

Mrs. Tudor's Tiara

A Short Story

By John Haslett in Pall Mall Magazine

Mr. James Tudor stood with his back to the magnificent window of a fashionable jeweler's. He was waiting for his wife, whom he had arranged to meet at this particular spot. First he looked up the street, then down; then he turned to gaze into the window at the central attraction, a small but exquisitely designed tiara, set with sparkling brilliants. The price, legibly marked upon a card, in tiny letters, as if to draw attention to the modesty of the demand, was £300.

It may be remarked that Mr. Tudor was an outside broker, with a business which brought him a moderate income. His wife had extravagant tastes, and logically desired to emulate her neighbor who enjoyed double the Tudor income. Mr. Tudor sighed over this failing, but in the course of time gave up attempting to explain that a pound in gold is nowhere accepted as the equivalent to thirty shillings. Just a week previous to the present date he had indulged himself with a little flutter in Amagante Copper shares and netted a profit of some three hundred pounds. This was the fact which had indirectly led him to the fashionable jeweler's shop, and incidentally to the contemplation of the aforementioned tiara.

It happened that Mrs. Doubledee de Welsh, who lived at No. 4 Walsingham Gardens, next door to the Tudors, had been presented by her loving spouse with a delectable diamond necklace. She had, so to speak, flaunted it in Mrs. Tudor's face at a dance given by the Delaneys. Excited in honor of the coming out of their daughter, Amabel, no one quite knew where she was coming out or in what role, but the term gave an excuse for a function—set which all the Walsingham Gardens elite met, to enjoy themselves in the dignified and aristocratic way beloved of the district.

The result was obvious and inevitable. Mrs. Tudor must outshine her wealthier rival; and Mr. Tudor had lately secured a profit sufficient to encompass this end. So here was Mr. Tudor, waiting for the arrival of his spouse, preparatory to the acquisition of the jewel winking bright eyes at him from the magnificent window. The friendship of the shop's proprietor, as it happened, had explained to his wife that friendship and discount are not incompatible terms.

"Presently a lady got out of a cab, and turned a beaming face upon her generous husband."

"Doesn't it look lovely?" she said, staring hard. "How good you are, darling, to think of buying me such a beautiful thing."

Mr. Tudor had not thought of buying it for her, and he surrendered at discretion to a moral force majeure. Still, he was not above taking the credit for a generous impulse.

"Sweetest, the swiftest and jewels to the—Oh, my dear, my dear, I must be back at the office in half an hour."

Mrs. Tudor's chin went up at least three inches as she followed him into the shop and to the counter where a smooth-voiced and delicate-looking young man presided over the wealth of a small nabob with an air of indifference.

The proprietor of the place was absent, and his deputy only knew Mr. Tudor by sight.

"What can I have the pleasure of doing for you, sir?" he asked, shifting a tray of rings into full view and smiling amiably.

"You have a tiara in the window," the attendant controlled a rising eyebrow, and Mrs. Tudor gasped expectantly. But the tiara was brought from the window, and set in its prospective place at the counter of admiration.

The audacity of her adjectives astonished even the delicate young man. However, the tiara was bowed in a sumptuous case, neatly packed, and delivered into the hands of its new owner. Mr. Tudor gave his address, asking that the bill should be sent to him at home, and piloted his wife again to her waiting cab.

"Be careful of it, my dear," he said, helping her in, and shutting the door. "There are some rogues about nowadays, and the tiara would be quite a fortune to some of them."

He leaned forward to permit of a grateful kiss being imparted on his cheek. "Well, good-night, dear, I shall be home to dinner."

"Good-night, darling. So sweet of you. Good-night."

After the cab had whirled away, Mr. Tudor stood thoughtfully on the pavement for a few moments. Then he stood away citywards, and was lost in the crowd thronging the streets.

