

The Quest of Betty Lancey

By MAGDA F. WEST

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THE QUEST OF BETTY LANCEY is a remarkable serial. The word "remarkable" scarcely describes the merits, the intensity of plot, and situations of this strange and weird but absolutely entrancing work of fiction. Its conception is phenomenal, its range takes in two continents. It is up to date in style, development and a variety of rare scientific developments that bring out the best detective instinct and employ wireless telegraphy and other modern appliances to the purposes of the story.

The plot of this romance hinges on fervid human emotions—love, jealousy, avarice, hatred. Every character is intense and graphically delineated. There are two beautiful women—Cecile and Narcisse—one like a pure, beautiful lily, all gentleness and affection, the other a siren whose restless spirit thrives only in excitement and change. To their lives are linked the welfare or wreck of others, and where the story is not absorbingly dramatic it becomes startlingly tragic.

CHAPTER I

Mrs. Annie Desterle padded uncomfortably up the front stairs to the second story front room, grumbling loudly at every step.

For Mrs. Desterle, who was nearly fifty years old, and who for more than half that time had supported herself and her husband, Pierre, by keeping a boarding house, had recently begun to grow more than partridge plump. With the rapid obliteration of her girlish outlines, which process might have been checked had Mrs. Desterle been less a mistress of culinary art and still less fond of her own cooking, had developed an increase in the transportation problem around the Desterle domicile. In these days, from the basement kitchen to the third story front was as appalling a climb to Mrs. Desterle as the journey up Washington monument had been when she and Pierre had taken their honeymoon trip for sightseeing thirty years ago.

"Dear me!" puffed Mrs. Desterle at the second floor landing. "I believe I'll ask that woman to move when her week's up. She never gets down to breakfast and the two days she's been here she's acted mighty queer. Don't know why I'm so foolish to toll all the way up here like this, but I've rung her bell twice and she don't answer, though it's most noon. If Pierre was ever around now. Lately he seems to be of less use than ever. Strangers in the house always did make me feel nervous. I'm most afraid to climb any further; seems like I sense something wrong. And as long as I've been keeping boarders never before did I let anyone come in that I didn't know anything at all about. But the poor little thing looked so tired and pretty, and her big bunch of violets smelled so sweet; why, she was just like a spirit coming out of the rain. It was so late, too, and, well, as I was none too careful in finding out who she was, but she's had time enough to look around by now, and I'll just tell Miss Cecile Wayne, as she calls herself, that she'll have to move to-morrow. This is such a lovely spring day that looking for another room may bring a little color into her pale cheeks. No, I don't want her around. Young Simpson was making eyes at her last night, which is too bad, for he's engaged to Miss Gentry. And Ada Gentry's a nice girl. She'll be getting mad and leaving next, and then he'll follow, and they're two of my best boarders; been here now for seven Christmases."

Mrs. Desterle's soliloquy and her upward pilgrimage ended with the same breath. At the end of the hall before her the door to the third story front parlor looked ominously funereal in its dull respectability of time-stained walnut. Annie Desterle was born to emergencies, and had been a mainstay and a prop all of her life, but for the first time within her memory her spirit faltered.

"Um," she sniffed, as she approached the door. "It does smell like cigarettes up here. Ada told me yesterday morning she thought she smelled smoke coming from Miss Wayne's room. Oh, Miss Wayne, Miss Wayne, Miss Wayne!" called the landlady in a succession of crescendos.

No answer came. So the woman in the hall knocked loudly on the door. Silence still. She tried the door. It was locked, though beneath the firm grasp of this experienced landlady, coupled with a vigorous kick, the lock gave way and the door swung open.

Mrs. Desterle's quick eye gave one glance around her, her jaw dropped

and her eyes nearly catapulted out of her head. She stumbled into the room and over to the bed. She put out her hand, startled, and impulsively felt of the coverlets and what lay upon them. Her fingers had barely touched the sheet when a noise from the farther corner made her turn. At sight of what was there Mrs. Desterle tossed her apron over her head, and screaming, shrieking, howling, ran into the hall, tumbling down flight after flight of stairs, to fall in a helpless, frothing heap at the feet of her husband, gasping incoherently:

"Upstairs, upstairs; at once! My God! My God!"

Doherty, the black policeman, who did extra watch duty on the Desterle premises for the daily luncheon that came from Annie's kitchen, had that instant arrived for his diurnal nibble. At sight of the calm Mrs. Desterle thus prostrated, Doherty made for the telephone.

"'Tis a riot call I should be sending in with Annie knocked out like this," mused Doherty. "For 'tis never she loses her head."

