

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 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—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 questioning, 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, pattering home on stout little stockinged 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 Friarly. 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 gaily. "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 miles 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 daresay. 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-topped 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 gilded 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 a 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, uh," was the answer, "some of dem farm hands wasn't earnin' der salt, an' 'manicipation' were jes' a 'plite 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.

OREGON STATE ITEMS OF INTEREST

AID FROM STATE.

Is Necessary in Road Construction, Says Convention.

Corvallis—The voice of the Good Roads convention is unanimously for state aid in the construction of public roads. No resolution to this effect was adopted, but throughout the two days' session the idea came to the front at unexpected times and always with the apparent approval of the delegates. It was injected into the proceedings by an Alsea farmer, who declared that there ought to be state aid, so that Portland would have to help pay the price, because all that Portland is or all that she hopes to be has come or is to come from the products of the farms, mines and mills in the territory of which she is the commercial mistress. This brought Judge Webster into the open, and he declared his approval of the sentiment expressed by the Alsean, and announced a belief that state aid should be vouchsafed in road construction, the state to pay about 50 cents every time a certain community struggling with a road raised 50 cents.

HAILEY ON SUPREME BENCH

Governor Chamberlain Will Appoint Pendleton Man.

Salem—Governor Chamberlain has announced that he will appoint T. G. Hailey, of Pendleton, to succeed Justice Wolverton on the supreme bench. This appointment was expected, but came much sooner than anticipated, for there is really no vacancy as yet.

Governor Chamberlain has been considering the matter of an appointment to the supreme bench ever since it became probable that one of the superior judges would be appointed to the Federal bench. He had therefore weighed the qualifications of available men and was ready to make a selection.

By announcing the appointment at once, the governor has saved the trouble of receiving and considering the flood of recommendations and applications that would soon have been pouring in.

Books for Christmas.

People who buy books for children usually take what they can get most easily, or what the clerk recommends. Everyone likes to make a good investment, to get value received. The Oregon Library commission makes this possible in so far as children's books are concerned, for it has published for free distribution a list of something over a hundred titles of children's books for Christmas gifts and for the home library. There are notes on the books, and prices are given—ranging from 15 cents to \$3. Any one may get this list by applying to the secretary of the commission at Salem.

More Smallpox at Eugene.

Eugene—Two more cases of smallpox have been reported to the health authorities, and the houses of A. J. Pickard and Warren Luckey are now in quarantine. Earl Luckey, son of Warren Luckey, was taken down and began to break out while in the school room, but it is not believed the other students were endangered, because the disease had not reached the stage where it would become contagious. Strict measures are in force for stamping out the disease as quickly as possible.

Big Ranch Sold.

Pendleton—One of the biggest ranch deals in the history of Eastern Oregon was just consummated here, in which the ranches and sheep of Charles Cunningham, the Umatilla county sheep king, were sold to a company composed of J. N. Burgess, J. M. Keeny, R. A. Kelsay and Dan J. Malarkey. The price paid was in the neighborhood of \$200,000. The deal has been pending since October, when an option was given the purchasers for \$5,000. About 20,000 acres, 20,000 sheep and 1,000 tons of hay are included in the deal.

May Replace Woolen Mills.

Albany—A proposition which would allow Albany to regain some of the payroll she lost through the burning of the Albany woolen mill last spring, has been received from an Eastern man who will remove a six set woolen mill plant to Albany, if local capitalists will furnish the buildings. Besides having double the capacity of the old mill, the new concern proposes to operate in connection with the woolen mill a knitting mill and a clothing manufactory.

Use Wagons in Lieu of Cars.

Athens—On account of the scarcity of cars, the Preston-Parton Milling company is obliged to employ teams to haul wheat overland to keep their mills running. The conditions are growing worse daily at the mills, which are congested with the large amount of accumulated flour, there being several hundred thousand barrels on hand awaiting shipment. Just when this condition will be relieved is hard to state.

ELABORATE PREPARATIONS.

Seven States Will Be Represented at Fruitgrowers' Convention.

La Grande—Elaborate preparations are being made in this city for the entertainment of the Fruitgrowers' convention here January 3 to 5. Secretary C. D. Huffman, of this place, has received many communications from delegates, and Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, Utah, Montana and Wyoming will be represented.

