

A DEAD PAST

By MRS. LOVETT CAMERON

CHAPTER XVI.

Felicia, when she drove away from Mrs. Talbot's door, had been quite certain that, in spite of her warning, Roy would yield to the temptation of going to call upon Mrs. Desmond.

Felicia had learned a good many lessons of life since the month of September, when she and Mrs. Talbot had killed time and pursued health together at the Yorkshire seaside village. She had gone through her experiences and they had not been pleasant ones to undergo, but, at the same time, they had been beneficial to her, in that she had by now completely got over her fancy for the "wicked man" with whom she had imagined herself to be deeply in love.

Lord Augustus Wray had not come well out of his love affair with Miss Grantley. After an infinite amount of trouble, Felicia had persuaded her father to give a reluctant consent to her engagement with this penniless scion of a needy aristocratic house. He had consented provisionally, that is to say, if the young people would wait two years, and were in the same mind at the end of that period of probation, then, Mr. Gregory Grantley agreed that he would give them his blessing, with something substantial added thereto. Felicia was overjoyed; this concession upon her father's part seemed to her to surpass her wildest hopes. Two years to a young and enthusiastic girl who loves seems but a small thing to secure the whole happiness of her future life. She embraced her father joyfully, and was overwhelmed with gratitude at his goodness.

Not so Lord Gus. The state of his finances was such that he could in no way afford to wait two years for the realization of his dreams. His debts pressed upon him daily; duns pestered and pursued him from morning till night. He had raised the last shilling he could realize; he was, to use his own words, "stone broke." To request such a one to wait for two years for the fortune which was to come to him with the lady of his affections was like asking a starving man to do without food for another month, and promising him a good dinner at the end of it.

Lord Gus kissed his intended very affectionately, wrung his future father-in-law's hand, and professed himself deeply impressed with his kindness. Then, having got in the good city of Bath a second string to his bow, he put himself into a train and betook himself to that ancient town.

"I should have preferred Felicia, of course," said Lord Gus, to himself. "She is young and she suits me; but I can't wait two years, not two months in fact, for any woman; and there is always Mrs. Cogger—I don't much like the idea—but two years! Oh, no, I couldn't do it at any price—not good enough!"

So, a week later, Felicia received a letter from her lover, with the Bath postmark upon it. He was afraid she would think him a great brute, he wrote, but then, he had never been good enough for; she was sure to meet with some one far more worthy. As for himself he had thought it wisest and best to offer his hand to a lady whom he had known for many years, and who was good enough to take him as he was in all his unworthiness. Mrs. Cogger had consented to become his wife, and they were to be united early in the following month. He ended by piously praying that heaven would watch over his dearest Felicia, and make up to her for all the sorrow he felt constrained to bring upon her.

That was Felicia's lesson. She suffered very keenly at first, but she got over it, being chiefly assisted by the facts concerning her rival that came to her ears. Mrs. Cogger was 50; in stature she was short and inelegant; in feature, plain and uninteresting; her manners were said to be vulgar, and her temper violent and excessively jealous. Mrs. Cogger, however, was undoubtedly rich; she was the widow of a Bristol merchant who had left to her an income of six thousand a year. Having purchased Lord Gus, she proceeded to pay her money down for the doubtful acquisition in a truly liberal fashion. She paid his debts, and she made handsome settlements upon him, so that he derived some substantial consolations from his marriage in exchange for the lack of those personal charms that a man is apt to think desirable in the wife of his bosom.

Perhaps the one soft spot in her heart was the feeling that she had for Roy—Roy, who had never wished to marry her, and whose heart was still constant to the love of his boyhood. She felt that she would do a good deal to save him from pain, and yet she feared that a certain amount of suffering must inevitably be in store for him.

"Perhaps it will be better that he should see her and realize that she has forgotten him and is happy in her new life; it may be the best cure for him in the end," she said to herself, and at this moment her brougham drew up at the door of her father's club in Pall Mall. As it did so a gentleman was coming slowly down the steps of the club. He glanced at the lady in the brougham, once quite idly, and then again more attentively. Felicia, too, looked keenly at him. Where had she seen that face with the pleasant gray eyes and the refined, regular features? Suddenly there came back to her mind the breezy hill slopes above Keppington Hall, the flickering sunshine through the branches of the beech trees, the blue distance in the valley below, and the great stone house

sleeping in its solitude near by; and then the stranger who came strolling up the hill to address them, and whose persistent attentions to Gertrude had somewhat mortified and annoyed her.

