

The Quest of Betty Lancey

By MAGDA F. WEST

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CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued.)

Mrs. Harcourt looked him over from head to foot. In this broken man, with the hair slightly sifted over with silver, she seemed not to recognize the handsome husband she loved so well. They stood in silence for several moments, and then she spoke. "Harold," she asked, quietly, "I've a great blank in my mind since I got well. I remember much, too much, in some ways, and others I can't remember at all. Since I've been better this last week I've been asking why you are in jail here, more closely than I did before, and I've been wondering why you never sent me any messages nor any reply to those I sent you when I was so ill and so delirious. And they've tried to explain things to me, and I've got my subconsciousness of the things I used to do out in India, all mixed up with what they've told me. Harold, don't you remember how I used to ask you if there were two Me's, and how you used to laugh at me? How I used to say I had seen myself walking through the garden, and wonder if it were my mother's ghost, my mother and I were so alike, you know? And don't you know how I used to tell you that I had wakened from sleep at your side to see another me bending over you, kissing you? Harold, what did it mean?"

Harcourt had grown whiter than the gardenias his wife wore. He put his hands to his forehead as if he would implore her to stop, but apparently thought better of it. Plaintively her sweet, childish voice went on: "They couldn't seem to make your trouble clear to me, Harold, and yesterday they brought me the newspapers. I've read the whole story, and can't understand it. I can't see why you should write so much like this Hamley Hackleye, I can't see why that letter they found that blew from your wallet, should be a letter addressed to you by a 'Cerisse.' I can't get this Cerisse woman straight in my head! Do you know anything about her? Why did she look so much like me? And that girl that came to my room that night? I remembered about it when I read it in the paper, Harold, did you know this woman? This Cerisse Wayne? And if you did, who was she, and what was she to you? You are my husband still, Harold, and my dead baby's father, and all I possess will be yours to clear you from this unfortunate state of affairs, only be frank with me, Harold! Tell me the truth! And Harold, do you know that they say that since I quit taking the medicines you used to tell me never to miss, I've been so much better. My recollection of my childhood is coming back—Why, Harold, what is the matter?"

Harcourt had fainted. Mrs. Harcourt cried out and the turnkey came in an instant. In a jiffy they had Harcourt on his feet again. "Ask her to go away," he begged. "Ask her to go away."

But Mrs. Harcourt stood firm. Philip Hartley and the doctor, summoned by the confusion, entreated her to leave Harcourt alone, but she turned a deaf ear upon them.

"I have asked only those questions that a wife has a right to ask her husband," she continued. "It is half a year since I have seen my husband. Let him answer me, or I shall not go." Harcourt realized the corner in which he was placed. He knew, too, that Narcisse, in her normal health, or even partially so, was a force to be gained. In estimating her powers of persistence he knew well the host with which he had to reckon. Obstinacy would never do, that he knew. An appeal to her emotions might. He staked all on one throw. "Narcisse," he begged, "I'm sick, weak, unnerved, and slight of you, dear, after all this weary separation has been most heart-breaking. It has brought up all the old loneliness and—"

But Narcisse was not deceived. The days when the wool had been lightly shifted over her eyes were sped.

"Nonsense," said she, tersely. "There is a woman dead and buried out there in the cemetery so like me that people mistake her for me. They found letters in your handwriting, and addressed to her among her belongings. They found a letter in your handwriting indited to some 'Cerisse' in your wallet, along with a picture which I have seen and which never was my picture, though it is a likeness of me. Those were the papers that blew from your wallet that night in the hotel, and you lied to me and told me they were passports. Tell me, I demand it, what was Cerisse Wayne to you?"

Harcourt braced himself before he answered. Then he shouted hoarsely: "She was my real wife! And the woman I loved!"

Mrs. Harcourt did not move, though Hartley stood ready to catch her. She fainted. The guards had walked away and only Dr. Fothergill and Hartley had heard the brutal answer as Harcourt gave it. The doctor spoke first. "And Mrs. Harcourt here?"

