us, if he is!"

"Or for Claire!"

"No. But please don't think I'm not willing to do all I can for the child for her own sake. But having her thrust on me in this mysterious way—"

She broke off and looked at me helplessly and I finished for her: "Has upset you."

"Terribly! I'm nearly distracted! And that isn't all—I mean Claire's being thrust on me; there's a new man come on the scene—I'm more troubled about him than almost anything else."

"A new man? When did he appear?"

"Last night—just after I got back from here and was waiting for monsieur; so I let him in—" and she described the very man who had just been to see me, and who was either a thief or Baron von Follow-up for the Emperor William, as Billy had called him. He had reached Mrs. Delario as he had me, through Claire, saying she had disappeared.

"And what's your impression of this new man?" I asked. I was beginning to take some little stock in her impressions, partly because they coincided with my own; partly because I was clutching at anything that might help.

"Trouble—trouble for monsieur. I get the word clairaudiently. You see, I'm so upset—why, my dear, it isn't any more possible for me to do my work—get my readings right—in an atmosphere of confusion—and fear and anxiety—than it is for you to do your work—write, and compose beautiful things. You couldn't, could you? You couldn't write, if you were all upset?"

I admitted I shouldn't expect to produce much of my own line of goods under like circumstances; and having won this from me, she laid her hand on my arm in an appealing way and said: "It's why I came to you—I didn't know what else to do or where to turn for advice. What am I to do about Claire?"

I was sure I didn't know, but I asked some trite question about how she seemed to be taking it.

"The poor child went into hysterics the minute she got in the house! I had to put her to bed. I'm afraid she's in for a sickness—a nervous breakdown."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

PENALTY WORSE THAN DEATH

Tragic Story of East Indian Prince Who Was Blinded by His Brother's Orders.

The tragic fortunes of princes are yet more vividly recalled by the only original copy extant of the Diwan of Kamran, the son of Babar, the erring brother of Humayun, who, after forgiving him on numberless occasions, was at last compelled for his own safety and that of the throne, to put out his eyes. The story has been told by Gulgadan Begam—the rose-bodied princess, daughter of Babar, whose memoirs of Humayun open the door of a woman's vision on the lives of these restless and warring men.

"All the assembled khans and sultans," she says, "high and low, plebeian and noble, soldiers and the rest, who all bore the mark of Mirza Kamran's hand, with one voice represented to his majesty: 'Brotherly custom has nothing to do with ruling and reigning. If you wish to act as a brother, abandon the throne. If you wish to be king, put aside brotherly sentiment. This is no brother. This is your majesty's foe. It is well to lower the head of the breacher of a kingdom.'

"His majesty answered, 'Though my head inclines to your words, my heart does not,' but he gave the order to blind Mirza Kamran in both eyes.

"After receiving the king's command," says Jauhar, "we returned to the prince, and Ghulam Ali represented to him in a respectful and condoling manner that he had received positive orders to blind him. The prince replied: 'I would rather you killed me at once.' Ghulam Ali said: 'We dare not exceed our orders.' He then twisted a handkerchief up as a ball for thrusting into the mouth and he with the farash seizing the prince by the hands, pulled him out of the tent, laid him down and thrust a lancet into his eyes (such was the will of God). This they repeated at least fifty times, but he bore the torture in a manly manner and did not utter a single groan, except when one of the men who was sitting on his knees pressed him.

"'Why,' he said, 'do you sit upon my knees? What is the use of adding to my pain?'

"This was all he said, and he acted with great courage, till they squeezed some lemon juice and salt in the sockets of his eyes. He then could not forbear, and called out:

"'O Lord! O Lord, my God, whatever sins I may have committed have been amply punished in this world; have compassion upon me in the next.'"

The blind man became a pilgrim and went to Mecca, where he died some four years later.—V. C. Scott O'Connor, in Asia Magazine.

Eggs Five Cents Per Dozen.

Price fixing can be dated as far back as the fourth century, when Diocletian placed the price of eggs at 5 cents a dozen.

SPORT SKIRTS FORETELL SPRING

THE new separate skirts which make their appearance early arrived the latter part of December and by the middle of January we were quite familiar with them. They are more indispensable than ever to the southern tourist, whose time is supposed to be spent out of doors in the pursuit of some sort of sport. Judging from the color and rich appearance of some of these new skirts the most popular resort sport is the wearing of good looking clothes.

The woolen skirts are mostly in large plaids in which very soft and quiet colors are skillfully combined. There are some smart black and white combinations among them and some in which black and white plaid stripes alternate with soft colors in stripes. These are made up with inverted plaits, like the skirt shown at the left of the two pictured above. No colors but the black and white appear, except as the plaits are spread apart by walking. The model pictured is the most popular for wool skirts. Girdles are plain and narrower than those of last year. Such a skirt, with the new handmade and simple blouse of voile or batiste and a sweater that looks well with it, is as dependable as a tailored suit.