When he came home there was still half an hour before dinner, and he went up to his wife's room before beginning those sartorial preparations which are as indispensable to dinner

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in Walsingham Gardens as is the doffing of a coat in humbler circles before sitting down to meat. Mrs. Tudor stood before the glass, viewing her own opulent person from every angle, and more particularly the diamond tiara which sparkled on her black hair. She ran playfully to meet her husband, and overwhelmed him with caresses.

"Isn't it a duck? Too sweet! Like a lot of big what-d'ye-call-it being lit up. What will Mrs. Doubledee de Welsh say? I am sure her necklet is paste. I said so at the time, don't you remember?"

"Quite well, my dear," said Mr. Tudor good-humoredly. "Now I must dress. Put it away carefully in its case before you go down. We don't trust Mary an Eliza, but one never feels safe nowadays."

Mrs. Tudor agreed. "It really is rather a responsibility," she said. "It might attract burglars. I never thought of that—and I hate burglars."

"We must hope for the best," he said, wisely.

II.

"Just one little look—a peep before I go to bed."

Mrs. Tudor had a last long look at the tiara. Then the lights were put out and sleep was about to descend on the household when Mr. Tudor sat up and spoke:

"My dear I'm not sure about the back-door being locked. I had better go down and see to it now."

He got out of bed and left the room. His wife, meanwhile, was beset with nervous fears. There were so many burglars in London, and the tiara was worth three hundred pounds. The bill, which had come by the post that evening, and which she intended to show Mrs. de Welsh, said, three hundred pounds.

She calmed herself at length by the thought of her rival's furious envy when the tiara should make its first appearance. Then her husband reappeared and again silence fell.

About an hour later a slight man, his features hidden under a black crepe mask, stole into the dining-room at No. 2 Walsingham Gardens. He went delicately, a feloniously inclined Azag, his bull's-eye lantern throwing a gleaming circle of light upon the silver arranged upon the oak sideboard. In the other hand he carried a small sack.

Like a gamekeeper at a noted shoot, he was evidently about taking silver. Leaving the room again he tip-toed into the hall and began to ascend the softly-carpeted stairs. On the landing he halted for a moment to get his bearings. The tiara was sleeping placidly on the floor above, so nothing was to be apprehended from them. Hesitating again, he entered the guest-room, then the dressing-room, but finally passed outside the door of the room in which Mr. and Mrs. Tudor slumbered deeply. Here he shut the slide of his lantern, took a revolver from his side-pocket, and gently turned the door-handle. At his entrance Mr. Tudor stirred uneasily, but his wife slept on, dreaming of Mrs. de Welsh, who stood before her, holding her hands before her eyes to shield them from the blazing light emanating from a colossal tiara surmounting her own (Mrs. Tudor's) brow.

The intruder passed by the bed, and went to the dressing-table, on which the jewel-case reposed. Opening the slide of his lantern, he permitted a little short of light to pass under the silkwood top of that massive article of furniture. It came to a stop at the leather-covered box, and was focussed there steadily. Then a hand stole into the beam, was placed upon the case, and withdrawn. And where the case had rested nothing could be seen, save the yellow sheen of the hyper-polished wood.

Mr. Tudor again moved, and this time his stirring awakened his wife. Left from the splendor of her dreams, she was inclined to be irritable.

"What is the matter?" she asked, sitting up. "Have you been dreaming of Mrs. de Welsh's head by megalomaniacally handing her the tiara. But her servant caught the sound of a footstep, and irritation gave place to alarm."

"Henry," she whispered, "I believe there's something—someone in the room!"

"Perhaps it's the cat," he suggested drowsily.

"Listen! Oh, get up, Henry! I am sure—"

The bedroom was lighted by two electric bulbs, a large one over the dressing-table and a smaller over the bed. This latter now sprang into incandescence, and cut short the scream which trembled on Mrs. Tudor's lips.

In the new light they could see a masked man standing by their bed, and the revolver which he held was directed at her husband. In a way which was at once threatening and suggestive.

