

# LOST MAN'S LANE.

A SECOND EPISODE  
IN THE LIFE OF AMELIA BUTTERWORTH  
BY ANNA KATHARINE GREEN

AUTHOR OF "THE LEAVENWORTH CASE,"  
"BEHIND CLOSED DOORS," "THE AFFAIR NEXT DOOR,"  
ETC., ETC.

## CHAPTER XII. THE PHANTOM CARRIAGE.

Well, I am getting on famously, thought I. Ghosts added to the other complications. What could the fellow have meant? If I had pressed him, he would have told me, but it did not seem quite a lady's business to pick up information this way, especially when it seemed likely to involve Lucetta. Yet did I think I would ever come to the end of this without involving Lucetta? My good sense said "No." Why, then, had my instinct triumphed for the nonce? Let those who understand the workings of the human heart answer. I am simply stating facts.

Ghost! Somehow the word startled me, as if in some way it gave a rather unwelcome confirmation to my doubts. Apparitions seen in the Knollys mansion or in any of the houses bordering on this lane! That would be serious, how serious seemed to be but half comprehended by this man. But I comprehended it and wondered if it was gossip like this which had caused Mr. Gryce to induce me to visit this house as a guest.

I was crossing the street to the hotel as I indulged in these conjectures, and intent as my mind was upon them I could not but note the curiosity and interest which my presence excited in the simple country folk that are invariably to be found lounging about a country tavern. Indeed, the whole neighborhood seemed agog, and though I would have thought it derogatory to my dignity to notice the fact I could not but see how many faces were peering at me from store doors and the half closed blinds of adjoining cottages. No young girl in the pride of her beauty could have awakened more interest, and I attributed it, as was no doubt right, not to my appearance, which would not perhaps be apt to strike these simple villagers as remarkable, or to my dress, which is rather rich than fashionable, but to the fact that I was a stranger in town and, what was more extraordinary, a guest of the Knollys.

My intention in approaching the hotel was not to spend a couple of dreary hours in the parlor with Mrs. Carter, as Mr. Simsbury had suggested, but to obtain if possible a conveyance to carry me immediately back to the Knollys mansion. But this, which would have been a simple matter in most towns, seemed well nigh an impossibility in X. The landlord was away, and Mrs. Carter, who was very frank with me, told me that she not only did not dare, but would find it perfectly useless, to ask one of the men to drive me through that lane. "It's an unwholesome spot," said she, "and only Mr. Carter and the police have the courage to brave it."

I suggested that I was willing to pay well, but it seemed to make very little difference with her. "Money won't hire them," said she, and I had the satisfaction of knowing that Lucetta had triumphed in her plan and that I must sit out the morning after all in the precincts of the hotel parlor with Mrs. Carter.

It was my first signal defeat, but I was determined to make the best of it, and if possible glean such knowledge from the talk of this woman as would help me to pluck out victory from it. She was only too ready to talk, and the first topic was little Rob.

I saw the moment I mentioned his name that I was introducing a subject that had already been well talked over by every eager gossip in the village.

Her attitude of importance, the air of mystery she assumed, were preparations I had long been accustomed to in women of this kind, and I was not at all surprised when she announced in a way that admitted of no dispute:

"Oh, there's no wonder the child is sick. We would be sick under the circumstances. He has seen the phantom carriage."

The phantom carriage! So that was what the locksmith meant. A phantom carriage! I had heard of every kind of phantom but that. Somehow the idea was a thrilling one or would have been to a nature less practical than mine.

"I don't know what you mean," said I. "Some superstition of the place? I never heard of a ghostly appearance of that nature before."

"No, I expect not. It belongs to us. I never heard of it beyond these mountains. Indeed, I have never known it to have been seen but upon one road. I need not mention it, madam. You can guess perhaps what I mean."

Yes, I could guess, and the guessing made me set my lips a little grimly. "Tell me more about this thing," I half laughed, half spoke. "It ought to be of some interest to me."

