

A DEAD PAST

By MRS. LOVETT CAMERON

CHAPTER XXI.—(Continued.)

To save Kitten, or indeed to benefit her even in the smallest degree, there was nothing upon the face of the earth which Roy was not prepared to do, or dare, or endure. But the question was not what he would do, but whether Felicia would feel disposed to sacrifice herself to save the reputation of a woman, whom she knew but slightly, and to whom she owed nothing whatever.

By degrees, as he thought it over, as he pondered upon Margaret's suggestion, turning it over and over in his mind, an entirely new and original idea flashed into his brain.

Why should he not pretend to be engaged? And what good reason could Felicia bring forward to refuse her consent to a merely nominal engagement which should last a couple of months at the longest? There really seemed nothing impracticable to him in the idea. Felicia had always understood each other perfectly and were quite capable of keeping a secret between them.

The more Roy thought about it the more simple and easy did the whole thing seem, and the less it entered his mind to imagine that his cousin could refuse to co-operate with him.

Felicia Grantley went about all one summer's day with a cloud upon her brow, a burden of horrible uncertainty in her heart, and a most singular letter from Roy in her pocket.

Mr. Raikes had sat for half an hour in her drawing room, balancing his stick between his knees, and staring gloomily at the carpet.

"What do you think," he asked her for the twentieth time, "shall I go abroad with Brian, or no?"

"You must be the best judge of that, Mr. Raikes," Felicia had answered coldly—very coldly.

The measured tones struck ice into his soul. How could he possibly guess that her heart was in a tumult, and that she had a difficulty in keeping back her tears?

Edgar Raikes looked at her gloomily and miserably. She did not care then, he supposed, whether he stayed or went. It made no difference to her; and how, indeed, could he expect it, or now dare to frame in words the miserable thoughts that were surging in his heart; he who was a pauper, to this girl, whose money and whose fears of being sought for her fortune, seemed to stand like a forbidding angel between him and his chiefest desire.

"I suppose then I had better go," he said miserably, with an intonation that was almost a question in his voice, and something wistful in his eyes which it was a pity that Felicia was so engrossed with her red and yellow silks as not to see.

"That is for you to decide," she said coldly.

Her very coldness should, perhaps, have shown him that she did care, but he did not understand that. Few men know women well enough not always to take what they say for what they really mean. Edgar Raikes merely supposed that his case was hopeless. He shook hands with her in silence, and left her, and when the front door had been slammed upon his departing footsteps, Felicia flung her silks and her plush on to the ground, laid her head upon the table in front of her and burst into tears.

All this took place in the morning. And then came Roy's letter, and Felicia went about her daily business, her shopping and her visitings, with a load of anxiety on her mind. In the evening she was to give Roy his answer.

They were to meet at some private theatricals, and it was there that he would ask her for her decision, to surely the strangest proposal which a man ever made to a woman.

When dinner time came Felicia was still undecided. For a wonder she was dining at home with her father. They took their places in silence opposite each other. And Mr. Grantley began his usual comments.

"Why didn't you ask Raikes to dinner?"

"He is staying with poor Mr. Desmond; I didn't like to ask him to leave him."

That very morning Mrs. Talbot sauntered down Bond street, when she almost stumbled into Brian Desmond's arms as he came quickly round the corner of Grosvenor street.

Here was a chance of mischief making which our friend Gertrude was not in the least likely to neglect. She laughed and stood still, so immediately in front of him that Brian had no chance but to stand still, too.

"You nearly knocked me down!" she cried playfully. Then asked quickly: "Any news of that naughty little truant, Mrs. Desmond?"

"I have not heard from my wife to-day," answered Brian frowningly.

"Oh! of course you know where she is," she cried lightly. "I tell everybody so. I've been fighting her battles for her everywhere. Of course, there is not an atom of truth in all the unkind things people say, as I tell everybody. No truth about her, that is to say. Of course, you are a very naughty, bad man indeed!"

Brian's brow grew black as thunder. No one had dared to breathe a word to him of scandal concerning his wife. It had been Edgar Raikes' constant care to see that no such reports reached his ears. Gertrude was pretty well certain that he had been told of nothing.

"Kindly explain yourself, Mrs. Talbot," he said haughtily and sternly.

