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HER DILEMMA

Dearest Bettina: This must be a short letter, but I need your advice and I need it quick. Please telegraph your answer. No, on second thought, that won't do. But write by return mail.

I'm having a glorious time, after all. My uncle has a beautiful home, with a regular park for a yard, and his big house has all the comforts and none of the discomforts of a steamheated flat. Barbara Morgan and her husband are here, and little Cousin Isabel has a boarding school class sitting her, and Dr. Burt almost always while his wife's away, and Paul Herrick came out for a regular house party, you see, and everybody is crazy over horse-back riding. My Uncle David hates automobiles, and every time one of his rich neighbors gets a new one he goes and buys another horse, so there are mounts for us all. You ought to have seen us last week, galloping over these country roads.

Well, to get to the point, Uncle David went to town last Saturday and he promised him that a mounted escort of at least six should accompany his carriage when it came to the station to meet him that afternoon. It's about two miles from the house. Then a storm came up—a howling wind and rain—and Barbara was for backing out. She's so different from what she was before she was married! But Paul and I wanted to go, so at last we started out—Barb and her husband, Isabel and Dr. Burt, and Paul and I.

You ought to have seen us—all tagged for the rain. I had on a coat and cap of my Cousin Jack's. But Barb wouldn't stay on so we put them into our pockets. Then Barbara's hair came down, completely—such hair, Bettina—and every hairpin was loose. It was a terrible wind, and I couldn't help thinking that Barbara made the most of it. She knew very well that she looked like an October magazine cover, with all that golden brown mass of hair flying.

She made the conventional fuss—and she couldn't go another step and all that. Then Dr. Burt asked if she'd go provided Isabel and I would let down her hair, too. Well, Barb said she would. I do think a girl might be past such tricks after she's married—though, of course, as far as she knew—well, anyway, you can imagine how I felt, Bettina.

Little Isabel naturally didn't mind the shock out her short pigtail without a murmur. But I said "No." That was the signal for mischief. Paul didn't do anything—only hung back and looked worried—but Dr. Burt and Mr. Morgan rode up alongside my pony, and the more I insisted that I wouldn't take down my hair, the more they insisted that I should. And such important-looking people!

Dr. Burt kept asking me if there was anything I'd like to slip quietly into his pocket. He said his wife wore one, and he knew all about it. Then the whole party—except Paul—

At last Mr. Morgan had the effrontery to begin pulling out my hairpins, and Dr. Burt was starting to help him when I got on my dignity. I told them I could do it—rather than disappoint Uncle David if Barbara insisted, but that I should do it myself. Then I ordered these two married men to ride ahead with their own companions, and I did it in a way that made them go! That left Paul with me, poor boy! He was trying so hard to look indifferent.

Well, I put up both hands and carefully extracted all the pins, holding the coils of hair right in place until the last instant. Then I said, "Oh, see Isabel's horse!"

While Paul was looking at the horse I let my hair drop over my left shoulder, and, at the same instant, ran my hand swiftly down its length into the wide pocket of the coat I was wearing, where I left my hairpins and—well, you know.

It was the oddest thing in the world of an eye, that unsuspecting Paul was looking at me again, and there I was, calmly shaking out my mane and plucking the pocket shut with a haste! You know my hair doesn't look so sparse when it's down, Bettina. It's only when it's up that it needs the extra braid so much. It's rather short, to be sure, but it has a kick and a stiffness that help.

Anyway, both those married men were perfectly crestfallen when they glanced back. You'd think they had counted on seeing me baldheaded after my topknot was down. But Paul looked perfectly happy.

We rode like mad after that, not to miss the train, and our hair streamed out behind like the heroine in a novel, and—well, if my cheeks were half as red or my eyes half as shiny as Barb's and Isabel's were, I can't blame Paul very much for acting like a goose and calling me "gay queen" and such names. But, Bettina, from that hour things got serious. I put him off as long as I could, and then there came a time—

Now, I don't know what to do. For I can't help knowing that matters were precipitated by that episode of the hair.