Harcourt answered sullenly, "I married her. But I never lived with her except for that first year. After the baby came I hated her. I learned to love Cerisse—she was a woman!"

"But she, and your wife," breathed Hartley. "They were like two peas." "Woof!" expostulated Harcourt. "So is a sunbeam like its picture! So is red paper like flame! Cerisse—she was the breath of the wind, the spirit of the flower—the essence of life. Narcisse, there—an ivory idol, nothing more."

"But this Wayne woman—where did you meet her? Was she not Hackleye's wife," eagerly interposed Hartley. "Or was there a Hackleye, or did you play a dual part as well as live a dual life?"

"No, there's a Hackleye," said Harcourt. "I kill Cerisse? Nonsense. If I'd been killing it's the other one I'd killed."

"And since you weren't killing, but drugging," scored Dr. Fothergill, "you kept her brain and will controlled with your deadly dosings!"

"So?" snarled Harcourt. "Fine hypothesis you've got there. You're a mess of bally idiots anyhow, you and your old American police. I didn't kill Cerisse Wayne, I tell you, and I don't know a thing about that girl. Why don't you let me out of here?"

All trace of the English gentleman had fled from Harcourt. He was a type of the brute debased. Prison life takes the brute out of some men. It had injected it anew into Harcourt.

"Good-by, Narcisse," he called, gruffly. "I'm not going to talk any more," and he turned his back upon the visitors and skulked over to the farther corner of the cell.

And talk any more he didn't. Hartley turned in a report of the conversation with Harcourt's wife to the sergeant, and the sergeant gave it to the papers, and then they took Harcourt and put him in the sweat box, and kept him there for three days. And when he came out they knew as much as when he went in.

Mrs. Harcourt went back to the hospital. She quit chatting and laughing with the nurses as she had grown to do, and sat for hours silently by the window, ostensibly busied with some embroidery, but in reality thinking, thinking, as if to find some lost pathway that would lead her to the clue she sought.

Day after day she sat and embroidered absently in so deep a study that she could with difficulty be roused. Even Hartley was powerless to break through this abstraction and he grew despairing. But shrewd old Dr. Fothergill, after watching her narrowly for a while, bade them let her alone.

"She will stumble yet upon the lost Alf," commented the doctor, sagely.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Three days' journey in the yacht brought the strange cortege to a little cluster of native villages. The river was no longer navigable and they stopped to fit the yacht with queer runners and harness it to a string of camels. The party was transferred to camel back, and made slow progress over the desert to navigable water. Tired as they all had been of the yacht, the camel travel had become more intolerable still, and even City Editor Burton welcomed the roll of the water again.

Le Malheureux had changed his mind, and instead of going to Khartoum, at Hackleye's solicitation, they took to the ocean for Cairo. It was easier traveling on the yacht, and less dangerous than in any other way. Besides Le Malheureux did not wish to leave his electrical toy behind him, because there was no suitable place in which to lodge it. Further, he had declared his intention of returning to America, and had offered to pilot Johnny Johnson and the Morris back to their own country, an offer only too speedily accepted. By now there was no distrust of any of their odd companions in the heart of the three Americans. Even Hackleye, the tacitly accused murderer of his wife, filed a certain claim upon their sympathies, he was so bowed down by the weight of woe. His children seemed to be outgrowing their temporary dislike of him, and a truce with them was already well under way.

"He's grieving himself to death over that wife of his," said Johnny. "It's a shame what an upset a woman can make, if she's beautiful and unprincipled."

Larry had made Le Malheureux promise him that once they were well out at sea he would permit the sending of a wireless to the press association stating that Betty had been found and they they all were safely returning.

"No use, you know," he explained, "in saving all the news till we get back. No reason why they should suffer from indigestion or the presses from over feeding, you know."