"Not a word, or I'll be the worse for you," said a gruff voice. "I don't mean to have the cops on me, if I have to finish the pair of you. I'm going now, but mind, if either of you lets out a sound I'll come back and complete the job. I shall be downstairs for some time collecting little things, so be careful."

"Let me get up!" Mr. Tudor whispered to his wife. "I don't want to get the cops on me."

"Let me get the poker!" he tightly.

But she refused to let him go.

"If you get up I'll scream, and then he'll shoot us both," she whimpered.

"Let him go, Henry!"

Mr. Tudor lay back with a sigh. The light went out as suddenly as it had flashed into being, and a quiet footstep passed through the doorway, and along the landing. Mrs. Tudor gave a great sigh of relief.

"Better to lose anything than to be killed," she whispered.

He must have watched me home after buying that tiara. I wish I had never asked for it. I'm glad it's gone. I could never have felt safe after this with such a thing in the house."

"That's all very well, but it was an expensive thing," her husband urged.

Mrs. Tudor turned upon him sharply.

"Well, my dear, all I can say is that if you value a mere bauble more than your wife's safety, you should never have been married at all."

"Never! never! How can you think of such a thing?"

Mr. Tudor settled his head on the pillow.

"As you please, my dear."

III.

On the following morning, Mr. Tudor paid a visit to the neighboring police station and gave a description of the missing tiara. He had few details to relate, for the burglar had entered by the front door, and had left no finger-prints which might lead to his identification. He was promised that inquiries should be made, and giving his name and address, betook himself to his office in the city.

He was busy working out backwardations, when his clerk announced that his friend, Mr. Tenniel had called to see him.

"Show him in, Margaret," said Mr. Tudor, drawing a cigar-box from a recess in his study. Mr. Tenniel came placidly. Then the door opened, and he got up to shake hands with his visitor.

"Morning, Tenniel. How are you, old boy? Got home all right?"

"Thanks, yes," the young man laughed. "I'm all right. I'll smoke if you pass me the box."

Mr. Tudor looked at his visitor and his visitor looked at him. Then they laughed loud and long, and generally comforted themselves as if some supremely good thing had happened.

"Hear that your wife's lost a tiara?" said Mr. Tenniel, wiping his eyes with his hand.

Mr. Tudor shook with merriment.

"I hardly hardly known you," he gasped.

"I hardly recognized myself. Well, here's your latch-key, anyway. It was as easy as shedding peas."

"Do you know of any particular market tip?" asked Mr. Tudor, closing one eye in a waggish manner. "I sent to investigate the market tip the other day over Amagante Coppers."

And the slight young man who was named Tenniel, relaxed into a chair and a paroxysm of inextinguishable laughter.

But, while the two friends were making merry over the success of their scheme, Mrs. Tudor was pouring into the ears of her husband the account of the loss of her valuable tiara, and a delicate-looking young man stood inside the front window of a fashionable jeweler's shop, smiling at the central attraction, which he had just bought for £300.

ment with a very anxious attention; he treated it skilfully and thoughtfully on his Sandringham estate, and he was sincerely and often deeply impressed by the sufferings and calamities which befell his poorer subjects.

He had a high sense of duty, and a resolute determination to perform, punctually and promptly, all the functions and ceremonies which were his best available means of bringing him into close bonds with his people. It is true that he had a strong love of ceremonial, and he showed a punctilious insistence on and a minute knowledge of details of dress and decoration, which those who were inclined to rate these matters lightly were apt to find irritating. But ceremonies were never carried out by him in a mechanical or perfunctory manner. He managed to introduce into them a special personal and characteristic note, without which the most gorgeously arranged function would have been flat and meaningless. And more than one of his ministers has had to acknowledge the constant thoughtfulness which excused him from attendance during a week-end holiday at a time of exceptional stress of work.