She half put out her hand and smiled. The gentleman stopped at once and took off his hat.

"Surely I can't be mistaken; it is Mr. Raikes, is it not?"

Edgar Raikes looked down at her oddly for a moment; he drew himself a little away from the brougham door. She asked him whether he had been at Keppington lately.

"Oh, yes, I am always there," and then he looked away for a minute, and added rather quickly, "I am a 'poor relation' of Brian Desmond's, Miss Grantley, an out-at-elbows younger son of a cousin of his mother's, whom he has taken pity on. I am his bailiff or agent, or whatever you choose to call it, at Keppington. I am only in town now to see him on business. I suppose I ought to have told you that before—but, one has a sort of false shame."

"I don't see anything in it to be ashamed of," said Felicia heartily. "A man need never mind working for his living if it is in an honest way," and she felt she liked him all the better for his little confession.

"I don't know much about work," he answered, with a smile. "I am afraid I am rather lazy up there—there isn't much to do, you know. It's a very idle life, I fear."

"Still, whatever there is to be done, I am quite sure that you do it, Mr. Raikes. Ah! here is my father. Papa, this is Mr. Raikes, a gentleman I met in Yorkshire last summer."

"Oh! Ah! Well, my dear, you had better ask Mr. Raikes to dinner. If you are doing nothing to-night we shall be delighted to see you at 8 o'clock sharp."

Edgar Raikes was upon the point of pleading another engagement, but a certain wistful glance into Felicia's dark eyes made him change his mind, and he murmured his acceptance and thanks. Mr. Grantley stepped into his daughter's brougham.

"This man, at all events, is honest," Felicia said to herself, and then she remembered that she had liked him when they had met him at Keppington, and afterward, too, when he had called upon them at the hotel, only that his attention seemed to have been absorbed by Mrs. Talbot. She recollected how foolishly piqued and annoyed she had been that this had been the case, and how angry with herself she had felt afterward, because she, Felicia, whose heart was at that time presumably in the possession of Lord Augustus Wray, should have been so lost to self-respect as to have felt jealous—yes, commonly jealous, because a good-looking young man, who was a perfect stranger to her, should have seemed to find pleasure in the society of her friend.

CHAPTER XVII.

"I have brought a friend of mine to pay his respects to you, Mrs. Desmond," said Mrs. Talbot that afternoon, as she entered Kitten's pretty drawing room in Lowndes Square.

Kitten herself had just come in from her solitary drive. She stood in the center of the room pulling off her long gloves; she looked just a little bit sad and weary, but her whole face brightened when, glancing past Gertrude, her eyes lighted upon the young man who entered the room in her wake.

"Roy!" she cried joyfully, running forward with outstretched hands to meet him.

"Kitten!" "Oh, how glad I am to see you! Do you know, that I thought you had forgotten me, and that you were never coming to see me!"

"So you two are great friends already!" said Mrs. Talbot, in a voice of disappointment. "And I thought that I was going to introduce you to a new beauty, Sir Roy!"

"Mrs. Desmond and I have known each other since we were children," explained Roy, and then he thought no more about her, but sat down on the sofa by Kitten's side. How glad she seemed to see him again; she who used to snub him and laugh at him, and turn her back upon him in the old days; how delightful it was to be welcomed like this by her.

"You are very much changed," he said, almost involuntarily.

"Yes! I suppose I am. A woman does change, no doubt, after her marriage, and I have been to so many places, and have seen so many new things and so many people abroad. I think I was a very ignorant little person, Roy, when my dear old daddy was alive. You see, I was always a child to him, and now I am a woman. I seem to have jumped from one to the other, to have had no girlhood!" and she half sighed.

He bent down and looked anxiously at her. "Kitten, are you happy?"

"As happy as a woman can be who has married a man she loves with her whole heart," she answered proudly and a little defiantly.

When he came back an hour later to her house to dine with her, as she had asked him to do, he found her standing dressed in her ball dress under the light of a swinging lamp upon the landing outside the drawing room door. As he came up the staircase she seemed to him a surpassingly fair vision of youth and beauty in her soft, clouded raiment of

white lace, with the glitter of diamonds upon her neck and arms.

"Punctual to a minute," she cried gaily, as she preceded him into the drawing room. "Ah, how I do love people who come punctually to dinner! How do you like my dress, Roy?"

"It is perfect," he said gravely, looking not at her dress, but at her.

