

The Quest of Betty Lancey

By MAGDA F. WEST

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CHAPTER XVIII.

"If that isn't a wireless I'm hearing, I never heard one," quoth Johnny. The trio had taken refuge below, as the rain was falling heavily and there was no cabin accommodation above.

"I learned the code, you know, coming over," he confided to Betty. "Wonder what they're saying? Listen."

Johnny's knowledge was not very extensive. He deciphered the words "Tyoga," "great haste," "make all efforts to save life," and "H. H."

"Well, we're on the trail of the story, anyhow," he cheerfully mused. "That ought to be some consolation."

All night the three were crowded in a space not big enough for two of them. The yacht made good time, and when it finally stopped with a jolt, Meta sought them out and bade them go ashore.

They were landing at the wharf of what might have been a conventional English seaport country place. At the end of a driveway, over which everybody limped except City Editor Burton, who Bononi had left tethered in the yacht, rambled a pretentious house of Gothic architecture. A modern glass covered piazza was built along one side of the place, and as they mounted the steps Betty recognized within this enclosure Tyoga in cap and apron, in charge of a pair of children, approximately 9 and 10 years old. The boy was the larger of the two, a slight dark lad, with a petulant expression and awkward movements. Later Betty saw this awkwardness was caused by a deformity of the hip. The girl was plainer of face than her brother, but her figure had the perfect symmetry of all wild things that live in the open air.

Tyoga was mending a white garment, but at sight of the pilgrims she dropped her work and went forward to greet them, leaving the children staring after her.

She bowed before Betty and the two other Americans, kissed Meta warmly on the cheeks, and embraced Bononi passionately. When these two were together the relationship of mother and son was easily discernible.

"Ah, so you came safely away," she sighed, in a relieved manner. "I was so alarmed. Hamley came home this morning. He and the old man had a dreadful argument. They are upstairs now. It has been frightful. But you must not mind. I do not know what I am going to do with the children. They are getting so old now, I can't put them off with fairy tales any longer. It is racking." She turned to Betty. "I'm glad your friends found you. Poor child! The strain on you has been terrible, but the snarl is nearing its end. You shall soon see."

The interior of the house was as conventional as its exterior. Betty, Larry Morris and Johnny felt that the penumbra of mystery was at length being pierced by the return of reason.

"But if Mr. Wayne finds these people here he may kill them," objected Bononi.

"He shall not see them," assured Tyoga. "Nor Hackleye, neither. They and the children must all be out of sight before he comes down stairs. Since she is dead Hackleye cannot abide the sight of the children any more. And all her things—he wants them out of sight down here, yet he lives in her old rooms. Take them to the north wing, Meta, and I will bring the children."

The north wing had four bedrooms, a sitting room, and a small alcove. It was done in English chintz, and several canaries sung and swung in the windows. In Betty's room had been placed garments more conventional than those she wore, and a dozen little toilet conveniences, not the least welcome of which was a box of hairpins in assorted sizes. She lingered long at her dressing—why shouldn't she have done so? In all this time she had not been so near the accustomed luxuries of life. The bath tub was a delight, the brushes, creams and powders brought back visions of civilization, and even the makeshifts for fashionable clothing were a comfort. True, the skirt laid out was plainly Tyoga's and needed a dozen reefs and tucks; but for a wailer there was an old-fashioned polonaise, and this was better suited to Betty's size. When she was finished she really felt proud of herself, and awaited the reunion with the boys in the sitting room with great anticipation. They had fared better in the matter of clothes, though Johnny's trousers were too long and Larry's were at half-mast. While they criticised, commented, and compared the children burst in upon them. The boy limped quietly in, but the girl stormed through the doors like a whirlwind.

"Where you live when you were a little girl?" she flashed at Betty. "Did they always have something doing around that you couldn't see into?"

"Of course they did," said Betty. "Those things always happen when you're children."

"But I don't believe it was like it is here," persisted the child. "Here things are so funny, they make you creep if you don't want to. You needn't scowl, brother, you know it's true. Anybody can see it. And why did these people come here in those skin clothes? And why has Tyoga been so worried? And why won't papa see us, and where is mother? Do you—oh, tell me—do you think our mother's dead?" the child cried, flinging herself in Betty's lap. "We had the loveliest mother, and she's been gone for so long!"

