

That Frivolous Miss Bell

By JEANNETTE SCOTT BENTON

Professor Leigh, the principal of the high school, was in attendance at the school board meeting by request of the board. The principal subject under discussion was the hiring of an assistant Latin teacher in the high school.

"Of course, professor, you understand," the chairman explained, "that the necessity for a new teacher arises as it does in the school year giving us very little choice. The board, however, has decided unanimously upon Miss Daisy Bell, room 7, of the Oak street school. What do you think of her?"

Professor Leigh frowned. "My actual knowledge of Miss Bell's attainments is limited, but she is a frivolous looking young woman. To me she seems a rather impossible Latin teacher. Her name, Daisy Bell, in the faculty would almost lower its tone."

He glanced around and caught the covert amusement of his auditors, his lean young face set in stern disapproval. To Professor Leigh life was "real and earnest."

He wrote under the frivolity and laxity of those latter days the lightness and love of display shown by the majority of his feminine acquaintances, annoyed him. Women were really degenerating, in his opinion, and he was only thirty years old.

"I know," he said stiffly, "my objection is unusual, but the girls of the high school run to do much frivolity themselves. The teachers should be of another type, if they are any. They even have a way of wearing their hair in a sort of arch over their faces so that in profile you can barely see the tips of their noses. That Miss Bell wears hers very much the same way."

The board relaxed decidedly. Professor Leigh regarded them in stern perplexity.

"I confess," the chairman remarked, "that we have not particularly considered Miss Bell's appearance. She graduated last year with unusual Latin recommendations, and for her ability as a teacher, the work in room 7 of the Oak street school is not easy, and she has succeeded there. Of course if she is not satisfactory, professor, other arrangements can be made for next year."

The professor arose. "My objections to Miss Bell," he said, "are of course theoretical. I am struck a smile of such entire confidence and good fellowship that it was easy to understand his hold on the high school in spite of his prejudices. And if you say 'try her' I shall do it with confidence in your judgment."

Which was not quite true, for every day his soul arose in disapproval against Miss Daisy Bell. "What could there be in a girl with such a white face fluffed around with such a mop of yellow hair and such an impression of frills and fancy things all about her?" He wondered for her influence in the school. The girls seemed so infatuated with her. How could she teach Latin? It was almost against nature.

Miss Bell grew red and white under his scrutiny in the Latin class, for he came in frequently during the first month's recitations.

At last he was obliged to admit that she could teach Latin fairly well, but he resented it. He hated instruction. She gradually became the trial of his life, and he always tried to make her as inconspicuous as possible. During the annual visitation of teachers he actually steered them away from Miss Daisy's classes. She was a blot on the dignity and high standing of his beloved school. It seemed to him that she didn't have any trouble with her classes. The girls were obedient and the boys were gentlemen.

But she could not understand Professor Leigh. She could see in his prettified fashion and worked her hardest in school, but she could not melt his uncompromising disapproval. She trembled for her position the following year. It meant head and butte and saying what she owed for her course at the university.

In view of this contingency her present bread and butter was of the cheap sort, and she turned and pressed and darned her frivolous little frocks and stuck a bow here and trimmed in a lacey frill there to hide the bad spots that the bright spring sunshine was making so apparent.

It was nearly 9 o'clock one evening when Miss Daisy discovered that by some mischance she had overlooked part of her Latin examination papers. They had to be graded that night, so she threw a little shawl over her shoulders. "I will have to go over after them," she murmured, and ran across the street to the dark, silent building. The hall looked terrible and dark, and she fairly flew up the stairs into the Latin recitation room. She lighted several matches and finally succeeded in finding the missing papers. The windows pined miserably in the corner, and she was sure she heard a noise somewhere in the building.

She fled in a little panic from the room to the stairs, halfway down she saw some one advancing toward her from the gloom below. She gave a little shriek, then slipped and fell headlong. She heard a smothered exclamation; then some one caught her frantically with terror, she tried to regain her feet.

"There, little one, there. Don't be

frightened, dear," a voice entreated—Professor Leigh's voice.

In her relief and the reaction she clung to him like a frightened child, half sobbing.

He held her closer, his face almost against hers. "Are you hurt?" he asked anxiously.

Then, after a minute, his clasped hands relaxed, and she slipped quickly away from him.

"I had no idea it was you," she said faintly in a small voice.

"I tried to tell you," he answered softly.

Another moment of silence followed; then the girl sped down the hall and out of the open door.

The professor leaned against the banister and passed his hand over his eyes.

A new heaven and a new earth had opened up before him.

He knew now that all his disapproval and condemnation had been a fight against himself, not her. He dared to think now of the stories he had heard of her fainting during her university education; how hard she had worked and how he had persecuted her. Poor little thing! And all because he was afraid of himself. What a narrow minded bully he was anyway—and now?