The skirt at the right is one of those irresistible silks in the heavy weaves that make innumerable sport skirts de luxe. They are quite plainly made, as may be gathered from the picture, and they have girdles to match. In the matter of pockets designers have been endlessly ingenious and one may have them set in or set on in any number of ways. It is on the wonderful new colors that they rely for novelty and they are more often two-toned than plain. Very fine voile, batiste or georgette waists daintily made bear these skirts company and together they are the aristocrat in sports costumes.

Blouses Grow in Importance

BLOUSES rank with hats now in diversity of design and beauty. They have grown in importance with the passing of each season, and many shops devoted entirely to them find business brisk all the year around. Styles cover a range all the way from the simplest tailored models to rich and brilliant things for evening wear.

Every time the subject of blouses is up for discussion women congratulate one another that sheer and dainty hand-made blouses in simple styles have returned to high favor. Once again we have with us the painstaking and beautiful needlework that we have learned to associate with France. Whether the new blouses are the work of French women or not, they come up to the standard of daintiness and elegance that those patient needlewomen have taught us to love.

Fine voile, batiste and net are the mediums chosen for interpreting the new wash blouses. Net with eyelet embroidery is a favorite, and voile makes opportunity for drawn work and hemstitching, the introduction of filet and fine cluny laces. Fine tucks find a place on all materials, and with batiste very fine net is used in frills and insertions. A pretty net blouse shown at the left of the two pictured is a lovely model. The collar and cuffs are edged with narrow frills and further adorned with small sprays of embroidery with eyelets cunningly introduced in tiny flower motifs. Crochet buttons pendent on short cords slip through button holes for fastenings in this blouse.

At the right of the picture the brilliant blouse for a gray haired matron is made of black georgette crepe. Jet beads outline the neck and supply a handsome bead embroidery for the panel at the front of the waist and the cuffs. Such a blouse worn with a skirt of black satin would make a handsome toilette for afternoon or dinner wear.

Yarn embroidery and crocheted yarn flowers are featured in the decoration of new blouses of georgette or crepe de chine. Narrow grosgrain ribbon in strips, with the strips fastened across the front and back of blouses at the bust line, is something entirely new. At the top of each strip a flower embroidered with yarn introduces a color. Flat crystal cabochons about the size of a silver dime have eyes at their edges and are sewed like buttons to light colored blouses that they match in color. These are presented as novelties in decoration; their success remains to be proved, but about steel and crystal beads there is no question.

Julia Bottomley

Last Winter's Suit.

In freshening up a last winter's suit or separate coat the lining of the garment is often badly worn under the arms, requiring a large piece of new material for repairs. When the lining is a fancy one, impossible to match, the question seems almost a hopeless one. But why not borrow the material from the sleeve lining? This is an easy trick. Measure the size of the piece required and cut this out of the sleeve lining, leaving sufficient at the top near the armhole to "keep up appearances" when the coat is removed. The rest of the sleeve can then be relined with silk as nearly like the original as possible, or plain material will answer, as it will not show.

To Wear With Navy Blue.

Light and neutral shades dominate for wear with navy blue.

Shoe Decorations.

Shoes are perforated and decorated in quaint and ancient designs.

IF BACK HURTS USE SALTS FOR KIDNEYS

Eat less meat if Kidneys feel like lead or Bladder bothers.

Most folks forget that the kidneys, like the bowels, get sluggish and clogged and need a flushing occasionally, else we have backache and dull misery in the kidney region, severe headaches, rheumatic twinges, torpid liver, acid stomach, sleeplessness and all sorts of bladder disorders.

You simply must keep your kidneys active and clean, and the moment you feel an ache or pain in the kidney region, get about four ounces of Jad Salts from any good drug store here, take a tablespoonful in a glass of water before breakfast for a few days and your kidneys will then act fine. This famous salts is made from the acid of grapes and lemon juice, combined with lithia, and is harmless to flush clogged kidneys and stimulates them to normal activity. It also neutralizes the acids in the urine so it no longer irritates, thus ending bladder disorders.

Jad Salts is harmless; inexpensive; makes a delightful effervescent lithia-water drink which everybody should take now and then to keep the kidneys clean, thus avoiding serious complications.

A well-known local druggist says he sells lots of Jad Salts to folks who believe in overcoming kidney trouble while it is only trouble.—Adv.

Economy.

"Are you giving away your old shoes?"

"No; I am having them soled and re-soled."

Sure Relief

6 BELL-ANS Hot water Sure Relief

BELL-ANS FOR INDIGESTION

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Read the following from a woman of forty-eight: "I have used DR. TUTT'S PILLS for Bowel regulation many years. I am now convinced that they are also the best known regulator for other retarded female functions. I have told many of my friends and now none would be without them. A few days before, *and* you are all right."

Dr. Tutt's Liver Pills