

The Quest of Betty Lancey

By MAGDA F. WEST

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CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

But Betty now tried her wiles on Meta. English, her smattering of French and a base maceration of German were hurled at the black girl's ears. Meta pretended to understand nothing Betty said to her. Tyoga was absent, Le Malheureux apparently had disappeared into thin air, and Betty was like a caged lioness. She was permitted to wander through the castle, for such the edifice proved to be, but with Meta ever at her side. The architecture of the castle was of non-descript type, and it was rudely fashioned of granite, moss and vine grown and surrounded by parked gardens filled with tropical foliage and flowers. At the end of the gardens was a miasmatic river, thickly green and vile of odor, filled with rank reptiles and nauseous water plants. Beyond the river stretched the desert, yellow and hard. All this you could see from the upper windows of the castle, farther than a radius of fifty yards around the porticos Betty nor her handmaiden was not allowed to set foot. Within the castle was a small sandpacked court with an asthmatic fountain and heat-wrangling plants. There Betty and Meta sat and Betty read the few books that were available, tried to teach Meta to dance and learned dances of her in return; tried, too, to learn Meta's guttural speech and failed sadly in teaching English to Meta. Which, along with certain other occurrences that happened as time went on, made Betty fairly certain that Meta already spoke English, or else understood it so perfectly that the girl was under instructions to betray no familiarity with the foreign tongue. A favorite game of these two girls became a variation of lawn tennis, a native game, which they played seated, hurling over a low net celluloid balls of light weight and gay colorings.

The evening of the third day Betty grew overwhelmed with such an uncontrollable loneliness that she could not help crying. Meta, who had just brought her supper of cocoonut, freshly cut, mixed with pineapples and guavas, a trussed pigeon, figs, dates, and fell sobbing, too, and tried inarticulately to find out what she wanted.

"Tyoga, Tyoga!" wailed Betty. Her nerves were at breaking point and the Jackal who howled in the hills to the north was crowling her with his yowling, and she was sick, so sick, of it all, of the mystery, the silence, the loneliness.

Meta hesitated and then ran away like a deer. She came back troubled after an absence of a quarter of an hour or so, bearing in her hand a wax tablet on which was written in an old-fashioned slanting hand:

"Tyoga cannot come to you yet. Will you be patient but a little longer? She is very busy. She will try and come in a few mornings."

Betty took the tablet to bed with her, telling herself that she was getting positively foolish.

Meta went along, caressing her as much as she dared. Betty began to lose sight of the fact that Meta's skin was black. She had already done this with Tyoga. As Meta aided Betty to disrobe the slave's hand caught in the slender chain of the little gold locket that Betty wore always round her throat, and snapped its links asunder. The chain fell to the floor, and as it hit the tiling the locket flew open, disclosing Larry Morris' face. Meta picked it up, sighted the face, and girl-like, scented the trouble. She gazed intently at Larry's counterfeit presentment, studying it closely. Then she nodded her approval and shook an accusing finger at Betty, which moved Betty to tears again.

Meta laughed, and with much slinking began to finger around within the capacious founces of her striped kilt. With much perspiration, and with what might have been blushes on a fairer skin she finally produced an odd little hand, painstakingly carved from ivory with inlaid nails and veins of gold. She held this high for Betty to gaze at, then pointed alternately to herself and Larry Morris' picture with such illuminating pantomimes that Betty immediately estimated that the ivory hand was the truth-sign of Meta and of a somewhere dusky-beloved!

Tyoga was three days in coming. Then she was much distraught and looked like a ragged edition of her once buxom self. First she called Meta aside and spoke with her long and earnestly—Betty would have vowed it was in French. Then Tyoga came to Betty.