Perhaps the King's most notable achievements were performed in his capacity as representative of Great Britain abroad. An exceptionally accomplished linguist, he was at once at home in a foreign atmosphere, and there can be no doubt that his genuine desire for peace, which he knew was shared by his subjects, was furthered as much by his personal skill as an ambassador as by his diplomatic ententes and understandings which his visits and interposition effected. Nevertheless, the precedent he set in this respect was a somewhat dangerous one. A king, endowed with similar talents, but with less caution and circumspection, might easily embarrass the work of the foreign minister.

Obituary notices are often rendered colorless by their excessive note of eulogy. But it would be hard to exaggerate the position which the King attained as a British Sovereign and a representative of the British nation abroad. The enjoyments and gaieties of life had a strong attraction for him, and though there have arisen from time to time throughout his career some misapprehensions, there was a frank openness and genuine good nature in his dealings with the lighter side of social life which usually disarmed his critics. The least successful of his record and every true portrait must have light and shade—was his influence as the leader of English "society." In the former reign there had gathered round him, or near him, a section of society which, though it was what is called "smart," was also what is called "fast."

It formed a striking contrast to the quiet and rather dull distinction of the early Victorian Court, the last remaining traces of whose influence vanished on his accession. The whole of society thus became affected by the prevailing style and character of this particular set. The King, however, was known (or who posed) as the King's friends were people unconnected with our older families, and were undistinguished by any public achievement. It was their duty to place the shortcomings of such persons to the late King's discredit, but it is right to say that in this by no means the least important of his functions he was a failure. A standard. On coming to the throne, he assumed with extraordinary adaptability the full weight of his new public responsibilities, but he did not think it necessary to state the social ties and connections of his former life. This blemish on the picture was readily disregarded, not because the King's public duties were intrinsically more important, but because the way in which he performed them was the subject of universal and deserved admiration. King Edward had the virtues and the faults of a human and singularly generous nature. His people thought of him as their friend; between the monarch and the nation a sense of security reigned, which nothing but a series of disasters could upset.

At the close of the late King's career can be complete without some mention of the man who stood by him from his earliest youth. In Lord Knollys the King had a trusted adviser and an affectionate friend. A man of liberal mind, of singular discretion and tact, he never pushed himself to the front, but stood ready at the right moment with a word of caution or encouragement. He alone from his long experience knew how to manage the embarrassments and adjust the difficulties which must arise in the numberless official connections which the Sovereign's position gives him over the country. His is a record of faithful and important public service which history cannot justly estimate because it can never be fully known.

It is the late King's remarkable qualities and his unique reputation in Europe which make the task of the new King exceptionally difficult. Of King George the country knows at present very little. The little it does know is entirely to his credit. He will feel acutely the loss of his father, whom he regarded with devoted admiration and affection. In fact, he was only too ready in the last reign to stand well in the background, and it is for this reason mainly that any-sided opinion of his character must be, to some extent, conjectural. In his youth, while his elder brother was still alive, he was popularly regarded as a high-spirited, box of straightness, with a very amiable disposition. When he came into the line of direct succession, and steps were taken to educate him for the responsibilities ahead of him, his natural gaiety of disposition became somewhat clouded, and the prospect before him seemed to weigh rather heavily upon his mind. He is a man of a very different pattern from his father. He is essentially domestic and homely, as well as rigidly temperate. In his tastes, which are simple and unaffected, and his frank display which are bound up with the business of royalty. He has never been, and he is never likely to be, closely associated with the flashier section of London society. These characteristics will be greatly appreciated by his people, and their respect for him is likely to increase as time goes on. But they must not expect to find the brilliant, charming and magnetic tact of King Edward in his shy-mannered and modest son. They must remember that he was not brought up from earliest youth to occupy the throne, and the desultory and sketchy education of a prince may give him a serious handicap until experience has given him more confidence. Doubtless he will now know how to regulate the opinions to which he is subjected, but unguardedly which, in a natural but unguarded expression, he is said sometimes to give. The tendencies which have been freely ascribed to Marlborough House will be definitely cast aside in Buckingham Palace, and his father's scrupulous impartiality as between the two political parties at once and instinctively adopted. In his desire to take up the strictly constitutional attitude in all possible controversies, King George will find in his private secretary an experienced counsellor, who can be counted a safe guide. Sir Arthur Bligh has had a long experience in the Court of Queen Victoria. He gained his high office purely by his own industry and ability, and he is a clear-sighted and judicious official, who will be the first to recognize the supreme importance of avoiding any signs or forms of partiality.