He could not answer that. He went out into the spring night slowly with wet head. He had forgotten utterly the errand that sent him to the school house. He even forgot to lock the door.

A very erect, plump checked little assistant Latin teacher and a very self-conscious professor came into the assembly room the next morning. Both the professor and Miss Daisy were in a rather bewilderment state of mind.

Miss Bell took the day off to recover over her endangered position. In fact, a little smile was more apt to come. Whenever the professor's eyes met hers there was a look in them that sent the red flushing into her cheeks. Possibly he could call any one "dear" when she fell unexpectedly into his arms, but she did not believe it.

So she asked Professor Leigh if in a few weeks, while the professor's eyes met hers there was a look in them that sent the red flushing into her cheeks. Possibly he could call any one "dear" when she fell unexpectedly into his arms, but she did not believe it.

On the night of commencement they found themselves face to face in a dark little lobby behind the opera house stage.

The professor bowed her way. "Miss Daisy," he said entreatingly, "you are going to the lecture, are you not?"

"Yes," she answered softly, extending a small hand. "Goodby," she half whispered.

He took her hand. "Goodby," he said. "Goodby," he repeated. Then he suddenly stopped and kissed her.

"Forgive me," he cried in the depth of confusion, but still holding her fast. "I love you so. You must know it."

"If I do it is pretty nearly telepathy," she murmured.

When the chairman of the board of education asked Professor Leigh if he still had any objection to Miss Bell he actually blushed, because the frivolous woman had issued an ultimatum that she would teach until her debts were paid, and his objections from being theoretical had become entirely personal. Still, they were not of a nature to be confided to the chairman, so he said half heartedly that she was a very good teacher, and she accepted the position she could hardly be refused it.

A moment later one of his friskiest juniors that year, who had coloured little head in the door, then withdrew in confusion at the sight of the chairman, and he smiled quite a benevolent smile after her. The professor was beginning to take a different view of the world and things pertaining to it—things feminine in particular.

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HER LADYSHIP'S DIAMONDS

By C. B. LEWIS

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Her ladyship's extravagance was a subject of general remark, but it was true that his lordship did not stint her in money matters, and so what she threw away was nobody's business after all. It was so for the first five years of their married life, and then his lordship began to pinch. He delayed saying anything to her as the matter as long as possible, but there came a day when he had to tell her that retrenchment must be the watchword for several years to come. He had figured up her bills and found she had spent more money in a given time than any other woman in the kingdom. In a way he was proud of it, but in another way he had to give her a word of caution. She could still be extravagant and reduce her expenses one-half.

His lordship found out something too late. Give a wife rein for the first few years, and she will take the bit in her teeth for the next five. Talk of economy should come before instead of after a husband's gratifying her own many whims and caprices. Her own many whims and caprices her ladyship had a brother in the navy and another in the army, both officers, of course, and both living more or less off her bounty. The day that her ladyship had asked for a private interview to talk retrenchment she had sent the naval officer a liberal check to straighten up his debts of honor and been informed by letters that the other one must have a much larger amount or throw up his commission in disgrace.

His lordship's news, therefore, came like a bucket of cold water. If there was any sort of scene it was kept from the servants and therefore from the public, and things seemed to go on as before. They did, however. Her ladyship had her diamonds dusted in paste and raised a large sum on the real gems to help others and herself. This was done quietly and secretly and was really part of a plan she had in her mind.

After the close of the London season his lordship retired to his country estate and was soon followed by a score of invited guests. The estate kitchen robber is always on the watch for these house gatherings. Every woman guest is certain to bring at least a good pair of her jewels to wear at dinner, and there are always chances for a smart thief to get in his work. As an offset the host employs a detective to mix in with the servants or even with the guests for the time being and keep watch over things.

It was so in this case. Scotland Yard had loaned him Inspector McDonald, and there never had been a robbery in a country house he was protecting.

The inspector, under another name, mingled with the guests and made his self at home, but he was given to passing much of his time wandering over the estate and musing in the shade of its forests. One of his musing fits was one day interrupted in a rather singular manner.

He was lying on the moss under a spreading beech when the sound of footsteps disturbed him, and he rolled over on his side, to discover her ladyship making her furtive way through the woods. At a dozen paces from him she stopped and with a sideling a look in the ground at the foot of a tree and concealed something. When she had run away the inspector scooped out the dirt until he came to an old silk bag containing her ladyship's diamonds. They were all there to her last ring, and the inspector knew enough about precious stones to know that these were paste.

This happened at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. What her ladyship would do without her diamonds at dinner time the inspector could not determine. Her servants had no more to say than to simply one thing—she was going to be "robbed" of them. She would have to put up a claim of loss by daylight, and there would be a sensation. Either that or she must be "impulsed" at dinner time and not appear among her guests during the evening.