She nodded, drew her chair a trifle nearer, and impetuously began:

"You see this is a very old town. It has its ancient country houses like the one you are now living in, and it has its early traditions. One is that a carriage perfectly noiseless, drawn by horses through which you can see the moonlight, haunts the high road at intervals and flies through the gloomy forest road we have christened of late years Lost Man's lane. It is a superstition possibly, but you cannot find many families in town but believe in it as a fact, for there is not an old man or woman in the place but has either seen it in the past or has had some relative who has seen it. It passes only at night and is thought to presage some disaster to

the one who sees it. My husband's uncle died the next morning after it flew by him on the highway. Fortunately years elapse sometimes between its going and coming again. It is ten years, I think they say, since it was last seen. Poor little Rob! It has frightened him almost out of his wits."

"I should think so," I cried with becoming credulity. "But how came he to see it? I thought you said it only passed at night."

"At midnight," she repeated. "But Rob, you see, is a nervous lad, and night before last he was so restless he could not sleep, so he begged to be put in the window to cool off. This his mother did, and he sat there for a good half hour alone, looking out at the moonlight. As his mother is an economical woman there was no candle lit in the room, so he got his pleasure out of the shadows which the great trees made on the highroad till suddenly—you ought to hear the little fellow tell it—he felt the hair rise on his forehead and all his body grow stiff with a terror that his tongue like lead in his mouth. A something—a thing he would have called a horse and carriage in the daytime, but which in this light and under the influence of the mortal terror he was in took on a distorted shape which made it unlike any team he was accustomed to—was going by, not as if being driven over the earth and stones of the road, though there was a driver in front, a driver with an odd three cornered hat on his head and a cloak about his shoulders, such as he remembered as having seen hanging in his grandmother's closet, but as if it floated along without sound or stir—in fact, a specter team which seemed to find its proper destination when it turned in Lost Man's lane and was lost among the shadows of that ill reputed road."

"Pshaw," was my spirited comment as she paused to take her breath and see how I was affected by this gruesome tale. "A dream of the poor little lad! He had heard stories of this apparition and his imagination supplied the rest."

"No; excuse me, madam, but this is the very point of the tale. He had been carefully kept from hearing any such stories, having enough to do to bear his own troubles without that. You could see this was true by the way he told about it. He hardly believed what he had seen himself. It was not till some foolish neighbor blurted out, 'Why, that was the phantom carriage,' that he had any idea he was not relating anything but a dream."

My second psalm was no less marked than the first. "He did know about it, notwithstanding," I insisted. "Only he had forgotten the fact. Sleep supplies us with these lost memories. We remember them what may never recur to us in the daytime."

"Very true, and you might be right, Miss Butterworth, if he had been the only one to see this apparition. But Widow Jenkins saw it, too, and she is a woman to be believed."

This was becoming serious. "Saw it before or saw it after?" I asked. "Does she live on the highway or somewhere in Lost Man's lane?"

"She lives on the highway about a half mile from the station. She was up with her sick husband and saw it just as it was going down the hill. She said it made no more noise than a cloud slipping by. She expects to lose old Rouse. No one could see such a thing as that, she says, and not have some misfortune follow."

I laid all this up in my mind. My hour of waiting was not likely to prove wholly unprofitable.

"You see," the good woman went on, with a relish for the marvelous that stood me in good stead, "there is an old tradition of that road connected with a carriage. Years ago, before any of us were born and the house where you are was a gathering place for all the gay young bloods of the county, a young man came up from New York to visit Mr. Knollys. I do not mean the father or even the grandfather of the folks you are visiting, ma'am. He was great-grandfather to Lucetta, and a very fine gentleman if you can trust the pictures that are left of him. But my story has not to do with him. He had a daughter at that time, a widow of great and sparkling attractions, and though she was older than the young man I have mentioned every one thought it would be a match, she was so handsome and such an heiress."