So when the sea was touch a week

later, this message went flashing into New York:

"Betty Lancey found. All well. Coming home. Larry Morris and she were married a month ago. Hamley Hackleye with us. Johnson."

Larry and Johnny had argued it all out between them that since Larry had carried off the bride, the glory was coming Johnny's way, so it was his name that was signed to the message.

Two continents thrilled at these words and one Harold Harcourt in his cell burst into tears.

"At last," he repeated to himself. "At last!"

But his hopes for release did not come at once. He was told he would have to wait till the party had landed in New York.

Meanwhile, aboard the enchanted yacht, as Betty still called it, Hackleye was winning new friends for himself. In spite of the suspicion that hung over him Betty could not help but like him, and the boys admitted that he seemed to be a very square fellow.

The old Cure dozed over his breviary continually, the children romped with City Editor Burton, who was a more ridiculous excuse for a lion than ever, Betty and Larry made up for lost time in love-making, and Johnny and Le Malheureux held high converse in the laboratory and battery room. Before they came to Cairo Johnny was as chock full of electrical phrases as the X-ray machine of sparks. He gave an electrical clinic every time you went near him, and everybody aboard, from Tyoga, in her neat little electrical kitchen, and Benoni and Meta, sitting astern in silent communion, sped away from Johnny and his newly acquired knowledge. Hackleye was the only lonely one aboard. He spent most of his time in a steamer chair, gazing at the sky line in the day time and at the stars at night. As they neared Cairo he became even more diffident and subdued.

His house at Cairo was a well set up home, furnished in an odd combination of oriental and occidental modes, and stood a little apart from the city. The children were not well. Walter's hip was bothering him, and it was agreed that it would be better to rest a week at Cairo instead of immediately setting out for America and England.

Into the house walked Johnny one day. At the door he met Benoni.

"Where's Hackleye?" he asked.

"In his rooms," pointed Benoni.

Johnny followed him down the hall. "Benoni," he urged, "why don't you loosen up and tell us about this? There's a big injustice being done somewhere, and it isn't right. Why don't you help us out. You've been a big man, as big inside as you are out. We know that. Your fidelity to the Wayne family has shown itself in a thousand ways. Let us get this all cleared up; if a nest of crime exists why can't we get at it and kill it before any more innocent people suffer from it. There's Mrs. Desterle, she never did anything to any of these people."

"She's dead," interrupted Benoni. "I got some dispatches this morning."

"Poor woman," said Johnny, "what else did you get, Benoni?"

"Nothing, except that Harcourt is still in jail, that his wife has recovered her health, and some think she is going to divorce him. They say he has confessed to having loved Cerisse Wayne!"

"What?" shouted Johnny. "I must go tell Larry. Oh, for a newspaper," he sighed for the ten thousandth time.

"Go up and talk to Hackleye," said Benoni. "He may be glad to see you."

"Benoni," Johnny said, gravely, "I don't believe he killed his wife. If it hadn't been that with my own eyes I saw Hackleye enter that bedroom where Cerisse Wayne was found dead, since you say Harcourt has confessed to having loved her, I'd say that Harcourt killed her. Those two garters I found, too, one in the Wayne room, and the other in Hackleye's home, bore the monograms 'H.' That's Harcourt's initials, too, you see."

"Go talk to Hackleye, why don't you?" repeated Benoni, and Johnny climbed the stairway with his head as fiery within as it was without, from insistent seeking that wound up only in blind alleys.

(To be continued.)

The Generous Barber.

"Here, I say! Be a bit more careful with that razor. That's the second time you've cut me."

"Well, well, so it is. But there! I always deduct a ha'penny for every cut. Why, it's nothing for a man to go out of here having won fourpence off me."—London Tatler.

Up to Her.

"I want you to give up swearing," said his wife.

"That will be easy if you'll promise one thing."

"What's that?"

"That you'll swear off letting the furnace fire go out in my absence."—Detroit Free Press.