"I dare say I shall not dance much," she went on in a sort of hurried manner that puzzled him, "only with you and with Brian." Then, after a little pause, she added in rather a strained voice: "By the way, after all, you will have to put up with only me for dinner, Roy; I have had a note from my husband, in which he states he will be unable to get back to dinner, being detained by business. I hope you will not find it dull alone with me. Shall we go down?"

He offered his arm in grave silence and they went downstairs to dinner.

"How odd it seems to be sitting down to dinner alone with you like this!" she cried, with a brave effort to seem gay and happy. "Do you remember our luncheons by the river and the sandwiches and cherry pies I used to coax old Keziah into making, so that I might bring them out to you in the corner of the meadow under the willow trees?"

How nice it was! The softened lamp light, the fruit and the flowers, the dim background of pictures and old oak in the empty room—for the servants had left them—and Kitten, in her white dress, with the light shining upon her corn-gold head, sitting opposite to him while they capped each other's reminiscences of those happy days long ago in which Brian Desmond had had no existence!

"Brian will be here very soon now," she said, glancing at the clock. "How I wish he would come back; let us go upstairs and wait for him in the drawing room."

There was a sound of wheels at the door, and the bell rang. For one moment Kitten's face was radiant; if it had not been for very shame she would have flown downstairs to greet her returning prodigal, but the consciousness of her matronly honors prevented her from doing anything so very undignified.

There seemed to be a little delay downstairs; no many feet, conscious of outrageous lateness, came tearing up the stairs two at a time—instead, there was a measured tread of heavy steps followed quickly by the swish of a woman's silken skirts against the banisters; the footman threw open the door, and there entered—Gertrude Talbot in amber satin and black lace, with a huge bouquet in her hand.

"Ah, my dear little woman!" she said, affectionately and gushingly, "here I am again, you see! how too—too lovely and delicious you look in that perfect dress! How well it suits you. I have just come from Felicia's dinner party—I thought I would drive round by your door, and carry you off with me to Lady Hunter's; your brougham, I see, is waiting for you, dear, so I can dismiss mine and we can go together, and you must follow us in a hansom, Sir Roy."

"But—you are very kind, Mrs. Talbot; but I cannot go with you; my husband will be coming back," stammered Kitten, confusedly.

Gertrude smiled more than ever, showing all her gleaming teeth, and flinging up her black gloved hands with an expressive gesture.

"Oh, my dear child, how deliciously young and fresh you are! Don't you see that—that naughty husband of yours had no more notion of going to Lady Hunter's to-night than your footman had?"

"What can you mean—have you seen him?" faltered Kitten.

"Ah, I understand men better than you do, child; they are all alike, every one of them—dear creatures, and we can't do without them, the more's the pity, but unreliable all of them! Seen him, my dear, of course I have; I passed him a few minutes ago, walking with a very good-looking woman—it was his sister, no doubt," she added, looking a little away from her victim.

"Yes, it was his sister," answered Kitten, very calmly, half turning to Roy; "it was stupid of me to forget it, but of course, I remember now. Brian told me that he was dining with her to-night."

"Then had we not better go on to the ball?" said Gertrude, considerably taken aback; Brian Desmond had no sister, and she knew it, but the young wife's coolness and courage struck her dumb.

"Yes; we will go together to the ball," assented Kitten, and she went.

"Do you want to break her heart?" whispered Roy, angrily to Mrs. Talbot as they went downstairs.

"Oh, dear, no! only to open her eyes," she answered, with a careless shrug of her beautiful white shoulders.

(To be continued.)

Where It Is Useful.

Patient—What do you think of this faith cure business, doctor?

Doctor—Oh, it's all right in some cases.

Patient—For example?

Doctor—Well, say when a person imagines something ails him and then imagines he is cured of it.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

As Others See Us.

Green—Do you believe there is really such a person as the fool-killer?

Brown—Er—by the way, how old are you?

Green—Forty-five.

Brown—Well, if there is, he must have retired from business.

Professional Advice.

The new doctor had been called in to see a lady with a swollen jaw.

"Does it hurt you to talk?" asked the pill dispenser.

"Yes," she replied.

"Then don't," said the M. D. "Two dollars, please."

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Lincoln the Farmer.

Matters soon reached a crisis which drove the junior partner out into the fields again, where he undertook all sorts of rough farm labor, from splitting rails to plowing. As a man-of-all-work, however, Lincoln did not prove altogether satisfactory to his employers. He was too fond of mounting stumps in the field and "practicing polemics" on the other farm hands, and there was something uncomfortable about a plow man who read as he followed the team, no matter how straight his furrows ran. Such practices were irritating, if not presumptuous, and there is a well known story about a farmer who found "the hired man" lying in a field beside the road, dressed in his not too immaculate farm clothes, with a book instead of a pitchfork in his hand.

