

A DEAD PAST

By MRS. LOVETT CAMERON

CHAPTER XXIII.

He stood up, facing her, with his back to the fire. Now that she could see him well, with the light of the lamp shining full upon him, she could see that he was very much altered. He was thin, and worn, and aged; his broad, manly figure had shrunk; his shoulders stooped; the eyes that used to be brave and buoyant, now looked weary and lifeless. She was shocked to see him so changed. He laughed shortly and bitterly as he looked at her.

"I have come half across Europe to see you, travelling night and day through all this frost and snow. I have taken no rest, and scarcely any food for four days, and all you can find to say to me at the end of it is to revile me for not keeping out of your way?"

"What have you come for?" she repeated more gently.

"What have I come for? To see you, Rosamond—to still the raging hunger at my heart. Because, when I found out where you were, I could not rest until I saw you again."

"How did you hear where I was?" she said wonderingly.

"There was a man, a poor fellow from this part of the country—he was consumptive, I think—who met us. I heard it from him at Mentone."

Mary's brother! She understood it then. There was a sort of fatality about it. She sat down wearily.

"What have you been doing with yourself, Brian? You look fearfully ill."

"I have been ill for months. We started, my cousin, Edgar Raikes, and I, to go to China, Australia, heaven knows where. We began by a fortnight in the Austrian Tyrol, and there I got laid up with a sort of fever. I have been there ever since till a month ago, when I managed to get down to the Riviera. I am getting right now, only a bit weak and pulled down."

"And a journey like this across Europe, in such weather and in your present state! What madness, Brian! It is enough to kill you!"

She looked at him with a kindly pitying concern. What surprised herself more than she could account for was the utter calmness and indifference with which she saw him. Save in the first moment of surprise, her pulses had beat no faster for his presence. His voice had no power to thrill her.

"When trust is gone," she told herself as she looked at him, "then the foundations of the building are undermined, and with time and absence the idol itself soon crumbles into powder." Aloud she said to him, with a kindly reproach in her voice: "What folly could induce you to undertake such a journey for nothing, Brian?"

"Do you call it nothing, then, that I am here, that I can see you once more, hear your voice, touch your hands?"

He knelt down before her on the hearthrug, and took her hand—his own trembled and shook, hers was as cold as ice and as perfectly unresponsive.

"Rosamond, tell me once again—let me hear from your lips—that you love me still. Then I will go. I ask for nothing more. That will be enough for me. Tell me that, once, and I will leave you."

"I cannot tell you that I love you, Brian," she said coldly, wondering, as she spoke, at the fearful evidence of selfishness of which such words, from this man to her whose life he had spoiled, gave evidence.

"You cannot say so! Do you mean that you do not love me, Rosamond? It is impossible! You cannot have ceased to care for me."

She withdrew her hands from his, and reached them up behind her head with a weary action. Her eyes wandered away from his pleading, earnest face that was haggard with passion and misery. For a moment or two she was silent, then very slowly she said:

"The one thing under the sun which is absolutely impossible, Brian, is to rekindle the ashes of a dead fire."

He rose from his kneeling attitude at her feet, and stood with his back to the mantelpiece. Then he drew a long, shivering breath.

"Ah! it is dead, then," he said, almost in a whisper.

"Yes," she answered, still not looking at him. "It is dead. Thank God! thank God!"

There was silence between them for the space of four or five minutes—absolute silence, during which the clock ticked steadily and the fire logs sparkled and crackled, and Brian Desmond faced the bitterest and cruellest moment of his whole life.

It was Rosamond who spoke first. "You have left your wife, Brian, at Mentone?"

He started.

"My wife! Good heavens! Surely you know—you must have heard!"

She looked at him with interest.

"What is it? I have heard nothing."

"Is it possible that you do not know that my wife left me before I went abroad?"

"Your wife left you!" she repeated in a voice of dismay. "Do you mean that you are not living with her—that you are separated from her?"

"She, at all events, has separated herself from me," he said bitterly. "It seems that no woman can stick to me now. Very likely I deserve it."

