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TUESDAY August 27, 1912

Beyond The Wall

Or the Story of The Open Gate

By CLARISSA MACKIE

It was not until several weeks after he had inherited the Latham homestead that Lewis Becton found time to close his law office and go out on Long Island to investigate the old place. He had been there often when a boy, for it was the home of a favorite great-uncle, but she had long since died, and as her interest in the place ceased then it had passed to a cousin on the Latham side of the family. Now the Latham cousin had died, and to Lewis Becton's surprise the old homestead was bequeathed to him.

The evening of his arrival in the quaint seaport village was spent in wandering around the neglected garden. He would sleep at the hotel, and the house could wait until morning, but tonight the garden was a place of beautiful unexplored shadows—a wilderness of mysteries that tempted him to prolong his wandering.

Lewis could see the roof of a low house beyond the wall, and above it rose tall, gracefully bending locust trees draped in wistaria vines. The garden of this other house appeared to be on a lower level than his own place.

He turned back to the Latham house and walked slowly around the prim, brick paved paths. Some of the narrow walks were edged with huge pink couch shells, for one of the Lathams had been a "deep sea captain." The house was broad and comfortable, with



"WE ARE SO GLAD THAT YOUR ACCIDENT IS SLIGHT."

white painted walls and green shutters, but with the shutters closely fastened it looked desolate enough.

He had circled the house and found new delights and lost himself in the traces of an old fashioned garden. He had just extricated himself from the too tender embrace of a rampant rambling rosebush when his attention was attracted by something small and white that darted out from a shadowy bush and frisked elusively before him always just out of reach.

He was not surprised that a fluffy Persian kitten should be stepping daintily around Aunt Lucinda's old garden. It was just the sort of pet she loved, and he remembered well that she was seldom without one of these cats about her. He came to with a little start as he remembered that all of Aunt Lucinda's kittens must have grown to adulthood and lived out their nine lives years ago. But whence this stray?

The fluffy white morsel led him a merry chase around the house. Once it paused and made as if to wait for capture, and just as Lewis bent down to grasp it the little creature flashed jeweled green eyes at him and disappeared among the blackberry briars that hedged the stone wall. Before he could recover his balance Lewis felt the soft earth crumble under his feet and he was precipitated through a small opening among the briars, and thence he plunged straight through a narrow sagging door in the wall, only to fall crashing down into a thorny tangle below.

The noise of his fall brought instant confusion in the little house that belonged to the garden. He heard feminine voices raised in wonder and alarm and then the opening of doors

In the meanwhile he sat as he had fallen on a flight of broken stone steps that led up to the door in his garden wall. On either side of him were thick hedges of roses, and long thorny branches had caught his thin clothing and held him prisoner. An especially vicious spray had scraped across his eyelids, and he could feel a little trickle of blood down his cheek.

The white kitten frisked on a grass patch at his feet, catching luckless crickets, quite indifferent to the suffering she had led him into. Such is the way of cats.

"What are you doing here?" asked a sweet, brave voice in front of him. Lewis started and opened his eyes. Somehow the pain had made him dizzy, and there was something wrong with his shoulder. He saw before him a diminutive figure clad in white gown, with a small, daintily poised head crowned with hair that looked black in the moonshine. Somehow her voice told him that she was beautiful.

"What are you doing here?" she repeated, with a note of determination in her voice.

"My name is Becton. I belong to the Latham place, or, I should say, it belongs to me now. I was walking around the garden when I spied this kitten. She lured me to the gate in the wall, and I was awkward enough to stumble and fall through. I hope I have not harmed your roses." He tried to rise from his posture on the stone steps, but the thorns detained him, and he fell back again, only to wrench his shoulder once more and become unconscious.

When he opened his stiffened eyelids again he was within a low ceiling bedroom, with quaint old mahogany furniture and slant walls papered with tulle of roses.

"I hope they are the thornless kind," he smiled as he looked into the concerned face of a gray haired doctor.