Her ladyship proceeded at once to business. An hour before dinner, and after all the guests, including the inspector, had been indulging in games on the lawn, she went to her room to discover that her diamonds were missing. There was a sensation at once. No one had seen any stranger lurking about, and the robbery must have been perpetrated by some of the servants, including maids and valets, these numbered over sixty, and each one was obliged to come forward and be investigated. His lordship insisted on the most rigorous examination, and the ladies went to protestations and hard feelings. Within twenty-four hours the house party was broken up and scattered, and Inspector McDonald had to admit that he had no clew. The only thing his lordship could do was to offer a reward, and he made it \$25,000.

The inspector did not go with the others. He remained behind to look for clews. He held many interviews with his lordship and her ladyship together, and he had to admire the density of the one and the cunning of the other. It is never then evening. Her ladyship had more nerve and cheek than the detective ever before had found in a woman. She was a most convincing liar, and if he hadn't had the paste diamonds in his pocket he would have been inclined to believe that the scene in the woods was a day dream. She could furnish no informa-

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tion as to how her diamonds had disappeared.

"She cleared her own mind of suspicion, but would not vouch for the honesty of the others. It was through her advice and insistence that his lordship advertised "No questions asked." The stolen plunder could thus be returned by any one of her choosing. The \$25,000 would get the originals out of pawn and save her brother. The inspector held but one interview with her ladyship alone. At that interview, after she had retold her story and looked him as straight in the eye as a woman could, he said:

"I can't believe that the plunder was carried far. I shouldn't wonder if it was buried in the woods."

"That may be," she innocently replied.

"They didn't happen to be your paste diamonds, while the real gems are in a vault in town?"

"Would his lordship advertise such a detective? Why didn't I have resorted to paste?"

"I did not mean it in that sense. The reason I spoke of the woods was because I was out there that afternoon."

"Well?"

"I thought I saw a woman prowling around."

"Then you have been derelict as a detective. Why didn't you speak of the matter before?"

"The more I think of it the more I believe that this woman buried something at the foot of a tree."

"Then let me call his lordship, and we will go at once."

When it was too late he saw that she wouldn't take a bluff, and he was obliged to accompany the pair to the woods. He walked straight to the tree and showed them the cavity. He looked straight into the eyes of the woman, but she did not falter in the gaze. He saw by her attitude that she was even ready to bear him say that she was the woman he saw and to drag from his pocket the bag of diamonds in corroboration. He dared not put her to the test.

When his lordship criticised his action in not hunting the unknown woman, the detective could only swallow his chagrin and beg to withdraw from the case. Two hours later he was packed and ready to go. As he was descending the stairs he encountered her ladyship ascending. She gazed straight into his eyes and held out her hand. There was no trace in her fingers—she knew the inspector to be above that. He took the bag of diamonds from his pocket and passed it over without a word and then, raising his hat to her, he kept on his way out of doors. Two weeks later a London paper said:

"We are glad to hear that her ladyship's diamonds have been restored to her. It is hinted that the person claiming the reward had the manners of the gentleman, though in disguise."

"One of her brothers, maybe," said Inspector McDonald to himself, as he turned to the case in his book and wrote "closed" at the bottom.

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WEEK-DAY TRAINS.

NORTH.				SOUTH.			
Chgo.	Pal'me	Bar't'n	Chgo.	Pal'me	Bar't'n	Chgo.	Pal'me
7:45 a.m.	8:45	9:45 a.m.	8:30 a.m.	9:30	10:30	8:25	9:25
10:15	11:15	12:15 p.m.	10:15	11:15	12:15	10:10	11:10
1:45 p.m.	2:45	3:45	1:45	2:45	3:45	1:40	2:40
4:15	5:15	6:15	4:15	5:15	6:15	4:10	5:10
7:45	8:45	9:45	7:45	8:45	9:45	7:40	8:40
10:15	11:15	12:15	10:15	11:15	12:15	10:10	11:10
1:45	2:45	3:45	1:45	2:45	3:45	1:40	2:40
4:15	5:15	6:15	4:15	5:15	6:15	4:10	5:10
7:45	8:45	9:45	7:45	8:45	9:45	7:40	8:40
10:15	11:15	12:15	10:15	11:15	12:15	10:10	11:10

SUNDAY TRAINS.

NORTH.				SOUTH.			
Chgo.	Pal'me	Bar't'n	Chgo.	Pal'me	Bar't'n	Chgo.	Pal'me
8:00	9:00	10:00	8:00	9:00	10:00	8:00	9:00
10:30	11:30	12:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	10:30	11:30
1:00	2:00	3:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	1:00	2:00
4:30	5:30	6:30	4:30	5:30	6:30	4:30	5:30
7:00	8:00	9:00	7:00	8:00	9:00	7:00	8:00
10:00	11:00	12:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	10:00	11:00

*Saturday only.

—"Yes!"

—"Yes!"

—"Very enjoyable; I saw an interesting account of it in last evening's Post."

—"Didn't you? Well, why don't you read The Chicago Evening Post?"