

A DEAD PAST

By MRS. LOVETT CAMERON

CHAPTER X.—(Continued.)

She stood before him trembling; something, too, awoke in her also—that vague something which from the very first his presence had shadowed forth in her.

"Answer me, Kitten. Do you understand me?" he cried, eagerly; for now that he had spoken, no hot, impetuous lover could be more impatient. "Do you love me, child? Do you love me?"

"What is love?" she murmured, below her breath.

"It is life and delight; it is happiness, Kitten: it is what you were longing for, child."

"Is it happiness?" she asked, dreamily, looking away from him. Was this indeed the answer to the great mystery which the wisest men on earth had been unable to fathom? "Are you sure, quite sure, that it is happiness?" she repeated.

"Yes: is it not what you wanted yourself? That I should stay with you always; only that would not give you content always unless you were one with me, part of my life, part of my very self. To understand perfect happiness you must love me, and you must be my wife."

She looked up straight into his eyes. "And you?" she said, trembling. "Do you love me, you? Is it perfect happiness for you, too?"

Something in the intense earnestness of her wonderful eyes cut him through for one moment like a knife; for half a second he could not meet her look—almost winced before her.

"Are you sure, quite sure," she said again, "that you, too—you have this wonderful thing, this love which you tell me about? Is it to make you happy as well? Or is it only for pity, and because I spoke ignorantly and foolishly, not knowing what I said?"

"Kitten, dearest Kitten!" he cried, taking her soft face between both his hands, and at his touch the blood rushed once more in a flame to her cheeks. "Why should you say that; why should I not love you, child?"

Why, indeed! Perhaps for one swift hour he believed it himself, her strange questionings, her persistent doubtfulness, the curious blending of shrewdness and of innocence which was the oddest part of the remarkable creature's character, fanned the flame within him, and increased, as opposition invariably does, his longing to take her to himself, until in very truth he told himself that he did indeed love her.

"Who could help loving you, my fairy queen?" he cried. "Do you think because I am so much older than you are that I am blind and deaf and cold to your loveliness and your sweetness? I cannot love you as a father, Kitten; that love has gone from your life forever, but I can make it up to you, my sweetest, for I can love you as a lover and a husband, and I can teach you, Kitten—I can teach you how to love me back again."

One of her rare sweet smiles stole into her face, hovering first at the corners of her mouth and then spreading like sunshine to her grave, still eyes, till they were lit up by a strange, unusual light, then slowly they sank before him.

"I think I have learned that already," she whispered, "better—oh, yes, far better than you can teach me."

That was Kitten Laybourne's wooing. And by and by, when the September days were already drawing to a close, very quietly, with no wedding guests and no wedding festivities, with but the village doctor to give her away, and with only a small crowd of village poor as witnesses, in her black dress and bonnet, with old Keziah behind her to hold her gloves, and the parson who had christened her to read the service over her, Catherine Elizabeth Laybourne was married to Brian Desmond in the little village church in which she had sat every Sunday of her life, and passed out of its porch a serious-faced but happy bride, along the path across the churchyard, where her young mother lay at rest after the short fever of her happy life. The clergyman kissed her and wished her joy, the doctor grasped her hands and blessed her, the school children scattered autumn flowers under her feet. And then she stepped into a carriage laden with luggage which waited for her at the church gate, and was driven away on her new life straight from the church to the station.

CHAPTER XI.

"Good gracious, wonders will never cease! Felicia, I shall faint! Hold me or fetch my salts bottle!"

The speaker flung down the paper and threw herself back in her chair with a gesture of mock despair. She sat upon the balcony in a low straw chair with a red and white striped awning over her head. The little seaside town, with its dead-alive streets and its empty esplanade, lay absolutely silent in the calm of the midday dinner hour, beneath the windows of the hotel. The sea, calm as a duck pond, stretched away to heaven in a great brazen sheet beyond the edge of the cliffs—tiny fishing smacks, brown or white-sailed, rested motionless upon its breezeless bosom. A few straggling parties of nurses and little children came laggingly up from the sands below, patting home on stout little stockingless legs to their midday dinners. There was nothing else to look at, no other evidence of life in the primitive little Yorkshire watering place, nothing but that piece of news in the pages of the Morning Post which had caused Gertrude Talbot to dash down the offending paper with a violence which summoned her

companion from the cool shadiness of the hotel sitting room behind her.

"What on earth has happened?" exclaimed Felicia Grantley, stepping out through the French window on to the balcony.

"What on earth has not happened?" cried Mrs. Talbot. "I am broken hearted! Read that. Brian Desmond is married!"