"But he failed to pay his court to her, and though he was handsome himself and made a fool of more than one girl in the town every one thought he would go as he had come, a free hearted bachelor, when suddenly one night a horse and carriage were found lacking from the stables, and he was found lacking, too, and what was worse, the young widow's daughter, a girl who was barely 15 and without a hundredth part of the beauty of her mother. Love and an elopement only could account for this, for in those days young ladies did not ride with gentlemen in the evening for pleasure, and when it came to the old gentleman's ears, and, what was worse, came to the mother's, there was a commotion in that house the echoes of which some say have never died out. Though the pipers were playing and the fiddles were squeaking in the great room where they used to dance the night away, Mrs. Knollys, with her white brocade tucked up about her waist, stood

with her hand on the great front door, waiting for the horse upon which she was determined to follow him. The father, who was a man of 80 years, stood by her side. He was too old to ride himself, but he never sought to hold her back, though the jewels were tumbling from her hair and the moon had vanished from the highway.

"I will bring her back or die," the passionate beauty exclaimed, and not a lip there said her nay, for they saw what no man or woman had been able to see up to that moment, that her very life and soul were wrapped up in the man who had stolen away her daughter and that it would be death in life for her to live with the knowledge that she had given him a wife of her blood who was not herself.

"Shrill went the pipes, squeak and hum went the fiddles, but the sound that was sweetest to her was the sound of the horse's hoofs on the road in front. That was music to her indeed, and as soon as she heard it she bestowed one wild kiss on her father and bounded from the house. An instant and she was gone. One flash of her white robe at the gate, then all was dark on the highway, and only the old father stood in that wide open door, waiting, as he vowed he would wait, till his daughter returned.

"She had not gone alone. A faithful groom was behind her, and from him was learned the conclusion of that quest. For an hour and a half they rode; then they came upon a chapel in the mountains in which were burning unextinguished lights. At the sight the lady drew rein and almost fell from her horse into the arms of her lackey. 'A marriage,' she murmured, 'a marriage,' and pointed to a carriage standing in the shadow of a wide spreading tree. It was their family carriage. How well she knew it. Rousing herself, she made for the chapel door. 'I will stop it,' she cried. 'I am her mother, and I have the right.' But the lackey drew her back by her rich white dress,

his daughter sitting all alone in the carriage. But the soil on the white broadcloth folds of her white dress was no longer that of mud only. She had stabbed herself to the heart with a bodkin she wore in her hair, and it was a corpse which the faithful negro had been driving down the highways that night."

I am not a sentimental woman, but this story as thus told gave me a thrill I do not know as I really regret experiencing.

"What was this unhappy mother's name?" I asked.

"Lucetta," was the unexpected and none too reassuring answer.

## CHAPTER XIII. GOSPEL.

This name once mentioned called for more gossip, but of a somewhat different nature.

"The Lucetta of today is not like her ancient namesake," observed Mrs. Carter. "She may have the heart to love, but she would never show that love by any act of daring."

"I don't know about that," I replied, astonished that I felt willing to enter into a discussion with this woman on the very subject I had just shrunk from talking over with the locksmith. "Girls as frail and nervous as she sometimes astonish one at a pinch. I do not think Lucetta lacks daring."

"You don't know her. Why, I have seen her jump at the sight of a spider, and heaven knows that can be nothing new to her among the decaying walls in which she lives. A puny child, Miss Butterworth; pretty enough, but weak. The very kind to draw lovers, but not to hold them. Yet every one pities her, her smile is so heartbroken."

"With ghosts to trouble her and a lover to bemoan she has surely some excuse for that," said I.

"Yes, I don't deny it. But why has she a lover to bemoan? He seemed a proper man beyond the ordinary. Why let him go as she did? Even her sister

surveyed her closely, but could detect no change in her somewhat puzzled countenance.

"My allusions were not in reference to the disappearance," said I. "I was thinking of something else. Lucetta is not well."

