

The Quest of Betty Lancey

By MAGDA F. WEST

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CHAPTER III.

They held the inquest that same afternoon, and in the room where Cerisse Wayne's body had been found. Dr. McGann, the coroner, could find no trace of violence on the young and perfect body.

"She died of heart failure," he remarked, very simply. "Probably the animal who caused the police such fright and trouble gained access to the room, and the sight and shock were too much for her patently fragile constitution to withstand. Remember, that this apparition has brought on Mrs. Desterie a stroke of paralysis, and may result in the permanent derangement of her mind."

"I have wired Doubleday, Franz & Co. in San Francisco," he continued. "Their reply just received is that they know but little about Cerisse Wayne. They declare that they knew her as Mrs. Wayne. Also that for five years past \$2,000 a month has been deposited to her credit with them. Parke & Gray, solicitors, of London, England, have handled the drafts sent to the San Francisco bankers. Mrs. Wayne drew on this amount so freely that at times her balance was practically nothing, and frequently her account showed a small overdraft. For the past several months, however, her demands on the account have been very slight. Last month \$4,000 was sent for her credit, and her present balance is approximately \$6,000. Besides this they have a casket, said to contain almost priceless jewels, that belong to her. A copy of a photograph of Mrs. Wayne, which they have in their possession, has been forwarded, and Henry Franz, one of the junior members of the firm, is coming East to view the body. They report they have cared for her mail for some time past, and during this time she has had it forwarded to nearly every imaginable point, both in this country and abroad. In her handbag there was nearly \$150 and nothing to indicate that she had been mentally depressed or was in poor health. Over-indulgence in cigarettes may have unduly excited her mind. It is patent that she read and smoked till she grew drowsy and then lightly tossed her book aside. Possibly she wakened from some quiet dream to behold that creature in the room, and died of fright. There was one second of intense horror and all was over."

"How did that—that—that—get in, doctor?" interrupted the still disheveled Doherty.

"Don't you know that there's no place on the front of this, nor any other buildin' in the block where a cat could crawl up for a footin'? Ain't they all smooth sandstone, worn as slick as me ast year's coat. And wasn't both of the windows there closed and locked in the bargain, and no chimney in the room? Maybe the creature killed the pritty little girl after it got in all-right, but how did it get in? Here's another thing. Will ye look at that bed? Now there's been two people sleeping in that bed, sir, one of them far heavier and bigger than the poor little girl you've just been inquiring over. And here, now, is a cigarette stub that's different from the others—stronger, can't you see?"

The policeman held out the stub in question, and it was passed wonderingly from hand to hand, and later marked exhibit "A."

"Entrance might have been effected from the hall," said the coroner with a puzzled frown.

"So? Wasn't the door bolted from the inside? Can't you see where it was broke to get in?" retorted Doherty.

"Ah, someone was inside and rushed out when Mrs. Desterie opened the door," muttered Larry Morris of the "Times."

Everybody in the room directed his attention to the corner where the newspaper folk were sitting. There were eight or ten men in the little group and one woman, a fair, calm-eyed girl, Betty Lancey of the "Inquirer." Betty was barely 23, one of those tall, athletic, wholesome girls who demand classification in the mental menu as well-cooked oatmeal with rich cream, country honey, baked apples or new milk. Larry Morris was very much in love with Betty, but he didn't know it and neither did she.

Pierre Desterie denied Larry Morris' suggestion. His wife Annie Desterie could not come as a witness to corroborate his statement. Raving and shrieking they had carried her off to the hospital hours before. Pierre, for his wife, and himself, told all he knew of their unfortunate boarder.

"She came Monday night," quavered the little black-skinned fellow. "She was all dressed in green. She had the prettiest eyes you ever saw, they were just like those of a hurt baby. So many violets were pinned on her breast you'd have thought 'twould have wearied her to carry them. She brought no trunks, only the green bag there. Said she wanted room and board for two weeks

and would pay well for them. Annie took her because of what she paid, and because she was so pretty. She slept late mornings and Annie was going to make her move to-morrow because she slept so late it made breakfast drag along till noon. The women in the house didn't like Mrs. Wayne. They said she painted her face and smoked cigarettes. The men made soft eyes at her and the woman got jealous. Annie said she had awful fine things in her valise, and lots of jewelry. Annie came up stairs to wake her, for it was lunch time, and then it all happened. There couldn't anybody have rushed down the stairs. I was in the hall when Annie fell, and Doherty was with me, and he came right up here after we'd carried Annie to her room. That was the only time the hall was alone."

"How long did that take you, Doherty?" asked Johnny Johnson of the newspaper coterie. He was thinking that the coroner was a shade too judicial and prosy about the inquiry.