"But, Brian," she cried eagerly, "I don't understand! Do you mean that she left her home and went away? What made her leave you?"

"Her own idiotic jealousy," he replied

irritably. "Some one, I believe, saw us together that one evening—do you remember it, Rosamond?"

Could she ever forget it? Although the anguish of it was past, the bare recollection of that day in London was sufficient to make her shudder.

"Yes, yes, go on," she said, hastily. "I don't know who it was. Either an interfering young fool, called Sir Roy Grantley, who imagined himself to be in love with her, or else a mischief-making woman called Talbot, I never can make out which; but one of them must have seen us together and told her. She wrote me a sensational letter and left my house."

"But, Brian, surely, surely, that alone could not have led her to such a strong measure."

"Oh, she was always jealous about you! She found out—she knew, I believe—that it was you, and not her, whom I loved."

"And it is I—I who have worked her all this woe and agony!" she moaned. "Oh, what can I do? What can I do?"

"Do not distress yourself, Rosamond. Kitten was not like you; she is a mere child, a creature with no depth or power of feeling; she has the inconsequence of immaturity, not the heart of a woman. I do not think she has the power to feel much; she is but a baby."

"Ah, do not think it!" cried Rosamond eagerly. "Do not flatter yourself with such a delusion, Brian. Would a child and baby—a mere shallow, heartless creature as you call her—have left her home, her comforts—you—if she had not suffered acutely?"

"Ah, you do not know her, her little baby ways, her keen pleasure in trifles, her rapid changes of manner and of feeling."

"What has that to do with it?" cried Rosamond, with an impatient wave of her hand. "No, I do not know her, but I think I know her better than you do; that must be a nature that can love intensely, and to whom love is either life or death. She might have been childish, but you have mistaken inexperience for ignorance, and the trustfulness of youth for an evidence of heartlessness. Brian, find your wife and take her back to your heart and to your love. To her you are all the world—to me, thank God, you are nothing!"

"Is it, indeed, as you said last night, dead ashes?" he asked, looking wistfully into her dark eyes and grasping her hand tightly.

"Absolutely and entirely," she answered, with that brisk coldness of voice, that cheerful iciness of expression, which is a more effectual extinguisher of love's hope than a passion of reproaches or a whole volume of angry denial.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Where is that girl, Ann?"

"She is out in the park, ma'am."

"She is always out in the park. It isn't fit for her to be out at all in such weather, with that cough of hers that never gets any better. Instead of being a comfort to me, she is nothing but a burden and a responsibility. I am sure I don't know what to do about her—and there's nobody that I can write to for orders nowadays, with the master and mistress gone abroad, and even Mr. Raikes as has took himself off—the Lord knows where! I think in my old age, that it is hard to be saddled with a useless child like that."

The speaker was Mrs. Succurden; she stood at the hall door shading her eyes from the bright winter sunshine, and looking out over the snow-covered slopes that reached away, one below the other, till they sank into the dazzling whiteness of the plains below. She had not looked long before she espied between the black trunks of the beech groves some quarter of a mile away a small, dark-robed figure that wandered slowly and aimlessly over the crisp, snow-covered grass.

"There she is," muttered the housekeeper, with a pucker of annoyance on her forehead. "Poor feckless, half-witted creature, sauntering along as if it was midsummer, with no more notion of taking care of herself than if she was a baby. Tom," she called out to one of the gardeners, who was sweeping the snow in a desultory manner away from the front door, "go and tell Catherine that I want her."

She came obedient to the summons. A small, wisp-like figure of a girl in her dark dress, with a face that seemed scarcely human in its absolute transparent pallor.

"You wanted me, Mrs. Succurden?"

"Yes. I want you to come in; it is not fit for you to be wandering about in the snow like that. Have you washed the best dinner service, as I told you?"

"Yes. I have done all the work you set me to do."

"Come in then, and go and dust the glass in the octagon room."