"Ah, I know! They say she has some kind of heart complaint, but that was not true then. Why, her cheeks were like roses in those days and her figure as plump and pretty as any you could see now among our village beauties. No, Miss Butterworth, it was her weakness lost him. She probably palled upon his taste. It was noticed that he held his head very high in going out of town."

"Has he married since?" I asked.

"Not to my knowledge, ma'am."

"Then he loved her," I declared.

She looked at me quite curiously. Doubtless that word sounds a little queer on my lips, but that shall not deter me from using it when the circumstances seem to require. Besides, there was once a time— But there, I promised to fall into no digressions.

"You should have been married yourself, Miss Butterworth," said she.

I was amazed, first at her daring and secondly that I was so little angry at it. But then the woman meant no offense, probably intended a compliment rather.

"I am very well contented as I am," I returned. "I am neither sickly nor timid."

She smiled, looked as if she thought it only common politeness to agree with me and tried to say so, but finding the situation too much for her courage and discreetly held her peace. I came to her rescue with a new question.

"Have the Knollys ever been successful in love? The mother of these girls now—she who was Althea Burroughs—was her life with her husband happy? I have always been curious to know. She and I were schoolmates."

"You were? You knew Althea Knollys when she was a girl? Wasn't she charming, ma'am? Did you ever see a livelier girl or one with more knack at winning affection? Why, she couldn't sit down with you a half hour before you felt like giving up everything you had to her. It made no difference whether you were man or woman, it was all the same. She had but to turn those mischievous, pleading eyes upon you and you became a fool at once. Yet her end was sad, ma'am; too sad, when you remember that she died at the very height of her beauty and in a foreign land. But I have not answered your question. Were she and the judge happy together? I have never heard to the contrary, ma'am. I'm sure he mourned her faithfully enough. Some think that her loss killed him. He did not survive her more than three years."

"The children do not favor her much," said I, "but I see an expression now and then in Lucetta which recalls her mother faithfully."

"They are pure Knollys' blood," said she. "Even William has traits which, with a few more brains back of them, would remind you of his grandfather, who was the plainest of his race."

I was glad that the talk had reverted to William.

"He seems to lack heart," said I, "as well as brains. I marvel that his sisters put up with him as well as they do."

"They cannot help it. He is not a fellow to be looked with. Besides, he holds third share in the house. If they could sell it! But, deary me, who would buy an old tumble-down place like that on a road you cannot get folks who have any consideration for their lives to enter for love or money? But excuse me, ma'am; I forget that you are living just now on that very road. I'm sure I beg a thousand pardons."

"I am living there as a guest," I returned. "I have nothing to do with its reputation—except to brave it."

"A courageous thing to do, ma'am, and one that may do the road some good. If you can spend a month with the Knollys and come out of their house at last hale and hearty as you enter it, it will be the best proof possible that there is less to be feared there than some people think. I shall be glad if you can do it, ma'am, for I like the girls and would be glad to have the reputation of the place restored."

"Pshaw!" was my final comment. "The credulity of the town has had as much to do with their loss of it as they themselves. That educated people such as I see here should believe in ghosts!"

I say final, for at this moment the good lady, springing up, put an end to our conversation. She had just seen a buggy pass the window.

"It's Mr. Trohm," said she. "Ma'am, if you wish to return home before Mr. Simsbury comes back you may be able to do so with this gentleman. He's a most obliging man and lives less than a quarter of a mile from the Misses Knollys."

I did not say I had already met the gentleman. Why, I do not know. I only drew myself up and waited with some small inner perturbation for the result of the inquiry I saw she had gone to make.

(To be continued next Saturday.)

Notice to Land Owners.  
To all whom it may concern:  
The county commissioners of Madison county, Nebraska, having viewed the section line road petitioned for by J. Hoopfinger and others, commencing at the northwest corner of the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter of section nine (9) in township twenty-four (24) north, range four (4) west of the 6th principal meridian, in Madison county, Nebraska, running thence north to the northwest corner of section four (4), aforesaid township and range, and terminating at the intersection with the south line of Pierce county, has reported in favor of the establishment thereof, and all objections thereto or claims for damages must be filed in the county clerk's office on or before noon of the 7th day of November, A. D. 1899, or said road will be opened without reference thereto.