But he simply called the doctor and helped the little Frenchman carry his stricken wife to her bedroom.

Annie Desterle lay still till they reached the second floor. At the landing she commenced her writhing again.

"Upstairs, upstairs!" her blood-purpled lips commanded, and she vainly tried to motion towards the third story front.

"'T'd better be seeing what's wrong in the top of the house," suggested Doherty, as they lay Annie on the bed. "Who could be up there now?"

The policeman stepped blithely past Miss Gentry's room, with but a casual glance into its domestic depths, straight to the wide opened portal of the third story front and across the threshold.

The perfume of the room was the first greeting. An odd penetrating odor that savored of things forgot, and things undone, a fragrance belonging to the mystic places of shadows, and not to one of the clean, well-soaped, and better dusted apartments of Annie Desterle's boarding house. On the cheap oak table that had been drawn close to the bed was a great bowl of dying violets. By the flowers still burned a drop light and beside this an opened fallen book as if the occupant had bailed sleep with story. A gold cigarette case half emptied was under the table, and the stubs of the remainder of its contents sprinkled the floor.

On the bed, clad in a soft gown, lay a young and beautiful woman. Her lips were softly parted, the dark lashes touched the curve of her cheek so gently that in spite of her pallor Doherty, who had looked on the dead many times in his fifteen years of police duty, pinched the thin white arm again and again and patiently held a mirror to the cold white lips before he could believe that it was the girl's body only, and not her body and soul that were outstretched before him, and that she was quite dead.

He looked around the room and saw no empty vials, nor boxes, nor even a rattling white paper that might have held those silence-bringing powders women suicides affect.

On the bureau was a juggle of woman's clutter—hairpins, a half dozen long jeweled hatpins, and one thick gold bracelet set with a very large ruby. The combs and the brushes were elaborate specimens of the goldsmith's craft, and from an overturned and broken bottle of fragile glass,

heavy scent was slowly trickling. Rouge, cold cream, and savory rice powders were jumbled in sore disorder with the collars and cleaned and soiled handkerchiefs. Even a silk stocking, small of foot and delicately green of tint, had found a resting place upon the neat linen cover of the bureau. The woman's clothing, all of the richest make, was tossed carelessly on a big chair. A large traveling case of green morocco leather, the same soft, dull shade as the gown and long had first come to the house, was the only luggage in the room. It bore a silver monogram, "C. W." and was empty save for soft lingerie and two letters addressed in a masculine handwriting on heavy white paper and postmarked New York. The superscription on each was the same,

Miss Cecile Wayne,
C/o Doubleday Franz & Co., Bankers,
San Francisco, California.

Doherty, thrusting his fingers within the first envelope, was withdrawing its enclosure when a jibbering over his shoulder turned him faint and sick.

The policeman swerved his head. And there, grinning into his face, with its hot breath smiting his cheek, Patrick Doherty saw the most hideous apparition mortal men might conjure out of the depths of delirium, a most fearful and terrible object.

Neither gorilla, nor ape, nor man, nor demon, was this thing. It was all four, with the repulsion of the snake. Tall, gross and hairy, its pelt the exact russet shade of the curling hair that veiled the dead woman on the bed, its eyes, black in the corners, and white in the pupil and iris, with half hands, and feet half hoofs, the skull of an ape, the leer of a drunken man, it grinned and smirked at Doherty.

Doherty pulled his pistol. He aimed at the thing. Then he shut his eyes and staggered to the hall, blind with the flash and crazed with fright. At the door he looked back. The Thing, grinning even behind the veil of smoke, was standing motionless where Doherty had been and beside it were the two letters addressed to Miss Cecile Wayne. The report of the pistol had called Pierre Desterle from his wife's side.

"Patience, Patience," he cried. "I'm coming. It is Pierre. What is it?"

Pierre was mounting the top stair when Doherty leaned over the banisters and pushed him back.

"Not here," gasped the policeman. "Send to the station. Tell them quick—the dog-catcher—a riot call—hurry—hurry!"

The Frenchman saw the Irishman's rosy face now white as chalk and his sunken eyes. The Thing within Cecile Wayne's room began jibbering again. The policeman threw the frightened Desterle down stairs and waited in awful fear till help should come.

CHAPTER II

As the Fifth street police station was only a block from the Desterle's the squad drawn out by Pierre's hysterical summons had little time and less opportunity for speculation as they traversed this distance. The tacit sentiment prevailing was that either Desterle was drunk or that Doherty was "sprung a bit in the head."