The exercises will probably be held in the opera house, and the commercial club hall will be utilized for an exhibition room. Hood River has signified its intention of having an exhibit here, and many other fruitgrowing communities are arousing interest. La Grande will be well represented. A large number of growers of this valley will save their best fruits for the occasion, and anyone alone is able to make a creditable showing. One flouring mill is considering erecting a huge pyramid of flour reaching to the ceiling to advertise the grains.

A strenuous campaign will be started soon and delegates from all over the valley will be asked to prepare the exhibit.

Fishing Law is Defied.

Tillamook—Although the fishing season for Tillamook closed on the 20th, fishing is in full blast on Tillamook bay, and Elmore's cannery is also running to its capacity and is receiving a large quantity of fish, as there is a fine run of silversides, and the fishermen are doing well. The cannery has agreed to take all the fish, and as it has a lot of empty cans on hand that it wants to fill this season, no attention is being paid to the closed season by the cannery people. Only one or two fishermen have stopped fishing and complied with the law.

Much Work for Wolverton.

Salem—There are 34 cases to be decided by the Supreme court, presumably before Judge Wolverton leaves the bench. These cases have all been argued before the court. Twenty-four of these cases were heard at the recent session of the court at Pendleton. Ten cases heard in this city have not been passed upon. Among the latter is the noted Marquam case, which the court has had under advisement for several months. If all these cases are decided before Judge Wolverton retires, it will require at least two weeks.

New Road in Baker County.

Baker City—Private advices received from engineers in the field state that surveys have been approved for building another railroad in Baker county, connecting Union with the Cornucopia timber country. The promoters are after timber traffic and nothing else. For obvious reasons the names of the promoters and financiers are kept quiet for the present. The money is guaranteed in New York.

PORTLAND MARKETS.

Wheat—Club, 71c per bushel; blue-stem, 73¢@74c; valley, 74¢@75c; red, 67c.

Oats—No. 1 white feed, \$20; gray, \$26 per ton.

Barley—Feed, \$22 per ton; brewing, \$22@22.50; rolled, \$22.50@23.50.

Rye—\$1.50@1.60 per cental.

Hay—Eastern Oregon timothy, \$15@16 per ton; valley timothy, \$11@12; clover, \$8@9; grain hay, \$8@9.

Fruits—Apples, \$1@1.50 per box; huckleberries, 7c per pound; pears, \$1.25@1.50 per box; quinces, \$1 per box.

Vegetables—Beans, wax, 12c per pound; cabbage, 1@1½c per pound; cauliflower, \$1.75@2.25 per crate; celery, 75c per dozen; cucumbers, 50¢@60c per dozen; pumpkins, ¾@1c per pound; tomatoes, \$1 per crate; sprouts, 7c per pound; squash, ¾@1c per pound; turnips, 90¢@1 per sack; carrots, 65¢@75c per sack; beets, 85¢@1 per sack.

Onions—Oregon yellow Danvers, \$1.25 per sack.

Potatoes—Fancy graded Burbanks, 65¢@70c per sack; ordinary, 55¢@60c; Merced sweets, sacks, \$1.90; crates, \$2.15.

Butter—Fancy creamery, 25¢@27½c per pound.

Eggs—Oregon ranch, 35c per dozen.

Poultry—Average old hens, 10c per pound; young roosters, 9c; springs, 11c; dressed chickens, 12¢@14c; turkeys, live, 16¢@17½c; turkeys, dressed, choice, 17½¢@22c; geese, live, 8½¢@9c; ducks, 14¢@15c.

Hops—Oregon, 1905, choice, 10¢@11c; olds, 5¢@7c.

Wool—Eastern Oregon, average best, 16¢@21c; valley, 24¢@26c per pound; mohair, choice, 30c.

Beef—Dressed bulls, 1¢@2c per pound; cows, 3¢@4c; country steers, 4¢@½c.

Veal—Dressed, 3¢@7½c per pound.

Mutton—Dressed, fancy, 7¢@7½c per pound; ordinary, 4¢@5c; lambs, 7¢@8c.

Pork—Dressed, 6¢@7½c per pound.