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County Clerk.

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"HE FELT THE HAIR RISE ON HIS FOREHEAD."

"Look!" he cried, pointing in at one of the windows, and she looked. The man she loved stood before the altar with her daughter. He was looking in that daughter's face, and his look showed a passionate devotion. It went like a dagger to her heart. Crushing her hands against her face, she waited out some fearful protest; then she dashed toward the door with 'Stop! Stop!' on her lips. But the faithful lackey at her side drew her back once more. "Listen!" was now his word, and she listened. The minister whose form she had failed to see in her first hurried look was uttering his benediction. She had come too late. The young couple were married.

"Her servant said, for so the tradition survives, that when she saw this she grew calm as walking death in an instant. Making her way into the chapel, she stood ready at the door to greet them as they issued forth, and when they saw her there, saw the rich bedraggled robe and the gleam of jewels on a neck she had not even stopped to envelop in more than the veil from her hair, he seemed to see what he had done and stopped the bride, who in her confusion would have fled back to the altar where she had just been made a wife.

"Kneel!" he cried. "Kneel, Amaranth! Only thus can we ask pardon of our mother." But at that word, that word which seemed to push her a million miles away from these two beings, who but two hours before had been the dearest beings on earth to her, the unhappy woman gave a cry and fled from their presence. "Go! Go!" were her parting words. "As you have chosen, continue. But let no tongue call me mother! Henceforth I am mother to no one."

"They found her lying on the grass outside. As she could no longer sustain herself on a horse they put her into the carriage, gave the reins to her devoted lackey and themselves rode off on horseback. One man, the fellow who had driven them to that place, said that the clock struck 12 from the chapel tower as the carriage turned away and began its rapid journey home. That may be so and it may be not. We only know that its apparition enters Lost Man's lane at nearly 1, always at nearly 1, the hour at which the real carriage came back and stopped before Mr. Knollys' gate. And now for the worst, Miss Butterworth. When the old gentleman went down to the carriage from the door, where he had stood without movement ever since she started after the lovers, it was to find the lackey in front and

admits that she loved him."

"I do not know the circumstances," said I.

"Well, there isn't much story to it. He is a young man from over the mountains, well educated and with something of a fortune of his own. He came here to visit the Spears, I believe, and seeing Lucetta one day leaning on the gate in front of her house he fell in love with her and began to pay her his attentions. That was before the lane got its present bad name, but before one or two men had vanished from among us without anything being known of their fate. William—that is his brother, you know—has always been anxious to have his sisters marry, so he did not stand in the way, and no more did Miss Knollys, but after two or three weeks of doubtful courtship the young man went away, and that was the end of it. And a great pity, too, say I, for once clear of that house Lucetta would grow into another person. Sunshine and love, two very good things, Miss Butterworth, especially for those that are weakly and timid."

I thought the qualification excellent. "Yes," said I, "I should like to see the result of them upon Lucetta." Then, with an attempt to still further sound this woman's mind and with that the united mind of the whole village, I remarked: "The young do not usually throw aside such prospects without excellent reasons. Have you never thought that Lucetta was governed by principle in discarding this very excellent young man?"

"Principle? What principle could she have had in letting a desirable husband go?"

"She may have thought the match an undesirable one for him."

"For him? Well, I never thought of that. True, she may. They are poor, but poverty don't count in such old families as theirs. I hardly think she would be influenced by any such consideration. Now, if this had happened this year, after the lane got its name and all this stir had been made about folks disappearing there, I might have given some weight to your suggestion—women are so queer, especially the women of old families like theirs—but this happened long ago and when folks all thought a heap of the Knollys, leastwise of the girls, for William does not go for much, you know—too stupid and too brutal."

William! Would the utterance of that name heighten my suggestion? I

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