"What's the matter, Pat?" asked Monahan, grabbing the palsied Doherty by the shoulder, while a dozen more officers piled into the little hall and overflowed into the front room.

"Riot call for a suicide!" sneered Finn, who had always hated Doherty, and who, the first to cross the threshold had been the first among them to discover the body. "Say, but she's a looker, anyhow, and—What's that? What's that?" shrieked Finn.

The Thing, which had been cowering behind a chair, had arisen and stepped out before the policemen. Doherty's fright was feeling, so he led the squad, and they advanced. The duel between the one and the dozen now began. They clubbed at it, they shot at it, they grasped at it, but blows, shots, and clutches all missed fire and effect. Strive as they would it eluded them. They herded it into their midst and round and round the room the strange struggle went on. The table was overturned and the bowl of violets struck against the shade of the falling drop light with an eerie crash. Suddenly the pursued turned pursuer. Plunging straight for Doherty it wound its hairy arms around his neck and dug its long claws through the padding of his coat shoulder into his flesh.

Monahan pulled a blanket from the bed, Finnerty a sheet. They tied the sheet round the long hind legs of the Thing, they threw the blanket over its head, and they held it firmly there, till in the fright and fight to free itself the monster loosened its grip on the fainting Doherty.

The squad of officers, exhausted in body and staggering in mind, could roll no more coverings over the scratching, writhing shape battling to rid itself of the swathings that rendered it helpless. The odds were that this horrible caricature of man and ape would overpower them.

"If only Finley will send the dog-catcher," groaned Monahan, "then we'd have some place to put the beast."

The end man of them all went out of the room and dragged the prim little mattress off Miss Gentry's bed. Just as he came up to the confused heap in the center of the death chamber, the Thing with the surge of a bursting dam, rose up and scattered its captores like straws. Doherty, revived now, but mad with pain, shot out his great ox-arm and hit the monster squarely between the eyes. Reeling, away, stunned for the time, it fell over on the bed directly across the frail white dead.

(To be continued.)

BIG FEES OF NEW YORK LAWYERS



THE size of legal fees is growing to keep pace with the magnitude of financial transactions. Recently it became known that Samuel Untermyer, the New York corporation lawyer, had received a fee of \$775,000, all cash, with the exception of a block of stock valued at \$65,000. This is above three-quarters of a million dollars. When the news became noised abroad there was a degree of consternation among clients and citizens who contemplated a legal flyer; some lawyers turned green, some judges began to figure on a polite form of resignation from the bench and some police court attorneys raised their rate \$2.50 for defending "drunks and disorderlies."

If William Nelson Cromwell would reveal the fee that he got for engineering the sale of the Panama Canal by the French owners to the United States government it might be found that he is entitled to the laurels of the highest legal compensation. At the time of the sale of the \$40,000,000 property it was reported in Washington that his fee was upward of \$1,000,000. Of course, mere rumor cannot be credited in an official championship contest. On another case Mr. Cromwell is said to have admitted that he made \$400,000 in sixty days, which is a very fair achievement. It was his fee for adjusting the affairs of Decker, Howell & Co., New York bankers, who failed for \$17,000,000. There is little doubt that Mr. Cromwell realized six figure fees for his work in organizing the United States Steel Corporation, the American Cotton Oil Company and the National Tube Company.

Senator Elihu Root's fee for acting as counsel for James Hazen Hyde during the Equitable Life Assurance Society disturbance was at the rate of \$3.00 a minute, or \$1,000 a day. One evidence of the size of Mr. Root's fees is his long retirement from active practice, which is conceded to be a costly luxury. Many statesmen have retired from public life because they couldn't afford it.

In contrast with these large compensations, Governor Hughes of New York State, obtained only \$25,000 for his long, arduous and highly skilled labor as attorney in the Insurance Investigation, which, however, made him a national figure. In criminal cases, Delphin M. Delmas, the gilded orator of the Pacific Slope, probably made a record with his \$50,000 fee for helping to defend Harry K. Thaw. Ex-Governor Frank S. Black of New York State is reputed to have obtained some large rewards for legal work. James M. Beck, formerly Assistant Attorney General of the United States, has gathered a few sizable plums in the corporation orchard.

Receiverships are generally profitable to the lawyers who act as receivers and counsel. Fees in six figures are not uncommon, and it is rare that a court sets aside the amount agreed upon among the attorneys, as happened in the receivership of the Knickerbocker Trust Company, when a judge held that a charge of more than \$500,000 was excessive. More recently a sensation was created by a Brooklyn lawyer, who voluntarily turned back his share of a receivership fee on the ground that it was too much. It is said there was a movement to disbar this lawyer for unprofessional conduct and violation of legal ethics tending to lower the standard of living among practitioners. However, the fear that other attorneys might follow in his footsteps was not realized.

