

OWNERS YOUR OWN

PRICE: FOUR CENTS...\$1.50 PER ANNUM.

TORONTO, SATURDAY, JUNE 29, 1861.

[Written for the Hon. Journal.]

Down on the Beach:

A STORY OF THE SOUTH.

BY E. F. LOVERIDGE.

(CONCLUDED FROM OUR LAST.)

XIII.

EIGHT MONTHS LATER.

CARL SCHRIEFF did not die of the wound he received from Inlin's daughter—his Indian wife. He suffered for many weeks though, but the antidote to the poisoned steel and a good constitution won the battle with death, for the time being.

It is now the middle of June—one year since our narrative opened, and eight months after the masquerade at the Crescent City, described in the previous section; and as the reader has already foreseen Lansing Dacre and Maud La Grange are married since Christmas—nearly half a twelve-month.

Maud has been to Maryland with her husband; she was a light in the gloom and loneliness of Chester Hall; but though old Mr. Dacre loved her as if she had been his own daughter, like the birds, the Little One yearned for the Far South once again.

As I look back to the months of Dacre's life; as I see once again before my spiritual vision the sweet face of that Child-Woman, it seems marvellous to me that the husband could not see what Uncle Abe and Chloé plainly enough discerned, and which alarm they communicated to Mr. Mentor, Maud's oldest, truest, best of friends.

We were visiting with Mr. Mentor at the plantation, and Toty and her father the Colonel were also there for the week. Toty, Mentor and the writer were walking to and fro one pleasant morning, before breakfast, in the court-yard of Terreverde. Presently Maud and her husband appeared on the upper gallery, which it has already been stated, both on first and second stories ran about all sides of the main building,—upper and lower piazzas communicating by a staircase on the rear of the mansion, as well as by the main flight of steps inside: or, in other words, to descend from the second story gallery to the first, it was not necessary to go inside the Manor House.

Maud and her husband paced slowly up and down the upper front gallery, and the early morning sunshine lighted them faintly as its beams struggled to reach their forms. Maud wore no bonnet, and her hair fell in a wealth of golden curls almost unto her waist. She wore on this occasion a blue and white lawn morning robe, and her little figure scarcely reached Lansing's shoulder, and the tiny hand was placed within his arm, and as she walked along, to and fro, up and down, very languidly, we all thought, her face would turn to his, as a child might look up in the face of an elder brother.

Pretty soon Maud espied us, and waving her handkerchief like a fairy, exclaimed: "How'dyo Toty; you may come and walk here too." And then as Toty tripped away to join her, she coughed violently, and when the fit was over said to us, as she bent over the railing of the corridor: "Lansing is a

naughty boy, and won't let me come down until the sun is longer out of bed lest I get more cold."

When Toty was by Maud and her husband's side, Uncle Abe, who was smoking that same long pipe near the porter's lodge, approached Mentor, the Colonel and myself, and we saw that his dusky features wore anxiety, for he said in very low tones, looking wistfully at his youthful master and mistress:—

"Massa Mentor, you'be hear dat?"

"What do you mean, Uncle Abe?"

"Dat air cough. Missey Maud um de im'go ob her mudder. She was tuk jes dat way. Dar um dose up dar," and he raised his withered hand to heaven, "are awaitin' on dat air angel. Ole Marse J'ovah nebber give dem air bright ones to dis wicked world all de time. Dat cough am jes de way Missey's dear mudder go away. Why see dat air chile! She don't step lika as she used to do. Massa, Massa, sho's gwine to die and leave Ole Ab'em an' all de darkies! Massa Lansing don't go for to see it. Bet the writin's on de wall. Oh! Massa Mentor, take de little angel farder Souf: its do only hope; an' let Ole Abe go too."

Language cannot convey the tone and plaintive air with which the faithful fellow uttered these words. They came upon us all like a clap of thunder, and the Colonel was the first to break the constrained silence:

"But Abe, you must not frighten Mrs. Dacre or her husband. Surely Toty would see this if it were so."

"Massa Grade; jes you look at dem two. Missey Toty neber see anyting but de sun, and de moon, and de stars. She'b love Missey Maud, and neber tink dar is anuder place for her dan Terryverdy."

"Uncle Abe," said Mentor, "cheer up. I shall see if Dacre won't go with me and this gentleman to Corpus Christi, for a few weeks. If you are right, then it is wise to be warned. We must not lose Maud now. And Uncle Abe!"

The old negro turned to hide a tear.

"And, Uncle Abe, you shall go, too, if I can fix it. There! there! Don't tell to any one what you have expressed to me."

"Tank you, Massa Mentor. No! Abe'm would not scare dem sweet birds—not for no ting in de hull world."

After breakfast, Mentor saw Dacre apart, and the young man's face was graver, and he was even more tender than was his wont when he spoke to his baby-wife. How it was, does not import, but it was arranged that Dacre and his lady, Toty and Mr. Mentor, should pass some weeks at Corpus Christi. As Mentor turned to the Colonel and the writer, just before dinner, he said: "I am sorry, Colonel Grade, we cannot have you with us, but we will take good care of Toty;" and he whispered, as the Colonel went away, late that afternoon: "Loveridge, do you know I fear Abe is right: her mother died of it. I think Dacre may meet Mrs. Schrieff unharmed, now. Do not you?"

I answered, "Yes, unless he is very mad or very base. Do you know I have a curiosity to see that woman. Lansing evidently loves his wife. You love him as a son: he is a dear friend of mine."

