

ANNETTE.

It was in a little French tea room off Fourth Avenue, where New York's fashionable shoppers are accustomed to linger over a cup of tea or chocolate, that I had first met Annette, a little French girl, with big black, and very lustrous eyes. I had just been to the dressmaker's to have a fitting, and had dropped in for a moment's rest and refreshment. The very first of being in the place was refreshing. With its little red lamps, its hanging baskets of wisteria, and its dainty pictures, it was all the world like the little shops in Paris. I found Annette quite alone, and after taking my order, we fell in to talking—I forgot now just how—about herself, and before I had left, we had become so friendly that I was always glad when I found myself in the neighborhood of the tea room, in order that I might see and talk to Annette.

Some three years after our first meeting I was equally surprised and delighted on entering the establishment to find Annette no longer the little French girl, but now a beautiful young woman, elegantly gowned, sitting at one of the little tables, under an exquisite oriental lamp. It was the first time that I had seen her since the wedding—her—and you cannot imagine how glad we were to have a little tête-à-tête in this quiet, I might say romantic spot; for when my story is finished you will quite agree that the adjective "romantic" is very aptly applied. After some conversation she related to me the following about herself and Billie, who by the way is my nephew.

I had been here about six or eight months as waitress when I first met Mr. Bartlett, and after that I saw him almost every day for so many months more. From the first moment I saw him I liked him. I shall never forget the way in which he was dressed on that day. He wore a light grey suit, a soft silk shirt with a turn down collar, and such a beautiful, soft lavender tie, and right at the bottom were the initials "W. B." in monogram. I wondered who had wonked them so nicely for him. You may think it strange that I should note all these details, but you know I have always been fond of dress and nice things, and always admire them, and was always so very few men some in here wearing soft shirts and soft collars that I was particularly observant. He selected this table the very table we are at now, under this oriental lamp, and as long as he had been coming in I have never seen him at another.

He never spoke except to give his order, and then with what a beautiful accent! Sometimes he used French, and more often English, but he spoke both so beautifully that for a long time I wondered whether he was French or English. When he was finished I always brought him the matches and he would light his cigar—and they were like him good; for though the gentlemen that came in always smoked cigars, I never liked them; but Mr. Bartlett, I liked. Then he would slip a coin under the saucer for me and go out. Several times I felt myself impelled to run to the window to see in which direction he had gone, but it did not seem proper for me to do it; so I curbed my curiosity.

After he was gone I always found myself thinking of him and wondering who he was, and try as I would, I could not put him out of my mind. Often I wished he could say something to me. I did not particularly care what, I just loved to hear his voice, it was so musical, so sweet, and if he would only look up at me through those large, brown eyes, I felt better for the whole day. Thus things went on for some time.

One day he failed to come in. I cannot describe to you how I felt. Although we had not exchanged a single word other than giving of the order, I felt an indescribable longing to see him, if it were only to see him passing the street. I worried for him. Was he sick? Had he gone away never to return? There were some of the possibilities that occurred to me. That night I could not sleep. Mother noticed it and wondered. Ah, my dear, this was the first and only thing that I had ever kept from you. But the idea was so foolish that I simply could not tell her. She would only laugh and scold.

Next day as the hands on the little gilt clock neared four, I went to the window, and just as I looked out, there I spied him coming towards the door. On his arm leaned a tall, beautifully gowned woman, about his own age, with a face so beautiful that although in my foolish conceit I considered her my rival, I could not but like her. Her skin was of that peculiar, soft tint bred only on the farm and in the convent, and in her carriage there was a something that was suggestive of the swan.

As they entered she turned to him and smiled, and he led her to his table. I would have given anything to have exchanged places with her at that moment.

After I had taken their order I stood over in the shade and watched them. They were chatting like two children. I just loved her to make him smile, for every time that he smiled I caught a glimpse of two rows of the whitest teeth that I have ever seen. Suddenly she caught sight

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of the monogram at the bottom of his tie. She leaned over the table and took it between her fingers, so delicately, so daintily.

"Oh, Billie," she exclaimed, "how beautiful that is!" She lifted the end of the tie, and letting it fall between her long white fingers, she examined it critically.

"That is beautiful, Billie," she exclaimed. That name "Billie" rang through me. She pronounced it so sweetly, so languidly, lingering on the liquid 'l'. I would have loved to have disliked her for her familiarity, but could not.

While I basted myself about the table opposite, I noticed that they were waiting for me, and I felt that their conversation was about me; why I could not say. I just felt it, sort of mental telepathy, no doubt.

I ran to the window after they went out, to see in what direction they had gone, and saw them enter the little church a few doors below on the other side of the street.

The following evening when he came in he appeared rather strange. Several times I thought he was about to speak to me, but each time I was disappointed. Finally when I brought him the matches for his cigar, he looked me full in the face.

"Might I ask your name?" he inquired.

"You might," I replied.

"Will you tell me if I ask?" he smiled.

"Try," I said.

He tried, and I told him.

"Miss is Bartlett," he informed me. There was a moment's silence; he seemed to be preoccupied. Finally he said, and I think I detected a tinge of sadness in his tone.

You remind me of someone, Miss Lang, and I could not resist the temptation to ask you your name."

This seemed to end the conversation. That evening after we had closed up I stopped in at the little church, and there to my surprise he sat in the front pew looking up through those large brown eyes at the statue of the Madonna.

For several months after this I did not see anything of him. Someone told me that he had gone on a business trip.

A short time after this my mother died, leaving me alone in the "holey. It was then that I received a letter from my uncle, my mother's brother, who lived in northern Canada, asking me to come and stay with him.

I thought the matter over, and after making all preparations I left the city and joined him. He had three sons, all big burly fellows, who would remind one of the men pictured in the early Greek paintings. They were so different from the pampered men that I had been accustomed to that at first I must confess, I was a trifle afraid of them, they seemed so big so powerful; but we soon came to know each other and became very good friends.

They lived in the center of a large lumber district, in which they had invested all the money that they had earned during the twenty years spent in the country, and had just sold the lumber on this tract to a large New York corporation for a fairly good price and with the understanding that they were to be employed in cutting and floating the lumber. There was no question as to when the money should be paid; as the corporation was a reliable one and had had a number of transactions with the neighbors of Dubawut—this was my uncle's name—all of which had turned out satisfactorily.

Then they had plenty of provisions, and not having any need of the money at the time, thought it would be more secure with the company. Gradually winter drew upon us and with it came a decrease in the provisions. Then for the first time they felt the need of money. Dubawut asked the superintendent of the company's lumber camp for a portion of the money. He was put off from time to time, until finally the need became so great that he demanded it; and was unconcernedly told by the superintendent that they did not have the money on hand and that he would have to wait till they got good and ready to pay him. At this Dubawut refused the company's men to enter his premises for the purpose of

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sell in the blankets and, throwing the foot robs on the snow beside the warm, paining body of the horse he waited. If he must die, he would die at least warm, he thought, in his semi-consciousness. Bery few minutes he set up a yell, each weaker than the last. Suddenly he became numb. A chill, icy hand seemed to grasp his heart, and with a little muttered prayer, he fell back against the body of his horse, as one dead.

(To be continued.)

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