Kitten did what she was told. She went into the octagon room. It was the room where Edgar Raikes used to sit—the room which Brian had once used as his own, and where the photograph of Miss Gray stood in its frame with the closed brass doors, upon the mantelshelf. It was a place that had a strange fascination for Kitten. She would stand whole minutes at a time motionless at the window that looked out over the now barren trees towards the grey church tower in the hollow.

Kitten never went into the octagon room without dreaming by the window for a while, nor without a glance inside

the closed doors at Rosamond Gray's picture. This self-torture, which kept her love and her pain alive, became a sort of religious duty to her.

"Was I not right to leave him?" she would say to herself, almost with triumph, "since he loved her so much, and could never, by any effort, have set me in her place? Are not all the mistakes of this world made by the women who struggle for a man's love which there is no hope of their getting? Better to let it go."

There was a glass-doored cabinet in the corner of the octagon room. It was filled up to the topmost shelf with specimens of old cut glass. It was part of Kitten's duty to dust the glass and the shelves, and to replace these valuable objects in order in their places. Kitten, mounted upon a low pair of steps, was carefully dusting an old goblet of greenish-hued crystal, which she knew better than Mrs. Succurden could tell her, was of untold value, being absolutely unique and unreplaceable; she was still dreaming about Brian's youth, about the beautiful girl whom he had loved long ago.

She could hear Mrs. Succurden's voice talking volubly, and with a certain agitation and animation which was unusual to her, and as the voices drew nearer, she was able to distinguish the housekeeper's words.

"This way, miss—dear me, I beg your pardon—ma'am I should have said! You haven't forgotten the way I'll be bound—dear me, to think of seeing you here again after all these years! It do seem strange indeed! And to think of your living so near, too—only at Dunsterton, and your never having come over to see the old place before!"

"Well, I have been a long time, certainly, in coming to see you, Mrs. Succurden," replied a clear, crisp voice, with a pleasant ring in it, pre-eminently the voice of a lady, as Kitten was instantly aware, and how great is the charm of a refined and well-bred voice. "I owe it to my shame, bit to-day, I had a fancy to bring my friend, Col. Trefusis, to look at the vicarage gables and at the dear old church, and as we were so near, why, I could not resist the temptation of coming on across the park."

"Along the old path, miss—ma'am, I mean! Ah, how many a time I've seen you come springing up the slope with your light steps!"

They were well within the room by now. The tall lady in her long fur cloak, and the slight figured gentleman a little behind her, looking about him with keen, kindly blue eyes, and behind them both, Mrs. Succurden, in her white cap and black silk gown, with her basket of keys in her hands. Kitten, from her vantage ground at the top of the steps, could see the group who invaded her solitude, while they were unaware of her presence.

"You have a great deal of glass here," said the gentleman to Mrs. Succurden.

"Ah, you would like to go over the houses, no doubt, sir," replied the housekeeper. "I will see if I can find the head gardener; he is generally about at this hour."

She led the way out of the room; the gentleman went with her. The lady in the long fur cloak made no effort to follow them. She was left alone, standing by the window where Kitten had so often stood with her back to the room, and her eyes rivetted upon the grey church tower.

Rosamond moved from the window at length; then she did exactly what Kitten herself had done hundreds of times. She went straight to the mantelpiece, and opened the brass doors of the painted miniature. She took it down from its place and gazed long and earnestly at the lovely face, bright with youth and happiness, that smiled back at her.

She turned away from the fireplace, leaving the doors of the picture wide open. Then Kitten saw her face, and behind it that other face, that was the same, only not the same. The beautiful features were unaltered, the eyes were as lovely, the proud pose of the head was unmistakable, only that in the living woman the curves of the laughing mouth of the pictured one were drooped and saddened, and the hand of sorrow and suffering had swept like a storm cloud over the once bright and fearless brow.

But all that Kitten realized at that moment was one thing alone. This was Rosamond Earle, whom Brian Desmond loved!

