

# SUNRISE AT CEDARLAWN

By ELLEN LEYS

Author of "Round the Corner," "Mr. Featherstone's Flirtation," "Her Guilty Secret,"  
"Twist Friend and Foe," Etc.

COPYRIGHT, 1909, BY THE NATIONAL PRESS AGENCY.

FOR two days a tremendous commotion had been raging within the walls of Cedarlawn, Surbiton. The master and mistress of this desirable suburban residence had gone abroad rather suddenly on account of the lady's health, the only cure, the specialists declared, at a hint from the invalid, for the languor arising from ennui being a cruise in the Mediterranean.

Their family of six youngsters, left in the charge of a treasure of a nurse and her underling, was to be transported at once to Littlehampton, and the house left in the agent's hands to be let furnished.

The head nurse, a comely woman of thirty, was noted for her generalship. Everything was planned and thought of. She had seen the cook and her staff, the three housemaids of various degree—first, second, and "between"—off the premises; and had given the gardener his final directions as to the minimum of attention requisite for keeping the place in order for a prospective tenant. All, indeed, had been most carefully planned. There remained now but the dispatching of Gwendolen, the nurse girl, to the station with a cabful of little Montmorencies; the closing of the front door; the tender parting with her young man at the back door, and her own departure with a second cabful of luggage to join her party at the station.

The hands of the clock marched steadily on toward the noonday hour when the train was due to start for Clapham Junction. As the cab for Gwendolen and the children arrived nurse heard, with beating heart, the double pressure of the electric bell at the kitchen door which announced the arrival of her Bill. Her engagement, following on a prolonged period of "walking out," was a recent affair, and Bill had a temper. With a rush of color to her anemic face, nurse poured forth her last orders to Gwendolen.

"Put them all in the waiting room while you get the tickets, and then find a carriage to hold the lot. If the train's crowded, don't bother about me. I'll pop into another compartment, and we'll meet at the junction."

"What about—" began Gwendolen, who was "all of a tremble" with excitement.

"Oh, never mind. We settled everything this morning. Just do what I tell you, and don't trouble your silly head about anything else!"

"But—" urged Gwendolen once more.

"Do you want to miss the train?" broke out nurse, angrily, as the bell vibrated again. "Jump in. Station, cabby, as fast as you please. Twelve-two for the junction. Four and a-half single, Clapham Junction. Remind her, there's a good chap." And nurse slammed the cab door on the flustered Gwendolen and five excited children, and rushed down to the basement to throw herself into the arms of the irate Bill, who had been pressing the bell at intervals of thirty seconds.

==\*==

AT 2 o'clock on that sunny afternoon a little fair-haired boy stretched his rounded limbs, yawned and sat up in his curtained cot in the nursery at Cedarlawn. He lay for a few minutes, as little children will, gazing; wondering, perhaps, what has happened to change the golden firmament of their dreams into the blank, meaningless whiteness above them.

The violet eyes noted with interest the dance of some silly flies upon the ceiling, and watched with anxiety to see if they would keep clear of the trap set by a murderous spider in the corner. To the child's relief, the flies waltzed away out of danger and disappeared from his view. Then he sat up, rubbed his eyes, gazed wonderingly at the emptiness of the big, bare room, and finally called in clear baby tones:

"Nurse! Nurse! Gwen! Gwen! Bover those dirls," he said, aloud, after shouting the names of his attendants in various accents of command and entreaty. "I 'spose I'll have to go to the top and call zem again. P'aps they're all in the garden. Muvver said they wasn't to go out of ze way. Bover zem, I say!"

Very carefully he climbed over the side of his cot and landed on a chair that stood beside it. Then he cautiously let himself down to the floor and pattered across the cork carpet on his bare feet, his brows drawn into a pucker of annoyance.

The nursery door stood open, and he reached the landing and trotted to the stair head. The gate that usually barred his farther progress was not in its place. The broad, shallow steps, with their beautiful soft velvet pile covering, stretched invitingly before him. Descent of the stairs without the steady hand of nurse or mother was forbidden to golden-haired Cyril, but the temptation was too great for the self-control of three years. He gazed at the crimson softness and was lost.

"Never mind," he whispered to himself, as he

stretched out his little bare arm to catch hold of the rails and gently began his descent, counting each step as he went.

"One, two, buck ma soo; free, four, knock at door," he repeated softly, and then he stopped and looked down and up and around him. The stillness of the house began to overawe him. Never in his three years' experience of his home at Cedarlawn had the house been plunged in such deep quiet. He took a third step and a fourth, and paused again. Then a sunny smile flooded his sleep-flushed face, and his blue eyes sparkled, for he saw a friend coming up the stairs to meet him.

"Pussy!" he cried, stretching out his dimpled hands; and the big black Persian cat, giving a low pr-r-r of joy, sprang up the intervening steps and rubbed herself against the dear bare legs of her favorite.

Cyril stooped down and rested his cheeks against the soft fur, then he sat on the step he had reached and put his arms round pussy's neck and hugged her, while she continued to purr and rub herself against his little body.

"Dear puss, good puss," he whispered, stroking the cat's head. "Where's nurse, puss? Where's all of zem gone? Nurse—nurse! Gwen—Gwen! Naughty sings, leavin' us all alone, puss!"