Felicia laughed. "What an emotional woman you are, Gertrude! How much of all this agitation is real, and how much of it sham? Even if Mr. Desmond is married, I don't see what it matters to you—you've got a husband. Let us see who the lady is."

She picked up the paper and began studying the announcement herself.

"Laybourne—Laybourne! Where have I heard that name?" murmured Felicia to herself. "And they were married at Friary. The late Prof. Laybourne's only daughter. Why, of course, it must be the same girl. Oh, poor, poor Roy!" and she, too, dashed down the paper impatiently.

"Roy being the schoolboy cousin they wanted you to marry?" inquired Gertrude. "But why poor Roy? And what can he have to do with Brian Desmond's marriage?"

"Oh, never mind, never mind," replied Felicia, almost angrily, retreating suddenly back into the room behind her. She was genuinely sorry, and angry, too, with the girl who perhaps had broken her faith to Roy to marry Desmond.

But Roy's love affairs did not interest Mrs. Talbot; she was thinking of other things.

"Then I suppose he married her either out of pity or because he did not know what else to do with her. Mark my words, Felicia, that marriage will be an unhappy one."

"I don't see how you can tell that."

"Yes, because Brian Desmond does not love her! he has had a past, that man, a grand passion in his life, which is by no means dead. I don't know what it is, but it is certain that little Miss Laybourne has nothing to do with it. Brian Desmond's life is not over yet; he is a long way from the blessed condition of callous indifference to the reopening of an old wound that is the nearest approach to happiness for which some of us can ever hope. You will see that he will live to break his wife's heart yet if she loves him and to wish himself dead and buried, too."

Gertrude Talbot flung back her handsome head and laughed, showing all her white teeth and flourishing about her hands with a free, careless abandon of action, till all the rows of little gold bangles on her wrists jingled merrily upon her hands.

"What are we going to do to-day, my dear?" she cried gayly. "This dead-alive place is becoming almost too much for my strength of mind; the sands are infested with babies and the cliffs are hot and blazing. What possible entertainment can you suggest for the day for a woman of intelligent aspirations and a temperament that positively collapses without the stimulus of novelty and excitement?"

"I am at my wits' ends. Suppose we send for the waiter?" suggested Felicia.

The bell was rung, and the waiter shortly appeared.

"Waiter," said Mrs. Talbot, "we want something to do; how do people as a rule amuse themselves when they come down here to stay, when they are tired of looking at the sea and of sitting on the beach?"

Thus appealed to, Caleb Griggs scratched his head, pushed out his lower lip and pondered deeply.

"Ah, yes!" he exclaimed suddenly; "there is a house, a fine house, too—not an old house—but a very nice place with a good park. It's a long way from here, certainly—a good ten mile or more, but then the horse could be put up for an hour, while the ladies walked about the park, and the family is away, so that no doubt the housekeeper could be induced to show two ladies over it, and if they would like to take their lunch in a basket—"

"The very thing! the very thing!" cried Mrs. Talbot, excitedly; "we will go there. What is the name of this place, and who does it belong to?"

"It's called Keppington Hall, ma'am, and it belongs to a family of the name of Desmond. The present owner he ain't been there much; but I did hear as how he was lately married, and is to bring his lady home soon."

Gertrude glanced at Felicia significantly.

"Order the fly at once," she said to the man, "and we will go and put our things on. It really is a wonderful piece of luck; of all places on earth Brian Desmond's house is the one I most wish to inspect just now, and I had no idea it was within reach of Smackton. I always think there must be some reason why he never goes there; he succeeded his uncle, you know, three years ago. There was a horrible railway accident to the Flying Dutchman, you remember, I d'cesay. Lots of people were smashed, and old Mr. Desmond and both his sons were killed; it was awful, of course, for them, but a capital thing for Brian, who was poor as a rat before that; but it has always passed my comprehension why he has never lived at this place; perhaps we shall hear something from the housekeeper. I shall tip her well and see if we can pick up anything."

CHAPTER XII.

Keppington Hall stood half way up

upon the southern slope of a range of round-topped moorland hills that frowned gloomily down upon it from above, and flat-terraced gardens, well laid out and well kept surrounding it; but upon the slopes above the solid white stone building, the trees became sparser and were more stunted in form and height, till at last they melted away altogether among heather and clumps of grey rock into the sterner landscape of the moors overhead.

The woman at the lodge, upon Mrs. Talbot's request that they might be permitted to go over the house and to eat their luncheon in some corner of the park, had returned a bewildered answer that they had better inquire up at the house of Mrs. Succurden, the housekeeper.

They drove up to the door, the flyman got lumberingly down from his box and rang the bell; it clanged loudly and jarringly out into the silence. Then they waited.