"Some six minutes or so," slowly answered Doherty. "Mrs. Desterie's a weight to carry; she's pretty fat, you know, lately. Her room, too, it's clear back on the second floor."

They read the letters aloud. The enterprising newspaper boys had already had them photographed so that their papers might reproduce them.

The longer of the two was undated, the other bore date of eight months previous, in mid-August and ran:

"Cerisse Dear—Heart of mine, I have so longed for a letter. Do you still refuse to remember? Will you not forgive or must I die without word or sign from you? Forgive me, Cerisse, dear, forgive me."

The other, couched more formally, though in the same writing, read: "Cerisse—So the wander-just still pervades your heart? Can you calm your restless mind and soul and body sufficiently long to realize that home, husband, children and the development of womanhood's ideals is the title life exacts from each of your sex?"

"You must pay now, Cerisse, or pay at the end. If you defer payment of your indebtedness to the scheme of all creation till the end you will find the interest hard to handle. I shall appeal no more. Entreaties do not move you. Neither do threats and commands are naught to you. But let me impress one thing upon you. If you do not return to me before the first of the coming year, I will kill you. Do you understand what I mean when I write this? I have never seemed able to make you comprehend anything I have ever written or said. You won't understand this, you won't realize that you will be dead, murdered, before the blossoms weight the orchards if you still persist in absenting yourself from H."

"Seems to me that 'H,' whoever 'H' is, must have been intoxicated, derailed or doped on his correspondence course," whispered Larry Morris to Betty Lancey.

"Oh, don't joke," replied Betty. "How can you at such time? Such a beautiful woman as she was, too. I'd have loved to have seen her as she must have been when she was alive."

"Death from causes unknown. Probably heart failure superinduced by fright," came the coroner's verdict.

This ultimatum disposed of the body, which was buried next day. But it didn't of the Monster. That was in a cage in the municipal zoological gardens, snarling, whining and making the hours hideous. And it didn't dispose of the story. That went flashing around the world on the wires, while newspapers the country over seized the scent to track the "greatest crime mystery of the age."

CHAPTER IV.

Early next morning Larry Morris sat in Le Roy's cafe, an all night restaurant and rendezvous of the newspaper men, industriously disposing of a roast beef sandwich.

Larry's forehead was twisted into half a dozen corrugations. He was hoping none of the boys would come in till he had got this Wayne story a little clearer in his head. Larry and two photographers had made three trips out to the Park to see the awful thing which some apt reporter had christened the Man-Aperilla.

One by one the boys came trooping in. And the Wayne murder was the topic of the night.

"I'll tell you what it is, boys," said Hank Smith. "That Man-Aperilla is half-human and I know it. When those white and black eyes were turned upon me I felt my soul crawl out from under me, and I was left there hanging in space. Tell you what it is, there's a story there."

"Cut it, Hank, cut it," called little red-headed John Johnston, the best police reporter in town. "Here, Mamma," to the waitress, "bring Hank some eatings so the rest of us can take a rubber at the conversational

game. Wasn't that girl a stunner, though? And did you notice, too, what a dead match that her hair was for the color of the pelt on the beast?"

Now every man at the table had noted just that point. It was so obvious a point that it was startling. Each had been loath to launch an opinion on it. But Johnny had a way with him of pumping all you knew by bold plays. Each man took counsel with himself wondering what Johnny would do next. For ten years these boys and Johnny had met every Monday night, and the crowd had learned when to give him rope.

But just now Johnny and his bowl of rice and milk relapsed into silence while his companions ranged far in wild theories of who "H" was, what part he had played in the life and death of Cerisse Wayne, whether she was wife, widow, murdered or simply another victim of the suicide list.

By and by Johnny dug down into one of the ever bulging pockets of his always baggy trousers. The by-word was that Johnny always looked so much like a burglar that he never had any trouble gaining the confidence of the rather reticent people of that profession.

"Hunting for a quarter, Johnny, or a toothpick?" questioned Larry Morris.

"Here, look at this," answered Johnny.

Into their midst he twirled the something he had drawn from his pocket. It was a man's garter of lavender silk elastic, the buckle hand wrought from rose gold, set round with amethysts and on the face the initial "H," worked out in emeralds and amethysts of excessive smallness but exceedingly great brilliancy.

"Where did you get that?" came the chorus.

"Well," said Johnny, "listen. I picked this up in the Desterie house about an hour ago. Say, everybody about that house has got stage fright. They are all moving out. An earthquake couldn't move them quicker than they are going. The death watch has got its grip on the whole thirty-five boarders. More than half of them are speeding away to spend the night with hand-baggage only. Great show, too, to watch them hustle out. I'm going to sleep up there to-night. I picked this garter up in the closet where it had rolled down behind a little shelf. Now women, you know, don't wear garters like this."