Prepared for the Test.

Miss Bronx—Are you going to speak to father to-night?

Mr. Harlem—Why to-night?

Miss Bronx—The football season closed yesterday, and I'm afraid you soon will be out of training.—Judge.

Genealogical.

She—How far can your ancestry be traced?

He—Well, when my grandfather resigned his position as cashier of a county bank they traced him as far as China, but he got away.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Carnegie says he has made forty-two men millionaires.

Wood fibers are strongest near the center of the limb or tree trunk.

The salary of lieutenant general of the United States army is \$11,000.

Sleeping sickness has been known in West Africa for one hundred years.

In Norway the average length of life is greater than in any other country.

Russia is establishing numerous wireless stations over its great territory.

An electric machine has been made to wash and purify the air in any room.

It is estimated that 60,000-horse power can be easily developed from the St. Lawrence river.

An Alabama man, ninety-seven years of age, says he has eaten hot biscuits regularly all his life.

The Yarmouth and Lowestoft herring season has yielded 800,000,000 herrings, which sold for \$5,000,000.

Formaldehyde is used in meat exported to England, and the government is making investigations as to its effect on the health of consumers.

Yale students are teaching more than one hundred New Haven boys in classes under the direction of the Young Men's Christian Association.

Rice stands first in the list of Siam's agricultural products. The average yearly export of rice for the last five years has amounted to 948,389 tons.

The Belgian minister of the colonies has decided to organize an expedition to go to the Congo to study sleeping sickness and to seek means to cure it.

Mrs. Cornelius Zabiskie is chairman of the committee which proposes to build a woman's clubhouse in Brooklyn at a cost of \$100,000. At a mass meeting held the other day in the chapel of Packer Institute stock subscriptions to the amount of \$20,000 were received. The largest single contribution was that of the Brooklyn Women's Club, which guaranteed \$7,500. The building will not be started until the committee has the full \$100,000.

One of the marvels of the age is the extreme cheapness of ocean carriage. The modern tramp steamer could carry her cargo one thousand miles for 9d a ton and make a profit of 10 per cent. A modern tramp steamer could leave England and go around the world by the two capes, and even then carry cargo at £2 8s a ton. These are marvelous figures, and they show to what extent the world is indebted to the carrying trade.—Cassier's Magazine for May.

The population of southern California, according to Colonel Drake, who is the world's foremost statistician in such matters, can not fall, in a very short time, to exceed twenty million souls, for there is a human breed there which multiplies with the miraculous rapidity of Belgian hares. When Long Beach had a population of only a little more than a thousand there sprang up in a few months, from the smallest beginnings, more than nine hundred real estate agents.

As a specimen of how practical the Japanese are with their knowledge of western science and determination to deal with disease, they have levied a tax on every household to produce two rats every month. A fine is imposed if the rats are not caught and produced at the time of inspection. Every rat is examined, and if found to be plague infected the house from which it came is to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Twice a year every house and shop has to disgorge all its effects and be completely cleaned out. The things only go back after sanitary inspection.—Java Times.

Perhaps the reason the English are so far behind in flying is because they worked the whole thing out long ago, and are sick and tired of it, for John Milton, in "Britain to the Conquest," says that the youth King Harold, last of the Saxons, strangely aspiring, had made and fitted wings to his hands and feet. With these, on the top of a tower, spread out to gather air, he flew more than a furlong; but, the wind being too high, he came fluttering to the ground, maiming all his limbs; yet so conceited was he of his art that the cause of his fall was attributed to the want of a tail, as birds have, which he forgot to make.

At the banquet given in her honor after the Nobel prize had been awarded to her Miss Selma Lagerlof, the Swedish author, spoke of the pleasure such a festival would have given Fredrika Bremer. She said all old maids should shower blessings on the memory of Miss Bremer for showing them how to attain an independent place in the world and an object in life. She then pointed out the change which had taken place in public opinion since the days of Miss Bremer. Women were no longer set aside and looked down upon, but had gained for themselves education and standing. Among women nowadays were found graduates of universities, doctors of philosophy and medicine, and heads of great business houses, hospitals and schools.