"What is it concerning my wife that you are kind enough to tell people, and what are the battles which you are generous enough to wage on her account?"

"Oh, my dear fellow, don't look so cross. I assure you I have contradicted it everywhere. Only just now I met some people who declared that Roy Grantley was still away; but it is quite untrue, for I saw Roy in a hansom not ten minutes ago (he looked as white as a sheet, by the way), but of all the false, wicked, cruel slanders on an innocent little darling like your wife! However, you and I know the world, don't we? And, after all, for you to complain would

be like pot calling the kettle black. Good by, Brian. I may call you so just for once, mayn't I? You and I were always good friends, though you haven't paid me one compliment or admired my new dress; but then I know 'Fair Rosamond' is all in all to you now!" And with this parting shot she kissed her fingers lightly to him, and vanished round the corner of the street.

As to Brian, he turned slowly and dully away. He could not go down to the club, nor walk along Bond street and St. James street now, to run the gauntlet of his friends' pitying or inquiring glances. He turned back and went slowly homeward. His miserable secret was known, and his wife's name was coupled with that of another man. He met his cousin coming out of his own house.

"We will start at once—this very night," he said to him. "I cannot bear the shame of this," and then he repeated to him what Mrs. Talbot had said concerning his wife.

"Do not believe her," said Edgar Raikes, stoutly. "To have repeated such a thing to you, she must be what I have always taken her to be, a bad-hearted woman. Stay at home like a man, Brian, find your wife and vindicate her name by bringing her back in the face of the world."

"No, no, let us go, if not to-day, let it be to-morrow," he answered gloomily, for there was that other trouble, concerning Rosamond Earle, of which he could speak to no one, weighing upon his heart. That, too, was, it seems, known and spoken about, and to save Rosamond's name it seemed to him that he had no alternative, save to get himself away out of England. There was no refuge for him save in flight. As to Kitten, she had been foolish, but her very simplicity and foolishness would save her. With Rosamond it was different. If Kitten's flight were once to be attributed to its true cause, then the voice of slander would not spare the woman of whom his wife was jealous.

He had made up his mind to go. By noon the next day a wonderful thing had taken place. In every club, in every house where Mr. and Mrs. Desmond's name and story had been known, there went about a strange and astonishing piece of news. Everybody was talking about it. Sir Roy Grantley was engaged to his cousin, the heiress.

"And, of course, said the fickle voice of the multitude, "it is evidently impossible that there could have been any truth in that other story of his unfortunate attachment to Mrs. Desmond." Kitten's name was saved.

And Edgar Raikes, going in for a moment to his club to get his letters, heard the story, too. Then he went back to Lowndes Square, and he said:

"Let us go at once."

They started from Charing Cross that very night.

CHAPTER XXII.

It is six months later. From July to January. A great many things in the world's history may take place in six months.

Some such thought was in the mind of a woman who sat very still in the twilight of a winter's afternoon, staring dreamily into the red coals of the fire in front of her.

The world outside was white with snow. Snow upon the cottage eaves, upon garden palings, and upon the stone pillars of the garden gate, snow in thick masses upon the laurel hedge, and a white pall upon the winding lane that vanished speedily away into misty darkness, and snow again upon the distant shoulders of round-backed hills which loomed weirdly against the gloomy sky.

And the woman herself sat still and motionless by the fireside, with the red light flowing full upon her. Her dress is of black velvet, plain as any nun's, yet with a certain richness in its harmonious folds. There are white lace frills at her throat and wrists, and the gleam of diamonds upon the hand upon which she rests her oval cheek.

Rosamond Earle is doing what she has seldom allowed herself to do of late; she is dissecting her own heart.

Insensibly she had grown to have but one interest in her existence, one solitary pleasure to which she looked forward—the periodical visits of her landlord, John Trefusis. She led a life of absolute seclusion at Dunsterton. The red brick cottage upon the outskirts of the village green, with its tiny lawn and its miniature flower garden, and with the glimpse of the Keppington hills away through the gate, had suited her purpose admirably. Here she had battled through the worst of her sorrow, and had come forth scarred and wounded indeed from the fight, but a conqueror in the end.