"You are in danger of your life," she said, simply. "We all are. We are sorry for this, Miss Lancey. We had not expected it. We had thought all dangers were well guarded against, that all precautions had been taken. You and Meta must be left alone here in the castle for weeks. But be not afraid. Besides the secret entrance which none knows but Meta, there is no approach to the castle save from

that river on the south and to cross that"—she shuddered—"to cross that is to swallow death. I have promised you a safe return to your people, and I go now to make that assurance doubly sure. Le Malheureux sends you his best wishes, and is sorry he cannot come in person, and now, farewell!"

The negress turned and left the two girls together, Betty terror-stricken, homesick, unnerved, Meta stolid, immobile as the castle itself.

For several weeks the weather was fine, almost supernatural in its beauty and glow. Betty troiled the castle over for hint or trace of any electrical apparatus, but none did she find. There were dozens of chambers similar to the one she occupied, what might be a throne room, a great dining hall, a mammoth kitchen, and one big room that possibly was an observatory, but which was most securely bolted, barred and cemented shut. Even American prowess dared not tamper with such solidity of masonry.

Meta and Betty had finally accomplished a species of pigeon dialect that like Crusoe and his man Friday permitted them to signify their wants and dislikes but prohibited the dangerous conversation of confidences and personal communications unto which women are so prone to fall! Betty had given up the idea of the note in a bottle, the sensational wireless message and such like methods of communication with the loved ones at home, and those of the newspaper fraternity in particular ever since she caught sight of the pigeons. She surreptitiously carved this message, "Betty Lancey, Africa," on the wing of a poor suffering bird and vainly tried to shoot it briskly away in the direction that she thought housed civilized people. This carving was a work of perspiring labor but it diverted Betty more successfully than anything else might have done. This occupation amused and exhilarated because it revolved around the constantly diminishing germ of hope that so was near to dying in Betty's bosom.

First of all, she had nothing to scratch with but a hairpin. And with tropical sun, and sea voyaging, hairpins had become scarce enough to be valuable. Second, Meta was always watching, and thirdly, you never could finish a bird at one sitting and it was terrible to try to catch any of the birds, and worse yet to get hold twice in succession of the same bird you had been working on last. Frequently there would be as many as three dozen birds, half bedecked with Betty's carvings, hopping around at one time. Betty held the thought that if one of these birds should perchance be picked up it might send people within a continent of finding her.

There was something romantic about living in this desert and swamp-bound castle until the rains came on. Then it was more aggravating than anything Betty could ever have imagined.

"Worse than any city editor I know starting out to play wrecking crew with an entire office," she commented, grimly.

For an African rain in the central part of that shadowy continent is not a rainstorm as we know it. The lakes, the rivers, the sea itself seem to have risen and to be descending in flat layers and sheets of the wettest wet that ever mortal knew. Lightning in more varieties than Betty had dreamed might ever have been patented broke round the grim old castle, and the two lonely young girls loved the goat harder than ever.

Later they had an addition to their family. A decrepit old lion, a beast so mangy, worm eaten and toothless that one longed in pity to kill him then and there, crept in from the jungle one cold, rain-pelted night. He frightened the two girls half to death at first sight, then they both laughed heartily at sight of his infirmities and took him in and made him royally welcome. He expressed his gratification in croupy roars that caused Betty to long to feed him hard and sugar, the same as her mother had given her when she was a croupy, wheezy kiddie.

But as a burglar alarm those roars were the best of all inventions, as Betty expressed it in the journal she was pretending to keep.

"As a perfectly proper property lion, City Editor Burton is a peach." Betty had named the lion "City Editor Burton" after the one being in the Inquirer office whose very voice was calculated to instantly remove the scarp of any cub reporter whoever sharpened a pencil in a newspaper office.

Between City Editor Burton and the pigeons Betty found less opportunity for worry than did Meta. Perhaps that was because Tyoga had not told Betty the same tale she had whispered that hot morning into the awe-struck ears of Meta. The black girl knew of the danger threatening, and feared in silence.

So strong had grown the attachment between Meta and Betty that she

young Nubian, who, truth to tell, spoke English with rare perfection, had much ado to keep up their farce of pigeon English and to refrain from outpouring her soul to the white skinned, but now sadly-tanned Betty.