"Might," bellowed Hank Smith. "Saw a telegraph story the other day that they had taken to wearing half hose in New York."

"But here's the question," continued Johnny, "no man in the house knew Mrs. Wayne nor anything about her. Why, the only decent word any one of those curious passed about her was that no one had come to see her since she arrived, and that she had appeared embarrassed when her fellow boarders of the sex masculine attempted to pay her any attention."

"I'll just wager that she was some poor, sweet little girl who had married some old fool for his money," interposed Phillip Hartley, whose sympathetic heart beat for all the mistreated women in the world. "She's found him unbearable, and refused to live with him, and he's just hounded her to death. That 'H' may have stood for 'Hubby,' in the letter that had the threat to kill her. I believe she's been taking slow poison, and came here where she wasn't known to snuff it off quietly."

"How about the Man-Aperilla?" flouted Larry Morris. "Proceed, Jules Verne II. Why don't you go farther, and have it a trained ape sent carrier pigeon, bloodhound-fashion by the ogre-husband, to choke her to death?"

"Because she wasn't choked," contended Hartley. "Heavens, what a woman she must have been."

"Oh, to kill from jealousy," added Hank Smith. "Why, hallo; here's Betty Lancey at this hour of the morning. Betty, don't you ever get through work? And you're all out of breath. What's wro'g, Mamma, get her some tea. What is the matter, Betty?"

Betty, white as print paper, sunk on a chair. Her big blue eyes were opened wide. "Boys," she said. "Come with me; come quick, don't say a word, but tell me, am I crazed or dreaming; has it really happened or am I hallucinating? Oh, no! don't stop to finish eating; come quick or it will be too late. I am afraid to stop alone in that awful room. You know I missed my train home and stopped at the hotel to-night, and, oh, it startled me so."

"What's up, anyhow?" asked Johnny. "Tell the rest of them, Betty. I'm going up to get chummy with the mystery, sleeping all night in the Desterie house. Maybe I'll have a visitation, seeing as how my own head is some reddish. 'Tisn't like you to have stage fright, Betty."

"I haven't got it," she snapped. "But just as I started to get into bed and went over to raise the shade, I looked across the court into one of the other rooms of the hotel. And in there what do you think I saw?"

Womanlike Betty paused to give her audience a thrill.

"Oh, nonsense; out with it," commanded the boys.

"Cerisse Wayne, her ghost or her double, and the handsomest man I ever saw!"

(To be continued.)

Often the Case.

The editor of the magazine was somewhat dubious.

"Curious," said he, "that this anecdote of Napoleon has never been in print before."



Spraying for Apples.

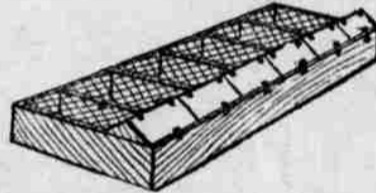
Experiments at Tragg Orchard, located at Rockford, Ia., have proven that it pays to spray. In an orchard of 2,900 trees two small plots were sprayed. The average yield for the orchard was less than one-fifth bushel per tree, while in one of the plots under experiment the yield averaged two bushels per tree. This is proof conclusive that if the whole orchard had been sprayed, and it could have been done at but little more expense, the result would have been 5,000 bushels instead of 500, or even less.

The benefits of the treatment were not confined to increasing the yield. Not only was there more fruit and finer fruit where the trees were sprayed, but the fruit hung to the trees better. The great superiority of the sprayed fruit over corresponding grades of unsprayed fruits was apparent to every one who examined the crop. The treatments may be given in this order: When the leaf buds are opening, just before the blooming, just after blooming, about two weeks after the third treatment, the last of July or first of August. In all this work it is best to use liquid Bordeaux mixed with paris green or some other effective poison.—S. A. Beach in Agricultural Epitomist.

Box for Sitting Hens.

I have often been troubled by having hens fighting over their eggs. The hen that wishes to lay always prefers to get on the same nest with the hen that is sitting, and the result is several broken eggs. I have fooled them by making a box like the one shown in the cut. Each door opens into the nest where the hen is sitting, and from this nest there is a little covered runway in which the hen can exercise.

The nests are made 14x16 inches



KEEPS HENS FROM FIGHTING.

and the affair will accommodate six hens. When a hen wishes to sit I put her in one of the nests and give her three or four china eggs until she has demonstrated that she is willing to incubate in this new place.—Mrs. M. K. Anderson, in Farm and Home.

Hog Makes Meat Quickly.