"How right I was to go away at once and to leave no trace of my destination," she said to herself often.

But she had no idea that Brian was abroad, or that Brian's wife was not living with him. In this far-away village no records of the doings and sayings of the world had reached her ears, and she certainly flattered herself that her own retreat was absolutely unknown to all save to her own friend, Colonel Trefusis.

And gradually and insensibly this one friend became more and more to her. His unflinching devotion, his unwearied kindness, could not fail in the end to have some effect upon her. He never spoke to her of love, but the atmosphere of his love surrounded her. She did not love him, but she learned to depend upon him. It is often said that a heart can be caught at a rebound.

Her solitude was broken by her parlour maid, who tapped at the door and desired to know if she might speak to her. She was a rosy-cheeked Yorkshire girl, whose father had been a farmer, but who had failed, owing to bad seasons and high rents, so that his children had all had to go out into the world and earn their living. Polly Whiffle, as she had been called in the days when she killed her time over her father's farm gate, and when Edgar Raikes employed

his spare moments in making love to her, had entered Mrs. Earle's service upon her first arrival at Dunsterton, under the more dignified name of Mary.

Some six weeks ago Mrs. Earle had been very kind to Mary's brother, whose chest was delicate. She had undertaken to support him for the winter in the south of France, and by the help and assistance of Colonel Trefusis, young Whiffle had been sent out on an invalid establishment managed by an English sisterhood at Mentone. It was of this brother that Mary came to speak.

"I have had a letter to-day from my brother, ma'am."

"Indeed, and how is he, Mary?"

"Oh, so much better already, ma'am, and so grateful to you and the colonel for all your goodness to him." And then Mary proceeded to enter into a detailed account of her brother's condition and of his surroundings at Mentone, which were all of great interest to his benefactress. After which Mary said, rather blushing, "And only think, ma'am, he met a friend there one day, such a kind gentleman whom we all used to know at home, Mr. Raikes, who lived up at the Hall."

"At Keppington, do you mean?"

"Yes, ma'am, he was Mr. Desmond's cousin, and he used to live there, he was there two years, I daresay, and he was a great friend of mine," she added, with a little conscious simper.

Mrs. Earle fell to musing. Raikes, Raikes, who was he? Ah, yes! she fancied she remembered a family of that name; many sons and many daughters, whose mother was a needy widow, and of whom mention used often to be made at Keppington in years gone by. No doubt this young man was one of this family.

"He has been very kind indeed to young George," continued Polly, "and inquired so much after me; and then he gave him three sovereigns for himself, so that George is quite rich now."

"That was very kind of him," answered her mistress absently. And then Mary left her, and she thought no more of it; nor did it occur to her to imagine that through the instrumentality of George Whiffle it would be possible for Brian Desmond to learn where it was she was living. Edgar Raikes might be his cousin, and he might also be at Mentone, but that Brian should have been a bystander at the interview between the two certainly never entered for a moment into her calculations.

Eleven o'clock struck. The last note of the clock had scarcely rung before she caught a sound outside at the garden gate; the click of the iron latch, then the slow swing of the hinge followed by the clang of the gate as it fell back again. Her dog put up his nose, and uttered a low growl. Rosamond shut up her book suddenly, and stood up. The door bell rang.

She stood for a moment half uncertain. Should she summon the servants from their beds, or should she go to the door herself?

At last, however, she opened the door. There stood outside, upon the doorstep, a man, wrapped in a long, loose traveling cloak, with a heavy cape to it.

"When he saw her he made a half step back, as though he would have turned away, as though he would have turned away."

"Who are you and what do you want at this hour of the night?" said Rosamond, summoning up her courage, although she was secretly somewhat uneasy. And then he spoke, and she recognized his voice.

"Forgive me for coming at such an hour. The train broke down; I have walked five miles through the snow. May I come in?"

She backed slowly from him into the hall; a great chill struck her soul, a sick sense of miserable helplessness.

He came in, divested himself of his heavy cloak and of his hat, shaking the snow from them into the porch. Her eyes rested upon him almost with terror and repulsion.

"Why have you come to trouble me?" she said to him, in a strange, hollow voice, and yet she led the way back into the warmth and light of her sitting room. For how turn a dog from her door on such a night!