In a few minutes a lady made her appearance, a very tall, upright old woman, in a white cap tied under her chin, and with spectacles on her nose. Mrs. Talbot began her story over again; they had driven over from Smackton; might they be allowed to see the house and to eat their luncheon somewhere in the park? Mrs. Succurden looked suspicious and doubtful; tourists were her detestation. "Mr. Desmond is a friend of mine," added Gertrude; "I am sure he would allow me."

"Of course, ma'am, that makes a difference," replied Mrs. Succurden more graciously; "not that there's much to be seen, and the house has been so long empty—still, if you would care to see it, ladies—"

The ladies did care to see it, and promptly descended. As Mrs. Succurden had told them, there was little or nothing to be seen in the interior of Keppington Hall. There were handsome suites of rooms opening one out of the other, a few family portraits of doubtful merit, a good deal of old china stored away behind glass doored cabinets in such heaps that it could hardly be seen, and miscellaneous furniture that was old-fashioned without being in any way beautiful.

"This was Mr. Brian's own room," said Mrs. Succurden; "the only time he stayed here he lived here entirely. He was here for three weeks after his poor uncle's funeral, and that is all the time he has ever stayed at Keppington since he became its master." And then the old woman sighed. "Eh, dear! it's a sad house now, when one comes to remember the past, when all the young ones were about and there was noise and laughter from morning till night; but it's no wonder he hates it now, poor fellow, no wonder!"

"Why does he hate it, Mrs. Succurden?" asked Gertrude.

And then Felicia at the window asked a question, too. "Is that the church down there among the trees?"

"Yes, miss," replied the housekeeper, "that is the church, and that yonder is the gable of the vicarage. Ah! and that is a changed house, too, nowadays! a stranger there with a sickly wife and a tribe of noisy children—so different."

Meanwhile Gertrude leaned her elbow upon the mantel shelf; before her was a picture frame of dark wood with closed doors shut to with a tiny glided key. Something, she knew not what, made her suddenly inquisitive concerning this frame. She glanced round; Mrs. Succurden and Felicia stood with their backs to her, looking out of windows; she turned the tiny key quickly and opened its doors. Before her was a painted miniature of a young girl in a riding habit wearing an old-fashioned felt hat with a bird's wing at the side; the face was exceedingly beautiful, the eyes large and dark, the features regular, the lips full and very sweet, and hair too was dark, and the figure appeared to be tall and perfectly symmetrical.

"That is Miss Gray," said the voice of the housekeeper behind her. Gertrude started and shut to the little door almost guiltily.

But before they left the little study, Felicia lingering behind had time to make one or two private observations.

"Do you think," she whispered to Gertrude while they waited at the open doorway that led into the gardens, when Mrs. Succurden had gone in quest of the man who was to take her place as cicerone; "do you think that there is a Mr. Succurden about, Gertrude?"

"Impossible to say—why?"

"Because somebody has been sitting in that room, I am convinced, just before we went into it. Did you notice the newspaper on the floor? and a pen in the inkstand was wet, and the blotting book was awry, and, oh, my dear, didn't you notice the strongest smell of smoke?"

"Well, I thought I did, certainly. Very likely some man servant, who appropriates his master's sitting room. Hush, here comes the old lady. When do you expect Mr. Desmond and his bride back, Mrs. Succurden?"

"I doubt if Mr. Brian will ever bring her here to this house, ma'am, and in any case they are abroad for a year, I hear. If you will walk out into the gardens, ladies, the head gardener will meet you outside."

(To be continued.)

Peculiar Theory.

"Uncle Rufus," said the man who takes an interest in everybody, "what is your idea of emancipation?"

"Well, sub," was the answer, "some of dem farm hands wasn't earnin' der salt, an' 'manicipation were jes' a p'lite way of tellin' 'em dat de white folks wouldn't be 'sponsible for deir board an' keep no longer."—Washington Star.

Surprised.

"Ella gets her beautiful complexion from her mother." "Is her mother a chemist?"—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

"RATIFYING THE CONSTITUTION" IN RUSSIA.



—Chicago Inter Ocean.