How to Cook Asparagus.
Asparagus should be boiled gently in well salted water, standing if possible to save the heads. The shoots tied together in one bunch should be put into the pot so that the water will reach about half-way up. When they have boiled some ten or fifteen minutes they should be laid on their side so that served with white sauce or with nothing but butter if the full asparagus taste is to be brought out, this makes one of the real delicacies of the table.

Rhubarb Ginger.
Wash but do not peel the rhubarb. The pink skin gives it a pretty color. Measure the rhubarb and allow as much sugar as you have fruit. To four pounds sugar and rhubarb allow the juice of two lemons and the yellow rinds, cut thin, with an eighth of a pound of green ginger root cut in thin slices. Cook until thick as marmalade.

Mexican Scrambled Eggs.
When you are tired of plain scrambled eggs try them as they are cooked in Mexico. Roast a dozen fresh green peppers a few minutes, peel, remove the seeds and chop, when they should be boiled in a very little water until tender, and season well with butter. Beat six or eight eggs, add with salt to the peppers and fry all for a moment in hot butter.

Raisin Fudge.
Two cups sugar, one cup milk, butter size of an egg, one-half cup chocolate. Cook, stirring constantly, until bubbles break slowly. Have ready one-half pound walnuts chopped fine, and one pound chopped seeded raisins. Add these, stirring until stiff, and pour into buttered pans. Mark in squares when sufficiently cool.

Tough Steak.
To make steaks very tender lay them, before cooking, on a flat dish containing three tablespoonfuls of salad oil and one of vinegar, well mixed together. Each side of the steak should be soaked for thirty minutes—making an hour in all—just before cooking.

Quick Brown Bread.
Two cups Graham flour, one cup sour milk, one-half cup molasses, two tablespoonfuls sugar, pinch of salt, one teaspoonful soda in two tablespoonfuls warm water, three-fourths cup raisins chopped and floured. Bake forty minutes in a moderate oven. Excellent.

Hints About the House.
Gritty soaps must never be used for washing paints.

In wiping the kitchen range use a small bag or a glove.

Paper bags which accumulate so fast may be put to good use in the kitchen.

Rub mirrors with methylated spirits, and polish with a touch of blue powder.

One tablespoon of ammonia to a quart of water will clean gold or silver jewelry.

Rolls may be rewarmed and made crisp and good if placed in a paper bag in a hot oven.

The flat taste of boiled water may be removed by pouring from one pitcher to another in the open air.

Meats and fish which spatter in cooking may be seared first and then placed in the oven to finish cooking.

Ordinary wall papers may be cleaned with dough, or rubbed with a soft, clean flannel dipped in fine oatmeal.

A baking powder box with a small hole in the bottom makes a sharp, quick chopper for use when warming over potatoes or vegetables.

When boiled custard is slightly overcooked it may be brought back to the right consistency if it be thoroughly beaten with an egg beater.

When beating upholstered furniture in the house, place a damp cloth over the pieces. The dust adheres to the cloth and does not rise to the room.

The soiled lace yoke of a dress need not generally be removed to be cleaned. A plan which usually restores its pristine freshness is to rub powdered starch into the lace, let it lie some hours and then brush it out. The starch absorbs both grease and dust.

Most every housekeeper knows what a job it is to clean a grater after grating coconut, lemons, or, in fact, everything she grates. If she will have handy a small scrubbing brush or hand scrub, as they are called, and scrub with this every particle will come out immediately and leave the grater sweet and clean.

Resemblances.
"That flirtatious woman wears magnificent jewelry."
"Yes," replied Miss Cayenne; "she acts like the queen of hearts and looks like the ten spot of diamonds."—Washington Star.