"Ah, how warm and bright!" he murmured, stretching down his cold hands towards the blazing wood logs. He looked very cold as he stooped over the blaze, and so pale and wan; it struck her with a keen pang of anguish to see him.

"You must forgive me for coming so late, Rosamond," he said to her once more.

"Why—why have you come, Brian?" she, too, repeated once again. "Could you not at least keep out of my way?"

(To be continued.)

Automatic Banks.

Every post office in Italy is a savings bank, but not every laborer in Italy can get a chance to go to the postoffice during business hours. Therefore, says Pearson's Weekly of London, the Italian government is encouraging thrift by setting up automatic banks all over the kingdom.

They are simply hollow cast-iron pillars, with three slits opening into them. In the top one a man who begins saving money inserts a ten-centime piece, which is equivalent to about two cents. If the coin is counterfeited it is promptly rejected, and falls out of a lower slit. If good, a receipt drops from the third opening.

As soon as one has collected five or more receipts he can exchange them for a pass-book at a regular savings bank, and the government begins to pay him interest on his savings at the rate of four per cent.

The device is a new thing, but already many a laborer turns to the automatic bank when he gets his day's wages, pleased with the thought that when he has saved ten cents he will have his bank-book, like any capitalist.

Searching.

"You may all poke fun at the Chinese about being backward," said the man who was looking for an argument, "but the Chinaman will make his mark yet."

"I don't doubt it," spoke up the man with the glazed collar. "One of them made a mark on my shirt with a hot iron only yesterday."

Always place a large book on a table before opening it.

FARMS AND FARMERS



Free Seed Distribution.

The annual protest of seed men against free distribution of seed by the Department of Agriculture has been sent to the President. It is signed by twenty-nine seedsmen, embracing the whole territory between the Rocky Mountains and the New England coast. The protest states that the original intention of the law was to obtain seeds unknown in the United States that might prove valuable, and in this way increase our agricultural production, but that this statesmanlike proposition has been grievously distorted, with the result that in the main the most common kinds of garden seeds have been distributed.

No doubt a great abuse has crept into this matter of free seed patronage. It has been used by a great many unscrupulous politicians to make themselves solid with certain voters. Like all other public questions, there are two sides. The distribution of sugar beet seed grown on the Pacific coast for experiment all over the country is a good feature that will offset some of the undesirable ones. Not all the seeds distributed are common garden truck.—Field and Fireside.

Feeding Cottonseed Meal.

Many mistakes are made in the feeding of cottonseed meal, feeders forgetting for the moment that it is an extremely concentrated food and needs a pretty strong stomach to handle it; hence it should be fed sparingly to young stock. As a food by itself it will not do for any considerable period, but as one of a mixture it has great value even at a price as high as \$35 a ton, provided the other grains used are not too high in price. A fine mixture is corn meal, the grinding of the corn and the cob together and the cottonseed meal. Or, bran may be used when the corn is ground without the cob but in the latter case the ratio should be two parts of the cottonseed meal to one part each of the corn meal and the wheat bran.

Home-Made Corn Cutter.

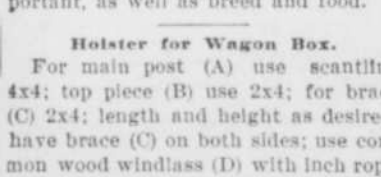
A New England paper gives this as an idea coming from Australia. The device is not exactly new, as it has been in use and described in America here and there. The implement is

Amount of Corn Required.

It is well enough to lay down the rule that ten pounds of corn will make one pound of pork, but rules may not give the results expected unless applied under certain conditions. Some breeds of hogs will produce more pork on the same food than others, and even with a selected breed there will be some individual animals that will increase more rapidly than others. In the winter season, if the hogs are exposed, twenty or thirty pounds of corn may be required to make a pound of pork. Care and management are important, as well as breed and food.

Hoister for Wagon Box.

For main post (A) use scantling 4x4; top piece (B) use 2x4; for brace (C) 2x4; length and height as desired; have brace (C) on both sides; use common wood windlass (D) with inch rope.



FOR HOISTING THE WAGON BOX.