"That remains to be seen," laughed the physician cheerily, stepping aside to allow Lewis to see that they were not alone. On the high bureau there flickered a pair of wax candles in tall glass sticks, and leaning against the footboard of the bed was the girl of the garden, and beside her was a slender, graceful, middle aged woman, who came forward as the doctor spoke.

"We are so glad that your accident is slight, Mr. Becton," she said gently. "That gate in the wall should have been closed long ago. Only a matter of sentiment has prompted us to allow it to remain as it was twenty-five years ago, when my mother used to run back and forth to visit her close friend, Miss Lucinda Latham. We will have it walled up at once."

"No, no, please; not on my account," pleaded Lewis so sincerely that they smiled. "I like neighbors, and, although my first call is an unceremonious one and must have caused you lots of trouble, I promise to be more conventional in the future."

It was a week before Mrs. Graham could permit Lewis to be removed to the hotel, for after his dislocated shoulder had been set a fever developed that made him very ill for several days. During that time he grew very fond of the gentle elderly lady who fitted in and out of his sick chamber and who waited on him with tireless devotion. Of Rose Graham he saw little, but he often heard her sweet voice.

At last he was able to go to the hotel, and as he took leave of the two who had been so kind to him he held Mrs. Graham's hand, but he looked at Rose.

"And may I come again?" he smiled down at them.

A mischievous light came into Rose's brown eyes as she quoted:

"There was a man of our town, and he was wondrous wise.

He jumped into a bramble bush and scratched out both his eyes.

When he found his eyes were out, with all his might and main.

He jumped into another bush and scratched them in again!"

"I shall take that as an invitation to come again by way of the garden gate," he said as he walked slowly down the steps.

Of course he went there whenever he came down to Quinleton, but he found Rose Graham a most elusive rose to capture. Sweet she was and shy, but she had a way with her of diverting the conversation from the intimate subject that lay so near Lewis Becton's heart.

The summer fled, and winter came. A very important case occupied many weeks of the new year. After he had won it the reaction from mental toil called for a holiday, and he went to Europe after a brief farewell visit to his friends. So it was late in the spring of the year when he went down to Quinleton to stay.

The old Latham place had been clipped and trimmed into its original pristine neatness, and the Japanese servant who did the housework would not permit a blade of grass to stray from the lawn to the brick paths. Koshuro filled the blue china bowls with apple blossoms and in June with roses from the garden and in all ways made Lewis Becton exceedingly comfortable.

One moonlight night—it might have been a replica of that other night last

year, only the day lilies had not arrived—Lewis walked once more in his garden. Again the white Persian kitten frisked around his feet and led him a merry chase to the gate in the wall. There Lewis paused, hesitating. Through the aperture he could see a white gown, and he knew that Rose Graham was in her favorite seat in the summer house.

He passed through the gate and down the steps and halted at the door of the summer house.

"Rose," he said quietly. She started to her feet and came toward him, and he could see that her head was turned a little from him, as if in displeasure, but he would have his say.

"I have been taking liberties with your Mother Goose rhyme, Rose. What have you to say to this?"

"There was a man in our town, and he was wondrous smart.

He jumped into a bramble bush and promptly lost his heart.

When he found his heart was gone, with all his might and main.

He jumped into another bush and got it back again!"

"Did he, Rose—did he get it back again? If he didn't I must go back through the little gate and close it forever, because—oh, Rose, dearest, it is all right then!"

"Yes," sighed Mrs. Graham when they told her the happy secret. "I see that the gate in the wall must still be kept open for sentimental reasons."

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OCCIDENTAL CHAPTER, No. 45, O. E. S., meets Saturday evening before and after stated communication of Masonic Lodge. Visiting members cordially invited to attend. Louise M. Boyie, W. M. Merta Mehl, Secretary.

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BANDON LODGE, No. 133, I. O. O. F., meets every Wednesday evening. Visiting brothers in good standing cordially invited. A. Knapp, N. G. Harry Armstrong, Sec.

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