CHAPTER XIII.

Johnny Johnson and Larry Morris arrived in Algiers early in August. It was hot and the dust was equalled only by the flies. Larry spoke a little French, Johnny nothing but English. They were both seasick and both tired of the task they had set themselves upon. In Chicago darkest Africa had looked to them rather a small and unimportant province, a shrunken Rhode Island. In Algiers darkest Africa overlapped every continent on the globe. The apparent futility of the undertaking weighed them down.

Night fell. Then followed stars and a subdued rumble of the city life for a brief and restful interlude. Later the mirth and ribaldry of the cafes—Algiers at her worst.

This was Africa. Bad enough on the coast. But to ship for the inland! It was an impossibility. They sought forgetfulness in the cafes. Before one in particular the crowds were swarming like flies over molasses. Within, a woman, she looked to be an American at that, blonde and full-figured, singing an atrocious French song with an even more atrocious Maine accent. Between verses she mingled the caw-caw.

"Let's get out of this," said Larry. "John, look at the negro over there. Did you ever see such a Colossus in your life?"

More than the two newspaper men were watching the negro in question. He was nearly seven feet high, magnificent in his proportions, and dressed in immaculate white duck. His features were typically African, but he had the bearing of ancient kings and high intelligence lurked in his eyes, and was planted at the corners of his mouth and in the lines along his nostrils.

Standing in the corner close to the stage, he was regarding the pitiful thing that gambled there with the same impassive pity that a man watches a butcher kill a little squealing pig. The pig is not worth much in the aesthetic scale as life goes, but through him life may be sustained. One pig more or less to feed the masses benefits the masses, and is very good for the pig. It lets him out of being a pig, and provides for his transmigration into another shape.

As the two Americans turned to look at the negro he was leaving the cafe. All eyes turned from the dancer to his coal-black pulchritude. The dancer, noting this waver of allegiance, lurched forward and kicked into the air with deft aim. One gaudy red satin slipper flew directly through the crowd and grazed the giant on the back, falling within a foot or two of the two Americans.

"That was a good shot!" ejaculated Johnny. Larry Morris was watching the muscles working in the African's face as he stooped to pick up the slipper.

"Because I'm black," he heard the man mutter, in pure English. "Because I'm black."

Straight through the crowd strode the black man, and up to the stage, overturning half of the tables in his way as he went. At the footlights he leaned over, held out the shoe and beckoned to the dancer to place her foot within it. But the women, with the whimsicality of her sex, turned her head away and smote the African twice across the cheek.

The black man straightened himself up like a steel bar, uncurved in a white hot furnace. He took the shoe and flung it at the dancer, lightly but accurately. It struck her across her painted mouth, and the steel plate on the heel tore the gentle skin of her full lip. The blood streamed down in a tiny thread over her chin and dropper on her white shoulders.

The habits of the cafe could not endure this treatment of their favorite. Pandemonium was loosed. Bottles, lamps, glasses, even chairs, they hurled at the retreating figure of the African. He was cut and bruised in a dozen places and almost overcome, for the strength of a Hercules could not have resisted such onslaughts. Johnson and Morris had gone out of the door when the riot began, and were turning down the street when the black burst out, winded, panting, and closely pursued.

By the curb stood an automobile—a great red touring car; it belonged to Suivever, the Associated Press man at Algiers. A weak, dissipated little fellow, Suivever was at that moment the foremost in consoling the dancer.

Larry Morris thought quickly. He knew Suivever well; they had worked together in the States, and the negro interested him.

"Crank her, Johnny," he cried, pointing to the automobile, and while Johnny cranked the machine Morris hustled the black within the car, threw from his perch the dazed chauffeur and in three minutes the black, Larry Morris and Johnson, in Suivever's car, were headed for the desert with the mob howling hyena-like behind them.