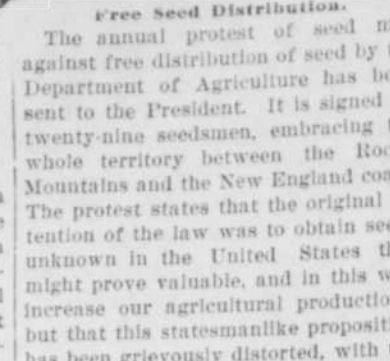
Abuses of Cold Storage.

Cold storage has apparently been overworked. At first the principle of cold storage was used to carry perishable foodstuffs over the period of plenty and distribute them through the following months of famine. But according to investigations of Boards of Health in some of the larger cities, cold storage plants contain food that has lain there from six months to two years because market conditions have not suited the speculators, and they are holding for greater profits. The result is that consumers are likely to eat some very old stuff that may not be conducive to good health, and that farmers and other producers are likely to suffer unfair competition when offering new wholesome products.

Pickled Posts.

Preservation of wood is becoming more general every year, says the Kansas City Journal. They are even extending this pickling business to fence posts and telegraph and telephone poles. It works out well in both of these. In the pickling of ties, the railroads are using a great many of the softer woods, those which ordinarily wouldn't last more than two or three years. By the treatment of chemicals, though, their life is extended to at least ten years. The movement first had its origin about 1880, when attention was called by the government that there was becoming a scarcity of timber in various sections of the country.

THE WEEK'S HISTORY



1555—John Philpot, Archdeacon of Exeter, convicted and burned.

1582—The Gregorian calendar adopted in Rome, omitting 10 days.

1642—New Zealand discovered by James Cook.

1644—Christina assumed the throne of Sweden.

1648—Oliver Cromwell orders the execution of Charles I.

1653—Oliver Cromwell deposes Charles II as protector of England.

1683—Isaac Walton, author of 'Complete Angler,' born.

1745—Dresden surrendered to the Prussians.

1754—Mahomet V. of Turkey died.

1764—T. H. Perkins, owner of the first railroad in the United States, born.

1770—Beethoven, the great composer, born.

1774—North Carolina adopted its constitution.

1775—American Congress moved to Lancaster and then to York, Pennsylvania.

1775—General Howe orders the evacuation of the British from Boston and their march to the Red Bank.

1776—Congress adjourned to Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

1782—The British troops evacuated Charleston, S. C.

1787—New Jersey and Virginia ratified the Constitution.

1796—General Anthony Wayne defeated the Indians at the Battle of the Fallen Timbers.

1804—British Consul in Hong Kong refused to allow American ships to trade.

1804—The first American warship, the USS Constitution, launched.

1800—Divorce of Empress Josephine from Napoleon.

1810—Lucien Bonaparte fled to England.

1816—First savings bank in the United States opened in Boston.

1820—Outbreak of the Revolt of 1820 in the West Indies.

1832—Treaty of navigation between the United States and Russia.

1836—Patent office established in Washington, D. C.

1838—Chartist meetings held in London.

1840—Remains of Bonaparte returned to France.

1848—Postal convention between Great Britain and the United States.

1850—Many killed and injured in the explosion of the steamer *Norman* at New York.

1854—St. Lawrence River American vessels allowed to trade with the West Indies.

1861—Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, died.

1862—Fredericksburg, Va. captured by the Union.

1864—Fort McAllister captured by the Union.

1865—Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution proclaimed.

1871—Alabama arbitration treaty signed at Geneva.

1874—Edwin Booth made his last appearance on the stage.

1884—World's Fair opened in London.

1891—Violent earthquake in the United States caused considerable damage.

1894—Great loss of life in the New York City fire.

1895—Samuel Gompers elected president of the American Labor Union.

1897—Attorney-General pointed out the danger of the States Supreme Court.

1901—Philippine tariff reduced.

1903—The Cuban reciprocity treaty signed.

1904—Three killed in explosion at the States battleship.

1904—Ex-Mayor of New Orleans, charged with fraud, sentenced to prison.

1904—This being in love takes time than an aching tooth.

When a man is too good, he will do a lot of good.

"Old age," said an old man, "is the worst joke ever played on a man."

Man learns from experience, except an experience which is not his own.

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