You're the only one who knows, Bettina, and I'd never have told you if you hadn't had to go with me to match the color. You remember, yourself, that it wasn't a large one, but of course Paul couldn't be expected to discriminate about that. You see, I want to be strictly honorable, and yet—oh, dear!

Another thing: I can't think it will come to this, but if I should have to choose between Paul and my switch, what in the world can I do? Your anxious Peggy.—Chicago News.

The Diamond Tiara

By Edward Clarkson.

On the second day after we sailed from Hamburg for New York on the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse, I sat in a sheltered corner of the upper deck, lazily puffing a cigar and watching the monotonous dip and rise of the great steamer as she stiffly forged ahead. All at once I heard a succession of hysterical cries from the direction of the cabin, and immediately joined the curious crowd that gathered around the door.

A short, dark man was talking excitedly to the steward, and a French maid near by was sobbing merrily. Words quickly passed from lip to lip that a diamond tiara, the gift of the Marquis Bonari to his American fiancée, had been stolen. The marquis had entrusted it to his sister, who was about to sail for New York with her husband, the gentleman who was talking to the steward. His wife was prostrated by the loss.

I elbowed my way through the throng and touched the speaker on the arm.

"May I have a word with you?" "Certainly," he answered in very good English, with a surprised glance. I led the way through the crowd to my sheltered corner.

"I am Roger Fielding of New York," I said by way of introduction. He bowed. "Donat Antoine Paucuel, at your service, sir."

"I have had the good fortune to solve several mysteries of this nature," I continued. "Possibly I can assist you."

He murmured something about a "big reward," but I interrupted him. "Please answer a few direct questions as concisely as possible. How long has your brother-in-law been engaged to the American girl?"

"Six months." "How long have you been married?" "Three months."

"Did anyone besides yourself and your wife know you were to bring the tiara with you?" "None to my knowledge."

"Have you any servants with you except the French maid?" "No," he answered me unhesitatingly, but his black eyes shifted nervously.

"I hope to find the missing tiara before we reach New York," I assured him, and he thanked me effusively.

During the next two days I learned that a assistant engineer named Luigi had been engaged at Hamburg. The thing might seem a trifle on deck at a late hour, I heard two men talking in an earnest undertone near the cabin. The tones of both voices were strangely familiar.

I lighted a cigar and, by the sudden flare of the match came the face of the cousin and Luigi. I turned before they recognized me. The next morning the tiara was discovered in a trunk belonging to the maid, who nevertheless protested her innocence. On the plea of curiosity I was permitted to examine the tiara, with an unexpected result, which made me alert and watchful.

All went quietly until the last day of the voyage. The shores of New York were in sight and the harbor pilot was approaching when the crew was raised of "man overboard." At the same moment the count of whom I never lost sight, snatched a life buoy hanging over his head and threw it. He was again standing near the cabin door. The drowning man caught it deftly and slipped it under his arm. Then I saw him tear quick-ly at the inside of the covering, and the sunlight flashed on something that glittered in his hand. The man in the main was Luigi!

I sprang to the side of the count, stripped off the black wig that hid his scanty gray hair, and covered him with my revolver. Resistance was useless, and toward that he really was he immediately implicated his partner. The pilot boat picked up Luigi and in less than an hour both men were under arrest. The tiara had been found hidden in Luigi's shirt.

It was an old trick of experienced criminals, one they had successfully tried in San Francisco Bay five years before, when they both reached shore on the pilot boat and thus escaped the officials who were lying in wait for them.

The scheme had been carefully planned and executed ever since the count overheard the order for the tiara given in a Venetian jeweller's shop. By forged letters of recommendation he had gained entrance to the home and family of the marquis, and had used both him and his sister as his tools. Had Luigi reached the shore safely, Paucuel also would have and duly disappeared. The tiara with the paste diamonds, found in the maid's trunk, would have been given to the American fiancée, and before the substitution was discovered they would have been out of reach of the police. But their plan failed at the last and the marquis' gift for the American girl was saved.

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