Queen Mary has been a popular figure in English life since she was a little girl. Her sympathy and assistance are likely to be of considerable value. She is able, thorough in her methods, and vigorous both in physique and in character; and she has had a hard and diligent training for her position, from which the interests of the nation and literature have not been excluded. The King may rest assured that as an emblem of family happiness the picture of himself, his wife and his children, from which the interests of the nation and literature have not been excluded, will at once receive cordial recognition, while unsuspected qualities may in the future be brought out by the great opportunity now afforded him.

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It is the late King's remarkable qualities and his unique reputation in Europe which make the task of the new King exceptionally difficult. Of King George the country knows at present very little. The little it does know is entirely to his credit. He will feel acutely the loss of his father, whom he regarded with devoted admiration and affection. In fact, he was only too ready in the last reign to stand well in the background, and it is for this reason mainly that any-sided opinion of his character must be, to some extent, conjectural. In his youth, while his elder brother was still alive, he was popularly regarded as a high-spirited, box of straightness, with a very amiable disposition. When he came into the line of direct succession, and steps were taken to educate him for the responsibilities ahead of him, his natural gaiety of disposition became somewhat clouded, and the prospect before him seemed to weigh rather heavily upon his mind. He is a man of a very different pattern from his father. He is essentially domestic and homely, as well as rigidly temperate. In his tastes, which are simple and unaffected, and his frank display which are bound up with the business of royalty. He has never been, and he is never likely to be, closely associated with the flashier section of London society. These characteristics will be greatly appreciated by his people, and their respect for him is likely to increase as time goes on. But they must not expect to find the brilliant, charming and magnetic tact of King Edward in his shy-mannered and modest son. They must remember that he was not brought up from earliest youth to occupy the throne, and the desultory and sketchy education of a prince may give him a serious handicap until experience has given him more confidence. Doubtless he will now know how to regulate the opinions to which he is subjected, but unguardedly which, in a natural but unguarded expression, he is said sometimes to give. The tendencies which have been freely ascribed to Marlborough House will be definitely cast aside in Buckingham Palace, and his father's scrupulous impartiality as between the two political parties at once and instinctively adopted. In his desire to take up the strictly constitutional attitude in all possible controversies, King George will find in his private secretary an experienced counsellor, who can be counted a safe guide. Sir Arthur Bligh has had a long experience in the Court of Queen Victoria. He gained his high office purely by his own industry and ability, and he is a clear-sighted and judicious official, who will be the first to recognize the supreme importance of avoiding any signs or forms of partiality.

Queen Mary has been a popular figure in English life since she was a little girl. Her sympathy and assistance are likely to be of considerable value. She is able, thorough in her methods, and vigorous both in physique and in character; and she has had a hard and diligent training for her position, from which the interests of the nation and literature have not been excluded. The King may rest assured that as an emblem of family happiness the picture of himself, his wife and his children, from which the interests of the nation and literature have not been excluded, will at once receive cordial recognition, while unsuspected qualities may in the future be brought out by the great opportunity now afforded him.

Obituary notices are often rendered colorless by their excessive note of eulogy. But it would be hard to exaggerate the position which the King attained as a British Sovereign and a representative of the British nation abroad. The enjoyments and gaieties of life had a strong attraction for him, and though there have arisen from time to time throughout his career some misapprehensions, there was a frank openness and genuine good nature in his dealings with the lighter side of social life which usually disarmed his critics. The least successful of his record and every true portrait must have light and shade—was his influence as the leader of English "society." In the former reign there had gathered round him, or near him, a section of society which, though it was what is called "smart," was also what is called "fast."

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