PRESIDENT'S LONELY LIFE.

Plain Common Folks Have a Better Time than the Nation's Chief.

After all, maybe it isn't so much fun to be the President of the United States. Perhaps there is more quiet, sociable satisfaction in being a non-commissioned officer in the great army of just common folks. There is almost of necessity a condition suggestive of loneliness attaching to every eminent, exclusive or unusual position in life. Whatever in the nature of wall or fence or social or official barrier serves to shut the crowd out, tends to shut the individual in. One cannot enjoy the honor and distinction of occupying a position above the level of the multitude and at the same time feel that sense of intimate sociability that comes of touching elbows with one's fellow beings. The normal, ordinary mortal does not particularly enjoy being too much in the presence of his superiors, especially if he is expected to make the attempt of presuming to meet them on the level.

And so it is that for every-day people to meet and enjoy the society of the highest executive officer of the United States of America requires more tact and less self-consciousness than those who have never tried it would be likely to imagine, the Christian Science Monitor says. Perhaps the feeling that is apt to possess one making such an attempt might be compared in a measure to the sensation one would experience in going for a stroll with a friend who was mounted on stilts. As a matter of fact, the President would, no doubt, gladly get down from his official stilts if it were possible for him to do so; but, try as he will, he is powerless in the matter. He may seek to make those about him believe that he is no taller than they are, but it counts little what he may say or do; they will persist in looking up to him. Perhaps there has never been an occupant of the White House who has come nearer to meeting the people on a common level than does President Taft. But those with whom he meets cannot forget that he is the first citizen of the great republic.

The President of the nation, whoever he may be, needs and deserves all the honest and disinterested friendliness that individuals and the public can give him.

VALUE OF FARM PRODUCTS.

Census Bureau's Statement Concerning Method of Ascertaining It.

Inquiries have been made of the Census Bureau whether farm products should be valued by farmers, in replying to census enumerators, at the general wholesale prices or at the actual prices obtained by the producer. It was pointed out by the inquirers that many farmers sell a proportion of their eggs for breeding, at much higher than the regular price. Others sell part or all of their milk, butter, and cream, at retail. Quite a number sell pure-bred live stock of various kinds at more or less fancy prices. The bureau's correspondents are of the opinion that if sales are quoted in this

way in the census reports, the results might be somewhat uncertain as a basis for the average market prices.

Responding to these inquiries, Census Director Durand states that in forming its inquiries and instructions with reference to the value of domestic animals and fowls, the Census Bureau must necessarily follow the lines laid down in the law governing its action. That law requires the bureau to ascertain the number and value of animals and fowls. The value sought is not the value of some particular class of animals or fowls, but of all animals and fowls. It is the amount at which the animals and fowls can be sold. Good pure-blooded animals will sell for more, and thus have a greater value than the poor animals. Where there are many pure-blooded, the average will be higher than where the opposite condition of affairs prevails, but, as a matter of fact, the pure-blooded animals are so thoroughly distributed that they left no appreciable influence upon the average published by the twelfth census, except in the case of the young colts of the State of New Jersey.

No appreciable influence on the average price or value of eggs, milk or butter is observed in consequence of the practice mentioned by the inquirers. The high-priced eggs, milk, butter, etc., are found about as much in one part of the country as in another. The average which the census will publish is not that of a particular class of eggs, but of all eggs produced. It is the same for all animals, fowls and animal products. The relative number and value of the animals and products to which specific attention has been called does not exert, for the country as a whole or for many of the States, an influence sufficient to make the average published by the census materially different from the average market prices.

Not the Seal Skin.

Simeon Ford, apropos of wifely sympathy, and at a recent dinner in New York:

"How hard it is when the wife is unsympathetic! Poor Jones trudged home through zero weather the other night, and, blowing on his frozen hands, said solemnly:

"Well, I've got the sack."

"Oh, you dear!" his wife cried.

"The seal skin, or the other one?"

"The other one," said Jones, laughing bitterly."

What Might Have Been.

"It is said that Napoleon contemplated coming to America after Waterloo. Seems a pity that he could not perfect his plans.

"It does so. What a hit he would have made in vaudeville!"—Washington Herald.

The steamer duck of South America loses its power of flight as it matures. The reason is that its wings do not grow as the rest of its body develops.

When a youth begins to sow wild oats it is time for father to start the thrashing machine.