After a while he rose, and continued his downward progress to the hall and sitting rooms. The doors were closed and locked, and, anyway, Cyril had not reached the epoch-marking moment when little hands can turn the knobs of doors and make exits and entrances unaided.

He drew a long, quivering sigh, and when at last, with puss at his side, he had reached the door at the head of the basement staircase and found that closed, the first feeling of distress puckered his brow and made the corners of his mouth droop.

The hall was big and square, a fine apartment with rugs and couch and lounge chairs—one of the features of the house most strongly emphasized by the agent in his advertisement. Cyril trotted round and round, his bright eyes on the lookout for objects of interest. A little horse, with hairy coat, whose legs had all but one given way under the child's fervent embraces, lay under a table. He caught it up and kissed it, and, cuddling it under one arm, continued his career, the cat marching beside him. After a while he grew tired; a little shiver shook him, for, in spite of the July heat, the hall was cool, and Cyril had on only his little vest and petticoat. He began to feel frightened; his calls were louder and more frequent, and pussy seemed to share his trouble, for she no longer purred, but mewed. Tars began to gather in the boy's eyes, and climbing on to the deep Chesterfield couch he buried his face in the cushions, and sobs shook his little body.

"Dear, dear! Poor Cyril! Dey've all gone away and forgotten us. What shall we do, pussy, what shall we do?"

==\*==

A HANSOM stopped at the gates of Cedarlawn. Two ladies—mother and daughter—got out; the younger gave some directions to the cabman, and he drove away. Then they turned to survey the house before opening the gate:

"Very nice, my dear. I think it might suit us very well. I like the lawn in front. The house stands well back, and what is a magnificent cedar. Let us go in."

The girl approached the gate, then stopped short. "It is padlocked," she cried; "they must have gone away already!"

"Are you sure, dear? Why, we only saw the advertisement yesterday. And it said, 'Inquire at house.'"

"Yes. There is no board, either; nothing to tell one what to do. How very provoking! What are we to do? See, there is no manner of doubt about the gate being locked, and the place looks deserted."

"What did you say to the cabman, dear?"

"I told him to come back in an hour."

"Of course—we should need that time."

"If I could find a resting place for you, mother, I'd go and inquire in the town."

The elder lady looked about her in dismay. "It's quite a lonely situation," she said, "and it's too early in the afternoon for any tradesmen to be about. If it were not so far—"

"You cannot walk back, mother," said the girl, firmly. "There is nothing for us to do but find some place to rest by the roadside until the cab returns."

She was a tall, stately girl, with pale, clear complexion, chestnut hair, and fine gray eyes. In her white linen dress and simple shady straw hat, she was a sight to make glad the eyes of any man, and as one came on swift wheel down the road, and saw her



"Dear puss, good puss," he whispered.

bending with tender protection to the white-haired lady at her side, his eyes lighted up, and a quick whisper broke from him.

"Can it be? Yes—it is!"

He sprang from his machine, and the girl, hearing the grating of the wheels upon the gravel, turned quickly.

As their eyes met a sudden color crimsoned her face, then died away again.

The young man came forward, hat in hand.

"Mrs. Hamilton—Miss Hamilton! Fancy meeting you here!"

"Dr. Vernon, mother," said the girl, as her mother, a little bewildered, looked toward the stranger. "Mamma is so shortsighted, you know," she said, and then added, with some constraint of manner: "We came to look at this house in reply to an advertisement, but it is locked, and there is nothing to tell one where to go for the keys."

"Are you thinking of taking Cedarlawn?" he cried, with lively interest. "It is an awfully nice place. I coveted it myself, but the owners won't sell. Gibson would have the keys, no doubt. He is the house agent. I'll go and see."

"Pray don't trouble," began the girl, coldly, and a shadow passed over the young man's face; but her mother interrupted:

"If you would be so kind! It has been quite an expedition for me, and I certainly shall not come again. If I cannot see the house to-day I shall abandon the idea."

"It will be a pleasure," said the doctor, "and I can find you a place to rest at while I'm gone."

He led them a little way along the road to a spot where some felled trees afforded a seat, and helped Miss Hamilton to settle her mother; then started off for the house agent's.

"He's very nice," said Mrs. Hamilton. "I have always liked Dr. Vernon, and I thought you did too. Has he offended you that you are so cold to him?"

"Oh, no," replied the girl stiffly; "I have never given him an opportunity of offending me."

"I used to think," began the old lady, timidly, "that he liked you, and that you might like him."

"Dear mamma! How many times have you said that about men we have known?"

"Yes, yes, my dear; that is very true. I am fanciful, I suppose, for I cannot imagine any one seeing my Beatrice without worshipping her. But," she continued more boldly, "I do not think I was mistaken this time—if you were not so stand-off, my dear."

"Mother! I do beg of you not to think—much less speak of such things! I am sure there is no such idea in Dr. Vernon's mind—not now, at any rate."

The girl's face was flushed, a strange dimness was in her eyes. She rose abruptly, and strolled farther along the road.

"Ah!" she whispered to herself, "I thought so too, once."

==\*==

THE shadow was still on Laurence Vernon's face as he sped toward the town.

His love for Beatrice Hamilton was deep and true. For the last twelve months he had worshipped her, and at one time his hopes had risen high, for he thought she "liked" him "a little," as his modesty put it.

But there had been occasions when his heart misgave him, when he feared that the dignity, the calm which harmonized so well with her fine, clear features and tall, graceful figure were not mere surface re-