"What are you reading?" inquired the old gentleman.

"I'm not reading; I'm studying," answered Lincoln his wonderful eyes still on the pages of his book.

"Studying what?"

"Law sir."

The old man stared at the speaker for a moment in utter amazement.

"Great—God—Almighty!" he muttered as he passed on shaking his head. —From Frederick Trevor Hill's "Lincoln the Lawyer" in the January Century.

An Early Reformer.

"I am looking," said Diogenes, "for an honest man."

"And when you find him, what are you going to do?"

"S-sh! I'm not going to find him. That would spoil the joke."—Washington Star.

Fast Resuscitation.

In the days of the first settlers in the Chickasaw country, when Davy Crockett still frequented the Big Hatchle, "Old Man Giddins" was a prosperous citizen of the Forked Deer settlement. One day he started on a trip to Arkansas, and thenceforth for several years Forked Deer knew him no more.

As travel in Arkansas was dangerous, and as nothing was heard of Giddins, he was officially declared dead by the court, and his estate divided among his heirs. A year or so later, however, he turned up, and tried to get possession of his property again. He was promptly seized and taken into court.

"What do you mean by coming round here, trying to take this property?" roared the court at him.

"It's my property," asserted Giddins. "Everybody knows it's mine."

"Not at all!" replied the Judge. "I'll admit your case seems a hard one, but it can't be helped now. This court has decided that you are extinctus defunctus, which is Latin for dead. This court cannot err. Dead you are. If you want any property round here you must take another name and set to work to earn it. Mr. Sheriff, adjourn this court, and we will all go and see that wrestling match you spoke of."

Much More to the Point.

"Ef yer real interested," said Deacon Skinner, "I'll tell ye what I want fur that horse."

"Oh, I wouldn't be interested in knowin' that," replied Farmer Shrupe, "but I wouldn't mind knowin' what ye'd take."—Philadelphia Ledger.

RHEUMATISM

BODY RACKED WITH PAIN

No other bodily suffering is equal to that produced by the pain of Rheumatism. When the poisons and acids, which cause this disease, become entrenched in the blood there is hardly any part of the body that is not affected. The muscles become sore and drawn, the nerves twitch and sting, the joints inflame and swell, the bones ache, every movement is one of agony, and the entire body is racked with pain. Rheumatism is brought on by indigestion, stomach troubles, torpid Liver, weak Kidneys and a general inactive state of the system. The refuse matter instead of passing off through nature's avenues is left to sour and form uric acid, and other acrid poisons which are absorbed into the blood. Rheumatism does not affect all alike. In some cases it takes a wandering form; it may be in the arms or legs one day and in the shoulders, feet, hands, back or other parts of the body the next. Others suffer more seriously, and are never free from pain. The uric acid and other irritating substances find lodgment in the muscles and joints and as these deposits increase the muscles become stiff and the joints locked and immovable. It matters not in what form the disease may be the cause is always the same—a sour, acid condition of the blood. This vital stream has lost its purity and freshness, and instead of nourishing and feeding the different parts with health-giving properties, it fills them with the acids and salts of this painful and far-reaching disease. The cold and dampness of Winter always intensify the pains of Rheumatism, and the sufferer to get relief from the agony, rubs the affected parts with liniments, oils, lotions, etc., or uses plasters and other home remedies. These are desirable because they give temporary ease and comfort but have no effect on the real trouble which is in the blood and beyond the reach of such treatment. S. S. S. is the best remedy for Rheumatism. It goes into the blood and attacks the disease at its head, and by neutralizing and driving out the acids and building up the thin, sour blood it cures the disease permanently. While cleansing the blood S. S. S. tones up the stomach, digestion and every other part of the system, soothes the excited nerves, reduces the inflammation, dissolves the deposits in the joints, relieves all pain and completely cures this distressing disease. S. S. S. is a certain cure for Rheumatism in any form; Muscular, Inflammatory, Articular or Sciatic. Special book on the disease and any medical advice, without charge, to all who write. THE SWIFT SPECIFIC CO., ATLANTA, GA.

About fifteen years ago I had a severe attack of Rheumatism and could not work with any satisfaction. My legs were badly swollen and drawn so I could scarcely walk. I tried many remedies but could get no relief. I was finally recommended to try S. S. S. and it soon cured me sound and well. I am now 74 years old and have never had any return of the trouble.

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