"Yes, yes, but"—

"But what, Mentor?"

"You know the verse, 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.' Pshaw! Loveridge, I am getting gloomy. Let us go and join Maud and Lansing in the library."

We both felt a cold chill as we entered the room. Why was it? "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

XIV.

CORPUS CHRISTI AGAIN.

The "Concrete" City glittered with the mid-summer noon. There was a silver sheen upon the restless waters of the bay.

So bright were the beams, and so merrily the little stars twinkled, that Corpus Christi loomed up like a very fairy-land. From the bluff, and far forth on the prairie, this weird light penetrated, so that the Mexican quarter of the town could be plainly discerned from the lower wharf; and if you surveyed the level, or main portion of the city, you could clearly descry Carl Schrieff's new house, and the quaint homestead of the Hazletons down on the beach.

The lustre of the moon was so bright, that those who have only seen the "Queen of the Eventide" in her pale robes which she wear-eth when she gives audience to her children in the colder regions of the North, can form but a faint image of her glory when she vouchsafes her royal presence to the peoples of the far-off South. A farthing candle and a drummond light, indeed! Why, I have strolled for hours on that beach, on such a moonlight, and listened to the voice of those wild waters, reader, until the weary Past and the uncertain Future were forgotten, and the living Present was all and all to me. The light was not the light of golden day, nor dewy eve, but a quaint and glorious halo, such as dreamy Persians sing of as belonging to another and a better world, and all things were absorbed in the joyous consciousness of these two glorious words: "I live!"

Emily Schrieff is visiting at her father's house; her husband is on his way home from Indianola, and the same little sloop that dances over the waves of Corpus Christi Bay to-night, bears more precious freight, for it bears also our friends from Terreverde, and on that miniature vessel, on the night you read of, was, as well, the writer of this record of happy days, now passed away forever. But, for the moment, let "the Fairy" plough her way over the phosphorescent water, and turn your eyes to the mansion of the Hazletons, and, invisibly, as a spirit, pace up and down the gallery, and mark Emily Schrieff as she walketh to and fro in the moonlight in her flowing robes of fleckless white, in the balmy air, tempered by the salt breeze from the bay that laves the beach. She is all alone; alone with her own soul, and straining her womanly eyes to catch the first glimpse of the little white sails of the boat that bears her husband, her old lover, his wife, and their friends and their servants to the wharf that is plainly observable in the distance. There have been tears in those passionate, deep, deep eyes, but she dashes them angrily away, and she dreams very sadly of a glorious life that might have been her own, had she been true to herself, her girlish heart; and to her God.

This woman loves her husband, but she feels her degradation. She was not born to creep on the earth like the serpent, but to walk erect amid the stars, as a Queen. Always controlling him, never condescending to altercation with him, the influence of the twain has been mutually poisonous. Neither could bend, and they must have a care of collision. Those two iron wills will chafe each other forever, and destroy all the temper of the metal. She knows all his baseness, and despises the perfidy that came so near costing him life. Carl Schrieff is her *bete noir*, but she loveth him, as angels in the wild ballads of the Arabs are said to have been infatuated by demons; but when the spell was broken, the pure spirits realized all the horror of their enchantment; while the German drains the goblet, filled with red wine, steeped in Passion Flowers, and finds his strength, as a child's obbeth when she singeth her syren song.

"This is horrible," you say.

C'est ne pas mon affaire, gentle reader. Alas! that it is true. You are in a spiritual dissecting room: the doors are locked, and you cannot close your eyes to those strange operations that are progressing in this psycho-anatomical theatre. Truly, did the singer of sweet psalms exclaim:—"I am fearfully, and wonderfully made."

Emily Schrieff paces to and fro rapidly, and you see that her heart surges like the sea, and that not a wave which lashes the shore almost at her feet, is not echoed by a wave of impatient self-communing that sweeps over her perturbed soul. Emily Schrieff has been weak, but not wicked; she has been under the influence of those poisoned words of the Tempter, which are to the soul like deadly night-shade to the physical system, and she realises, when too late, all the glory of what might have been.

That she *must* love her husband, that she *does* love Carl Schrieff is not the least part of her punishment. Do men gather figs from thistles? Oh, this horrible incertitude of soul—looking up to the clouds and groveling in the mire!

In the foul and terrible mire of a blasted life!

Of course, Lansing Dacre is happy. By her own heart, Emily Schrieff reads his. Such a torch of corruption might show all the horrors of any soul's charnel-house; she is bound and delivered up to the darkness that cometh only *after* the light.

Hush! her voice is raised in song; it is a deeply-plaintive voice, and the very air is echoed by the waves that dash at her feet but a few yards from the gallery:—

"DOWN ON THE BEACH."

"Down on the beach, the angry waves are dashing,
The sky is black—the thunder's crash is deep.
The lightning's keen white blade is sharply flashing,
As if a harvest in the clouds to reap;

And the billows lash the shore,
With a sullen, surging roar,
Ah! they seem to tell of death in the sea,
Of its grandeur and its dark treachery,
And the graves 'neath its coral floor;

"Down on the beach, the dancing wavelets shine,
At eventide when crimson clouds hang low,
And dying sunbeams faintly gleam and quiver,
Upon each wavelet's crest of curling snow,
The come, and they love the shore,
With a sound I have heard before,
And they sing to me of life in the sea,
Of its beauty and its wild mystery—
Sing of life forever, ever more."