"All right, old fellow; we'll help you," Larry had whispered in the black's ear as he hurried him towards the motor. Larry had had to do it, for downed as he was, the black instantly made a motion of resistance towards anything that smacked of captivity.

(To be continued.)

Reckless Driving.

"What is the matter with your wife? I see she's got her hand in a sling."

"Reckless driving."

"Horse?"

"No; nail."

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Aden makes ten million cigarettes a year at a very low cost of production. Wages are 16 cents a day.

News paper is made by machinery at the rate of from 150 to 400 feet a minute, according to width and quality.

The Peruvian Indians are credited with having the greatest range of vision of all races. Cases have been recorded of their distinguishing human beings eighteen miles away.

None of the monarchies of Europe, with the exception of Russia, can show a larger area than that of Texas—she possesses 57,000 square miles more of territory than the kaiser's realm.

James M. Henderson killed a horned snake at his home, near Bush river, on the Belfast road. It was about two feet long and lying on a stump in the field. At the end of its tail was a horn, something like a rooster's spur.—Newberry (S. C.) Observer.

Despite its shortness, Downing street, London, contains not only the prime minister's residence, but also the treasury, foreign office, colonial office, the office of the chancellor of the exchequer and that of the privy council. It was built on a swamp and the ground under the big houses is sown thickly with age blackened wooden piles.

Tar water was a cure-all in the eighteenth century. It was prepared by pouring a gallon of water on a quart of tar, and the dose was half a pint in the morning and a second glass in the afternoon. Its use became so fashionable that a contemporary noted: "It's as common to call for a glass of tar water in a coffee house as a dish of tea or coffee."

The modern French letter box has the shape of a pillar, profusely ornamented with the conventional lily. The whole box or stand is fashioned after a plant, and the top resembles a bud. The body is surrounded by floral wreaths or festoons, and the base is formed by large leaves. The boxes are placed against buildings and have a very pretty effect.

Another victory for woman and another argument to strengthen the assertion that she can gain distinction in any field of mental activity, says a writer in the Theater Zeitung, is the success of the opera "Die Dorf Komtesse" at the Berlin Thalia Theater. The composer is Frau Danziger, a young talented musician, "who will assuredly contribute more to the musical wealth of the world."

King Edward, as is generally known, has a weakness for walking sticks, but a writer in Women at Home tells of another collection in his majesty's possession which will have a unique interest in the future. This consists of relics gathered from every war in which British soldiers have fought since the early days of Queen Victoria. The king has also a quaint assortment of the programs of every opera, play and concert which he has attended since he came to years of discretion.

Trenton, N. J., has recently reported fifteen business women whose occupations are scarcely feminine. They include booting, wholesale tobacco, real estate, undertaking, pharmacy, jewelry, piano dealing, insurance, shoe repairing, banking, charcoal, etc. South Chicago's situation is more spectacular, if less creditable. In addition to women doctors and police, a woman runs the worst saloon and another the best undertaking establishment, so that, from birth to death, even by "the broad way which leadeth to destruction," a feminine hand may guide.—The Delinquent.

Bushido, in a word, is the popular literature of the mikado's realm. It includes country theatricals, tales of story tellers, and musical compositions. It is not only a literature; it is an idea and an ideal. The word means loyalty, fidelity, devotion, and it may be expressed in dozens of different ways. Nor is it only a system of mental development; it is a means of soul growth as well. "What," asks Okuma, "is the best mode of spiritual culture for the people of Japan?" His answer is, "To let them understand bushido and realize its principles in themselves."—New York Press.

Khartoum is not yet a century old and it owes its existence to an oriental form of treachery. When Khedive Mohammed Ali invaded the Sudan in 1820 he marched triumphantly to Shendi, where his troops were entertained at a banquet by the submissive natives. But while the khedive's high officials were seated at the feast they shared the fate of the viands and were themselves reduced to funeral baked meats. Full of fury the army fell on Shendi and demolished it. Marching south, the invaders reached the junction of the Blue Nile and White Nile. With the conqueror's instinct they recognized that the strip of land, with its new fishermen's huts of straw, formed ideal strategic headquarters. So Khartoum finally grew into the most sensitive part of the Sudan organism.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Old age insurance is compulsory in Germany.