The room swam round her, her wide-open eyes grew dark and dazed with unspeakable pain and anguish, then came a crash, and the sharp ring of broken glass as the mediaeval goblet fell, shattered into a thousand atoms upon the parquet flooring, then a dull, heavy thud, and a little dark-robed form slipped suddenly down from the top of the steps into a huddled mass upon the ground.

(To be continued.)

Getting His Money's Worth.

"Why doesn't Tightwad buy his stamps at the postoffice instead of going to that news stand every night?"

"The news dealer handles the baseball extra."

"I see. Tightwad buys one every night, eh?"

"Oh, no! You see, the papers lay on the showcase and while the clerk is getting the stamps Tightwad reads the score."—Detroit Tribune.

Comparing Records.

"No, indeed," she said. "I can never be your wife. Why, I had half a dozen offers before yours."

"Huh!" rejoined the young man in the case. "That's nothing. I proposed to at least a dozen girls before I met you."

In Hard Luck.

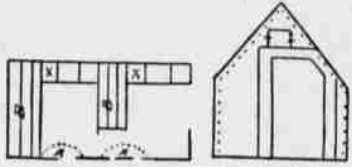
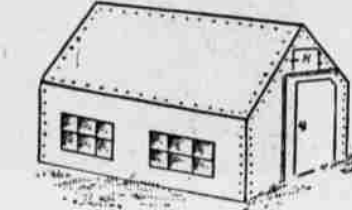
The Judge—Have you anything to offer the court before sentence is passed on you?

The Prisoner—No, your honor; I had \$13, but my lawyer appropriated it.



Practical Poultry Houses.

A practical poultry house may be built of four upright piano boxes. The backs and ends which come together are removed, together with two of the tops. The two remaining tops are inclosed at the middle end of the house and at the front, and a small door made in the gable end of one, which portion of the house is used for



PIANO BOX POULTRY HOUSE.

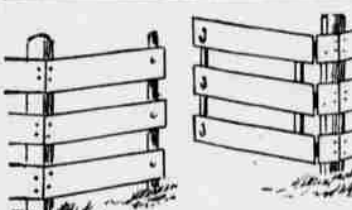
the storage of grain. A sloping roof is built over the entire structure, and the building covered with waterproof paper, thus cutting out any possibility of trouble in the way of leakage or drafts which might result from the joining. Two windows are made in the lower front of the house facing the south, and directly under each window a dusting box is made which will afford the fowls much pleasure, as they enjoy the sunshine. Roosts are placed at one end and in the middle, and nest boxes on the side opposite the windows.

Arranging the Window Garden.

How often do we notice a shelf filled with small plants in the window garden, many varieties grouped promiscuously until the characteristics of each are entirely destroyed. Arrange each class of plants in a separate clump, and you will be surprised to note the difference in their appearance. Take such plants as primroses, cyclamen, violets and ferns and arrange them alternately on the plant shelf. Now group all the ferns in the center of the shelf, the tall sword fern in the middle, with the broad-leaved sorts next, and the beautiful maiden-hair fern and other dainty varieties drooping from the edge of the shelf. On one end of the shelf, at a little distance from the ferns, group the different varieties of primroses in such manner that contrasts in foliage and blossoms will be readily noted. On the other hand, arrange the cyclamen blossoms, nodding daintily above the dark foliage, and the great difference between the careless and artistic arrangements will be at once apparent.

Good Fence Gate.

Where the farm is divided into a number of fields it is often somewhat of a laborious task to pass from one field to another, and especially when animals are to be driven from one section to another of the farm. A gate such as here described is easily placed in a section of any division fence, whether of wire, rails or boards. Ar-



FENCE GATE.

range the point of opening so as to have firm corner posts, then make a gate four feet wide; a light post is set before the ends of the boards are cut if the gate is erected as a part of a board fence. Two strong strips are nailed on the gate portion and three strong strap hinges are fastened on the boards where cut next to the post. Strong hooks and screw-eye serve as fastenings at the other end of the gate. It costs but little to arrange several of the handy gates about the farm, and they will be found useful. The illustration shows the idea clearly.—Indianapolis News.