No animal on the farm is better adapted to turning good feed quickly into marketable meat than the hog, and none can better repay, from a market standpoint, a discriminating system of feeding. This is particularly true as to first costs, for the hog is by nature planned to utilize the least expensive feeds and will manufacture into toothsome pork much that might otherwise be reckoned of little value, if not waste. In any phase of farm economy the hog is a feature, and his proper feeding has in innumerable instances been the factor that kept a farm's profits on the right side of the ledger.—From Coburn's "Swine in America."

Alfalfa for Cows.

Where there is an abundant supply of alfalfa, do not feed the dairy cows any timothy hay, but let them have all the alfalfa they can consume without waste. A mixture consisting of 400 pounds of ground corn, 300 pounds of bran or oats supplements the alfalfa very well. Seven or eight pounds of this combination is sufficient to produce one pound of fat when fed with all the good alfalfa when an animal will consume. If the droppings of the animal seem somewhat dry, do not hesitate to recommend the use of one pound of oil meal per day.—Farmers and Drovers' Journal.

Milo for Feeding Poultry.

Many poultrymen prefer milo to corn for feeding poultry. The seeds are of convenient size for feeding, and the composition is nearly the same as that of corn. Dry-land farmers in eastern Colorado state that in an average season they can raise a ton or more grain to the acre by planting carefully selected seed and giving it thorough cultivation. It is their surest feed grain crop.

Crops for Cut-Over Lands.

Observations of the sandy pine cut-over lands in Michigan, Wisconsin and Montana have been continued by the Department of Agriculture, and work begun in the growing of hairy vetch as a seed and forage crop. The light sandy soils of the North promise to be well adapted to this crop.

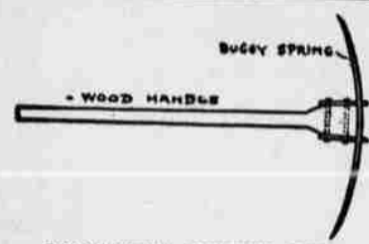
Growing Spanish Onions.

An experiment carried out by the New Mexico experiment station shows that Spanish onions may be grown

with good success in that region. A clear profit of over \$150 was realized from one-half acre of ground the past season, the product being shipped to the Chicago market. This does not take into account about 5,500 pounds of culls that would have brought at least 1 cent a pound.

Good Grabbing Hoe.

A light grubbing hoe for use about the garden or truck patch is shown in the accompanying illustration from Popular Science. Secure a leaf of an old buggy spring, about eighteen inches long, and cut the ends off square and grind them sharp. Two short pieces of strap iron with holes for rivets and one end of each upset and threaded for a nut will be needed to fasten the spring to the handle, which should be



BUGGY-SPRING GRUBBING HOE.

of wood. Assemble as shown in sketch and you will have a very handy little tool for light work.

Wonderful Work of Cow.

According to modern standards of measurements of a dairy cow, one that gives 6,000 pounds of milk a year, is but an ordinary milker. And yet to elaborate this amount of milk, this cow must manufacture not less than 780 pounds of milk solids. The cow may weigh more than 800 or 900 pounds, and the dry matter of her body is only the half of this amount, so we see the cow may manufacture new material annually amounting to more than twice that contained in her own body. To do this wonderful work she must be in the best of physical condition and must have an abundance of material containing the elements she needs.

Roup and Cholera.

Of the two diseases, says a poultryman, we fear roup more than we do cholera. The best remedy for a bird in the advanced stages of roup is the hatchet. Upon the first appearance of any disease, the ailing birds should be isolated and the poultry house thoroughly renovated and disinfected. It is always well to have some good roup remedy at hand, as the time lost in sending for a remedy after the fowls become affected only gives the disease a chance to get firmly established.

A Removable Clothespost.

For the resident, proud of his lawn, there has been designed a removable clothespost which may be taken up after use on wash day and thus the lawn is freed from any unsightly obstruction. The post and the socket base in which it is held are separate. The latter is 2½ feet long and is driven flush with the ground, a driving cap being provided for this purpose. When in position the post is inserted and can be lifted out again, leaving the lawn free of obstruction to the lawn mower or other uses. The posts are made of special high carbon steel tubing.



Brief Farm Hints.

It is a great mistake to feed pig-sour milk when they are learning to eat.

Milk the cows clean every time if you would keep up a uniform flow of milk.

The man, the cow, the feed, are three essentials to successful dairying.

Choose for the breeding mare a solid color—dark bay, black or chestnut.

The disposition of a horse has a great deal to do with his value on a farm.

A farmer's wife will not find it hard to get private customers in town for genuine fresh eggs.

Do not keep cows for a side issue; make it a business, like any other branch of farm work.

Examine seed potatoes to see they have not sprouted at the bottom, although the top may look all right.

Get a garden. Make up your mind to live well this summer. Life is too short to live on the husks of the farm.

The fact that a hog will eat almost anything and turn it into meat does not imply anything will do for the hog