Sweden and Spain have the fewest alien residents.

Four and a half million gross boxes of matches are used in London in a year.

A watch ticks 157,680,000 times in a year, and the wheels travel 3,558 1/2 miles.

As a general rule, a man's hair turns gray five years earlier than a woman's.

During the year 1909 the London dog-catchers caught 44,900 and dispatched 21,253.

More women marry between the ages of twenty and twenty-five than at any other time of life.

A rosebush in a garden at Freiburg covers ninety-nine square yards and bears ten thousand buds.

It is estimated that the coal mines already developed contain enough coal to supply the world for a thousand years.

The natives of Korea carry visiting cards which measure about twelve inches square, and when their use is required they are merely shown.

Bahia Blanca, Argentina, is now the largest wheat shipping port in South America. It has a population of forty thousand and is growing rapidly.

The Farthing Gazette, probably the cheapest daily newspaper in existence, has been started in Moscow, and has already a considerable circulation.

There was to be an attack by night. The darkness was impenetrable. A sergeant addressed his section as follows: "Now, pay attention, No. 2 section. We are going to do a night attack; there'll be no talking or smoking; if there are any orders to be passed down I will just tip you the wink!"

Peter the Great, Russia's famous czar, when he was staying in England had a particular liking for the companionship of Halley, after whom the comet is named. After carousing with him at Deptford one evening, Peter wheeled the astronomer in a barrow through a yew hedge and did such damage that he had to pay handsomely to John Evelyn, the owner.

Edward FitzGerald, the translator of the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam, was a more or less genial opponent of matrimony as a state. One day he said to his friend, Miss Ellen Churchyard, of Woodbridge: "Do you know, Nell, what marriage is?" Miss Churchyard thought not. "Then I'll tell you," said he. "Marriage is standing at one's desk, nicely settled to work, when a great big bonnet pushes in at the door and asks you to go for a walk with it."

It is proposed to establish a wireless telegraph station at the meteorological observatory on Mt. Mirador, in the Philippines, to give warning of typhoons to vessels in the China sea and points along the China coast. A similar station will probably be established later at Santo Domingo de Basco, on the island of Batan, for communicating information of the presence of typhoons in that vicinity to the headquarters of the Philippine weather bureau at Manila.

Tin holds chief place in Siam's metal resources and is found throughout the Siamese portion of the Malay peninsula. The average annual production is about 5,175 tons, valued at \$4,110,000. English mining companies and the Chinese are the chief workers for tin. Gold stands second to tin in the country's mineral resources, but thus far its working has not proved profitable. Copper and lead mines have also proved a failure. Transportation cost is enormous, but railways are being extended north and south.

When the British square at the battle of Abu Klea, in the Nubian desert, was penetrated by the dervishes one of them attempted to spear a gunner who was in the act of ramming home a charge. The Briton brained the Sudanese, but the rammer head split on the man's hard skull. Next day the gunner was sent for. Mistaking the reason, and knowing from experience that soldiers are charged for government property which they break, he led off: "Please, sir, I'm very sorry I broke the rammer, but I never thought the fellow's head could be so hard. I'll pay for the rammer so as to hear no more of the case."

It is a somewhat curious fact, if it is a fact, that the last of the terrestrial continents to be explored is the largest mass of raised land in the world. The concentration of attention upon the South pole since Commander Peary landed the other end of our axis makes it highly probable that the antarctic antipodes will soon be dangling from some explorer's belt. Incidentally, the south polar continent will be opened, if not to the settler, at least to the mapmaker. We already know something of its fringe at a few points, and Lieutenant Shackleton pushed into it south of Mount Erebus and Terror for several hundred miles, but the greater portion of its surface is still terra incognita.—Collier's.