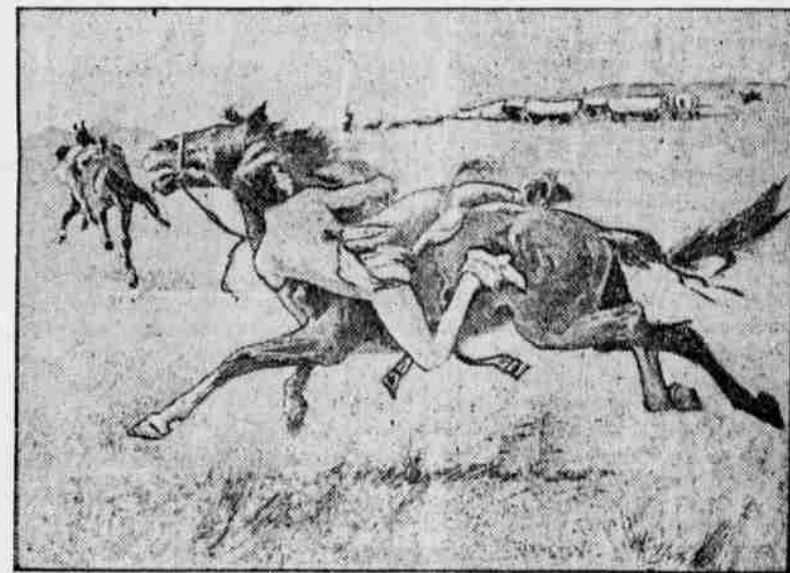
THE OLD SANTA FE TRAIL.

Old Track Through the Wilderness Now Paralleled by a Railroad.

To the traveler crossing our western plains to-day on a well appointed railroad train the transformation wrought upon this wilderness through the agency of the locomotive is most striking. He can hardly realize that this fertile farming country with its thousands of towns and cities was once, only a matter of forty years ago, the stamping-grounds of vast herds of buffaloes and the battle-field of fierce Indian tribes. The march of civilization has almost obliterated every vestige of the old life, and it is only here and there that the ruins of a fort, or a rude inscription on a rock, or an unmarked grave beside a fertile field recall to the mind of the beholder that amidst these peaceful scenes rang the war-whoop

led by the illiterate trappers that first penetrated the Plains. It is not unlikely that before the white man came that way the Trail in part had been used as a highway by the Indians, and before them by the wandering buffalo herds.

Proceeding from Leavenworth, the railroad to-day passes to the west of the Trail through Topeka, crosses it at the village of Wakarusa, and meets it at Great Bend on the Arkansas, whence it runs on and parallel to the old road to Holly on the Colorado boundary. From Holly the Trail branches off to the south through the Raton Mts. into New Mexico. At Dodge City, Kansas, the site of old Ft. Dodge, a branch of the Trail led away to the southwest through a corner of Oklahoma, uniting with the main road near Las Vegas, N. M.



PRINCIPAL DANGER OF THE WEST IN THE OLD DAYS.

of painted savages and the crack of the frontiersman's rifle.

The transformation of the region is especially striking along the old trails that led from the rim of civilization out into the wild West. Of these former overland routes the Santa Fe Trail was the most important, and along its course some of the most stir-

In many places the ruts made by the wheels of the heavy transport wagons and stage-coaches can still be seen in the hardened soil, although the road has been abandoned since the first train ran over the Santa Fe Railroad in 1880. Especially about Great Bend relics and reminiscences of the old days are abundant. Three miles to the east of that place, at the mouth of Walnut Creek, the ruins of Ft. Zarah can be seen from the car windows. On a farm nearby a score of low mounds indicate the spot where the soldiers who were killed in the conflicts with the Indians lie buried. On the present site of Court-House Square in Great Bend a thrilling fight took place in 1864 between two army officers and a horde of savages. Thirteen miles east of the town a solitary cliff loomed above the level waste. This was the famous Pawnee Rock, the rendezvous and lurking-place of the marauding red men. To-day a broken heap of rock, used as a cattle corral, is all that remains of this silent sentinel of the plains, that looked down upon many a desperate fight. In its shadow the wily Cheyennes or Pawnees lay in wait for the approaching wagon train or cavalcade of trappers. It was the most dreaded spot on the whole route, and in the seventysix years—from 1804 to 1880—in which the Trail was the only highway to the Southwest hundreds of fights took place at its base.—A. O. Leutheusser, in Illustrated Home Journal.

Metaphors Galore.

Dennis—'Tis th' early bur-rd gets th' wur-rrm, Mither Casey. Casey—'Tis thot. If ye want to keep your head above wather these days, ye can't let th' grass grow under your feet, Mither Dennis.

It's an exceptionally poor rule that refuses to work either way.



ON THE WAY TO THE WEST.

ring scenes of the West were enacted. It led from Ft. Leavenworth, then the outpost of civilization, to the valley of the Arkansas, which stream it followed into Colorado, thence trending southward into New Mexico to Santa Fe, the center of Spanish trade in the Southwest. One can easily trace this old highway on the map by following the course of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, which in a general way parallels it. The building of a railroad along the old trail is good evidence that from an engineering standpoint the course was well se-