"What was your mother's name, dear?" questioned Betty, though she knew before she asked, and felt ashamed of the query. She had the hot little head pressed close to her shoulder and could feel the rising sobs. The boy had gone over to the window and was tapping it moodily with his fingers.

"She was Mrs. Cerisse Wayne Hackleye," replied the child, "but we just called her mother."

Betty's tears mingled with those of the little girl. "I don't know, dear," she answered. "Wait till we get a post and then we'll know."

"That's what Tyoga always says," continued the child. "But the post never comes here any more. What's your name?"

"Betty Lancey."

"And his'n?"

"Mr. Johnson."

"And his'n?"

"Mr. Morris."

"Mine's Paula, and brother's is Walter Hamley," announced the child. "We just call him Walter, though. He's awfully shy, is brother. He doesn't wear mother's picture any more; he says she's been gone so long that she doesn't love us or else she'd come back. But that isn't so. Tyoga went away for a long time, but Tyoga came back. This is mother, see?"

She opened the lock of around her neck and displayed to Betty the now familiar face of Cerisse Wayne.

It was such a beautiful, lovely, mocking face but it wasn't a good face! Betty couldn't help acknowledging that to herself even as she made her bow to the witchery of the painted features before her. There was nothing of the mother there.

"I hate this place," went on Paula. "I don't like the blacks and I don't like the quiet that's always here. Papa said he'd take us to England, but since mother went away he never talks of that any more. Papa doesn't seem to love us like he did. He was away, too. He's just come home. And so cross! Why, the other day he stepped on one of my guinea pigs and killed it, and then he killed another and took and drowned the whole pen full of them in the river. He used to be so good."

"Paula, you've talked enough," chided the boy. "These folks don't care."

Larry proceeded to make friends with Walter, and Betty and Johnny kept Paula amused with a wonderful game of ball that you make out of your handkerchief and whirl around from one to another on two hat pins.

Gradually Larry and Walter got into the fun, and the revel was at its height when Le Malheureux came into the room.

"Le Malheureux!" cried Betty, and stretched out her hand in welcome. But the shrouded figure stood aside.

"Excuse me, please," he protested. "So these are your friends? Now they have found you, I hope they may be able to see you safely home again. I will ask of you, too, a favor. Will you take these two helpless children with you? They belong to my sister, Mrs. Hackleye, known to you as Mrs. Wayne. I wish they may go to their father's people in England. There is no one else who can take care of them and they mustn't stay here any longer. No," reading the question in Larry's eyes, "the father is not dead, but he is not well. And it is best for them to go."

"When can we go?" blurted Larry, "and where is the father? Didn't he kill—"

Betty threw the ball at Larry, and it struck him squarely in the mouth, interrupting the question on his lips. "Judge not," cautioned Le Malheureux. "I will dine with you later, after the children have gone to bed."

The remainder of the day was a catechism by the children. They devoured their strange visitors with questions about the country they had never seen, wondered if they would meet their mother, made a thousand childish plans for the voyage, and drew lots as to which of their pets they would take with them. Discussion as to the relative merits of white mice over guinea pigs and peacocks was bordering on belligerency when Tyoga carried the juveniles away to the room that did duty as a nursery and left their impatient elders to await the coming of Le Malheureux.

CHAPTER XIX.

The clock in the room told ten, and he was not yet there. The children

slept and Betty and her companions moved restlessly from room to room. Had it not been for Johnny, Larry and she might have been exchanging a thousand queries as to "when did you first begin to love me," and "do you remember that time?" but as it was they tried to be unselfish and make general conversation and, as is usual in such cases they only succeeded in having everybody miserable, Johnny as well as themselves.

Angry voices sounded from the corridor. One, unmistakably that of De Malheureux, the other that of an older and a more irate man.

They extinguished the lights, and Betty cautiously stealing to the door put her eye to the keyhole and her ear to the crack. Out in the hall was Le Malheureux, with him a bent old man, white-haired and saffron-skinned.

The old man leaned totteringly on a staff. "I hate you, hate you, a thousand times more than I ever have done before, oh wretched son!" he shrieked. "Vile that you are!"

"You cannot, father," interrupted the harsh voice of Le Malheureux, in a sorrowful intonation. "You have long condemned me to tortures. What I am you made me."