Indigestion in Cows.

There are several things to look for in a case of chronic indigestion in a cow. Possibly tuberculosis is present, and if it is suspected the cow should be removed from among the other animals and be closely examined by an expert veterinarian. Then there may be some organic disease of the stomach or there may be some foreign substance in the second stomach. When a cow suffers from chronic indigestion it is wise to call a veterinarian in order to ascertain how serious the trouble is.

Protecting the Manure.

The annual question concerning the disposition of the stable-made manure comes up as the pile begins to assume formidable proportions. By far the best way of taking care of it is to spread it on the fields where it will go down into the soil and be in readiness for the crop which is to be sown in the spring. If it is to be stored, the ideal place is the pit with cement bottom, which will hold the liquid excrement. If this cannot be done, then store it under a shed, placing it in layers and let the hogs root it over. If even this is not feasible, then put it in piles not very high and cover with any old, rough boards—almost anything that will keep out the rain, which causes the liquid portions to leach away.

An excellent plan is to choose a place where the soil is of a clay nature, and dig a trench all around the space where the pile is to be, and in this way save some of the liquid, which may be scooped up and poured back on the pile. Use the pile as a receiver for the slop from the house, and see that it is forked over several times during the winter. The main thing, however, is to see that it is protected from the elements as much as possible.

Reducing Farm Expenses.

The farmer who begins the new year with the intention of reducing expenses will find many opportunities for so doing, and will also be surprised at the end of the year at the many avenues for allowing the loss. One cause of loss is the neglect of the farm wagons and implements. An account kept of the cost of repairs will show that quite a large sum goes in that direction, much of which could be saved. The use of more oil on tools, and keeping them sharp and in the best condition for use, will save labor, which is an item that must be paid for. Too many unprofitable animals, however, cause more loss than anything else, and the farmer should begin the new year with sufficient courage to thin out the flocks and herds so as to retain only the best and most profitable.

Controls the Horse.

A Seattle inventor has devised a driving bit which places the horse under the complete control of the driver, and, if universally used, there would be no more runaway horses. This driving bit contains the ordinary jointed mouthpiece, with rein rings attached, the rings and mouthpiece being pivoted together to a



DRIVING BIT.

curved snaffle bar. The snaffle bars meet at the center under the lower jaw of the horse and are linged by a rivet, the overlapping ends of the snaffle bars being recessed to form a smooth joint. An overdraw check guard, consisting of a curved chin bar connects to the snaffle bars. An overdraw check bit passes through slots in the upper end of the check guard. The inventor claims that the overdraw check, when connected to either a snaffle bit or to a stiff mouthpiece bit, is humane in its action, does not force the jaws of the horse open to an extent to interfere with the proper breathing, will not pinch the sides of the mouth of the horse, and will not chafe and irritate the animal.

Packing Pork.

Clean the barrel thoroughly until all bad odors are removed. Then cover the bottom with three inches of salt and pack in a layer of pork, closely filling the space and covering the whole layer with salt three inches deep. Pound it down solid with an ax and start another layer, keeping on in the same way until the pork is all packed. Cover the whole with one-half bushel of salt and let it stand a few days, after which clean cold water should be added. A float with a flat stone on top will keep the meat from rising above the surface. This plan requires more salt than commonly used but is very sure for keeping meat.

Valley Frosts.

Three causes operate to produce valley frosts, which are: First, the air, made cold on clear nights, becomes heavier, rolls down the hillsides and settles at the bottom. Second, the winds do not reach the valleys, which allows unobstructed radiation of heat. Third, the richer soil of the valleys induces a later and more succulent growth, thereby promoting more rapid evaporation.

Managing Stock.

The real benefit derived from keeping stock may always be traced to the management. Good blood is essential, but no animal can thrive that is compelled to depend upon itself. Pure bred stock demands the best care, but the same may also be said of common stock. The food is the important factor in the production of meat or milk, but some animals can make better use of food than others. The farmer's attention, however, is necessary for all kinds of live stock, if the animals are to give a profit.