The two walked slowly down the corridor. Motioning to Larry and Betty to await his return Johnny followed in their wake. Through the main building and across to the south room wing they went, stopping in what was evidently the old man's sitting room. There the discussion broke out afresh.

"I hate you, I say— A thousand times more," repeated the old man. "Unfilial son! But I have outwitted you! My cohorts, my good black negroes, any one of them worth a thousand such sons as you, have found out your secret castle, the gate to those bonanza fields where the diamonds lie so closely bedded together that a needlepoint could not separate them. I am free of you now, forever, free; do you understand? That wealth that your mother and young aunt so long denied me is mine, mine and Cerisse's. Ah, there is devotion for you, devotion for you! She is a girl after my own heart! What vim! What nerve! What daring! My Cerisse! No chicken-hearted fool like you, and you, my son! Bah! Now that I have the path to the mines, now that I need him no longer, Hackleye may go, and his children with him if he wishes. They are but poor offspring for my beautiful daughter to own. Small wonder she never loved them. Nor him either. Her heart has long been with one man, and now with all this new wealth she shall have him. Money buys anything! Diamonds are money! Cerisse shall be rid of this Hackleye. I hate him, too!"

Another figure stepped out of the darkness. Johnny recognized the early morning visitor he had trailed from the Desterle home into the Flanders mansion, months before.

"Don't believe that for a moment," this man rasped. "You blithering old fool you! Cerisse is dead! Do you hear! She's dead! Dead!"

The old man dropped his staff and fell back into the arms of Le Malheureux, who led him to a seat near by.

"Hackleye, Hackleye!" wailed the old man, "you didn't—you didn't. You didn't kill her?"

Hackleye pulled a roll of newspaper clippings from his pocket and dangled them before the old man's eyes, and spread them out on the table before him. With quivering lips the stricken man read, punctuating each sentence with a moan. He saw the headlines only, then flung the papers from him and tried to reach Hackleye with his staff.

"And you, you—" he malevolently called to Le Malheureux, "why did you not prevent it?"

"How could I?" answered Le Malheureux, "and why should I? You know what Cerisse was, father. A murderer at heart, and my own sister. My mother's daughter!"

"Yes, and mine," snarled the old man. "Where are those brats of Hackleye's? I'll kill them—kill them, I tell you!"

Le Malheureux rang sharply on a bell. Bononi entered from the hall, and together they bore the old man from the room. Hackleye gathered up the clippings and with darkening brow paused before the portrait of the two children that hung on the wall before him. Opposite was a life size painting of the mother, and his wife—radiant, smiling as she had been in her early girlhood, and when she had listened to the ardent love-making of her future husband.

As the man looked the frown vanished. A breeze stealing in from the window swayed the portrait forward on the wall. With outstretched hands and lips apart the girl in the picture seemed to move towards the weary man, to offer him the roses she held in her hands. The dim lights completed the illusion. Hackleye sprang forward to embrace the girl in the picture, soft words upon his lips.

"Sweetheart, sweetheart," he cried, "you've come back to me. I know it, and you'll never go again, will you, dear? Just my girl again, just mine, just mine—"

He had touched the canvas now and its clammy surface woke him from his dream. Hurling it back against the wall, Hackleye snatched a jeweled knife from the table, and slashed the canvas into finest fringe.

"And all for love of a woman," quoth Johnny to himself, as Hackleye unseeing rushed down the corridor in a blind rage and almost knocked him over.

(To be continued.)

Despondency is not a state of humility; it is the vexation and despair of a cowardly pride.—Fenelon

THE MAN AT THE PLOW HANDLES.



Just a thought in recognition of a fellow who seldom gets into the newspapers. He doesn't make much news. He knows mighty little about the "city ways" of making money. He has a fine liking for clean financial methods and a hearty scorn for all that is crooked. Perhaps it is his manner of living that makes him want to be honest. Let that man see a problem play, one of those things that serve to satisfy the jaded appetites of metropolitan people, and you'll find a splash of red on his tanned cheek and he will wonder how it is possible for women to be present. Tell him about bribery and stock jobbing and franchise stealing and a few of the thousand forms of gouging the public, and you will jar his faith in the natural goodness of humanity.

In the spring this type of good American citizen is following a plow. It is hard work. It puts a big ache in the neck and callouses on the hands. It destroys the complexion. It calls for brown overalls and perspiration. The man is happy in his work. He whistles as he trudges along in the furrow. He clucks to the horses, and finds joy in the freedom of his life. He doesn't go into raptures over green fields and singing brooks and songs of birds. They are a part of his environment. They are routine, but he loves them just the same.

He has an enormous burden on his broad shoulders. He feeds the world. He is the brother of life itself. He toils long hours. His primary object in working is his own welfare. But he feeds the world. He makes existence possible. He is the head of the procession in which are marching the doctor, the lawyer, the banker, the idler. He is the fountainhead of wealth and prosperity. He is the creditor of humanity. It is well to remember with gratefulness this man in overalls, who follows the plow and whistles as the brown earth reveals its richness and prepares to bring forth the fruits of the field.

POPULAR SCIENCE

A cent's worth of electricity, at the average price in this country, will raise ten tons twelve feet high with a crane in less than a minute.

A French chemist has advanced the theory that the odors from vegetation disseminated through the air diminish the actinic powers of the solar radiations sufficiently to affect photography.

No coal is mined in this country lower than a depth of 2,200 feet, while several English mines penetrate 3,500 feet down, and there are mines in Belgium 4,000 feet deep. Eight inch seams of coal are mined commercially abroad, while few veins less than fourteen inches thick are worked in this country.

In a paper read before the Institution of Electrical Engineers at Manchester, England, recently, the maximum output of the five power-stations at Niagara Falls was stated at 320,000 horse-power, distributed over a distance of 150 miles. This distance will soon be increased to 250 miles, and then, said the authors of the paper, such a system of distribution will be in operation as would, if it were installed in England, supply the whole country with the electrical energy it required, from one central station.

Recent experiments by Dr. W. von Oechelhauser, in Germany, have resulted in the production from the decomposition of ordinary coal-gas in vertical retorts of a gas possessing a lifting power of about one kilogram (two and one-fifth pounds) per cubic meter. The lifting power of lighting-gas has been calculated at seven-tenths of a kilogram per cubic meter. Compared with hydrogen, the new gas has a lifting power of, in the proportion of 1,000 to 1,050. A balloon of 1,000 cubic meters filled with the new gas would lift 660 pounds more than the same balloon filled with ordinary gas.

The effect of chemistry on civilization, says Dr. Maximilian Toch, has been greater than that of any other science. "Engineering made but little progress until steel and cement, two chemical products, were cheapened, simplified, and made universal." Medicine owes to chemistry the discovery of synthetic drugs, and of anesthetics, and the progress that has been made

in the study of metabolism. The twentieth century promises even to outstrip the nineteenth in chemical progress, which will lie in the direction of controlling foodstuffs, applying the raw materials in the earth, and refining of metals.

Practically all the important infirmaries and hospitals in England have their own electric generating stations, and the size of the installations, says the London Times, would surprise the majority of engineers. The equipment has to be designed with unusual care, owing to the special conditions which prevail in hospital work. Even where a public supply is available, the use of an independent system is justified on account of the security which it gives against failure of current at a critical moment. The installations are used for lighting, heating, ventilating, telephoning and other purposes, and many hospitals have laundries operated electrically. One county asylum has its own private electric railway for conveying supplies from the nearest railway station.

A Nice Calculation.

Two very dear old ladies walked up to the window where tickets were to be sold for two popular concerts. They wanted tickets for both nights, but alas! those for the second evening were all gone. This was the more popular entertainment of the two.

"I'm so sorry, my dear!" pattered one of the old ladies to the other. "We did want to go, didn't we, and we wanted to go both nights."

"You couldn't give us two tickets for each night?" inquired the other, of the clerk.

"No, ma'am."

"You haven't two seats anywhere for the second night?"

"No, ma'am. Couldn't give you nose-room."

A great resolution beamed upon her gentle face.

"Then," said she firmly, "give me four tickets for the first night. We will make them do."

"Why, sister," quavered the other, "are you going to invite somebody?"

"No," said she, "but if we can't go both nights—"

She paused, bewildered, quite out of her calculation. Then a happy thought struck her, and she added, "We'll go twice the first night."

Why is it that married women never wear as much false hair as unmarried women?