

# A DEAD PAST

By MRS. LOVETT CAMERON

## CHAPTER XXVI.—(Continued.)

She was crying. Could any one of those who watched her doubt it? For the first day, indeed, it seemed as though the bitterness of death was already over. But with the decifelfulness of the disease which consumed her, she rallied. She came back to life, and to a certain amount of strength; she was able to be dressed and to sit propped with cushions in an armchair, before the fire. A bright color tinged her wax-like cheeks, her eyes shone and glowed with a strange preternatural brilliancy, and yet she was going to die, they all knew it; it was death robed of all its horrors, death clad in a beautiful and altogether wonderful garment, but it was death all the same.

Keppington Hall was a changed house. Instead of solitude and silence, and desolate empty rooms, there were the hushed steps of many feet along the passages, and fires in many rooms, where the saddened little group of friends, who had rallied about her, had taken up their quarters, meaning to remain by her till the end, or at least until her husband should come to her. To find Brian was the difficulty. Rosamond, who had seen him last, only knew that he had returned to London, and only hoped that he might be there still. The house in Lowndes Square was shut up. Roy could think of no better plan than to telegraph to his club. They did so, but no answer came. The telegram lay there a whole day, then the lawyer's clerk called and fetched it, together with several letters, and took it round to his master's office. The lawyer found it the following morning. According to his instructions from his client, he opened it; then being altogether shocked by its import, and fearing to deal too suddenly a blow to the husband, he telegraphed the substance out to Mentone, not to Desmond, but to his cousin, Edgar Halkes. A great deal of all too precious time was thus wasted while this took place.

At Keppington that morning there were anxious hearts who waited with gloomy forebodings to see what the day would bring forth.

"And it is I who have brought you this woe," she sobbed, with a bitter self-reproach, hiding her face upon Kitten's lap. Kitten's small, thin hand rested lightly upon the dark, bowed head.

"No, do not say that. Once I was angry and jealous, once I almost hated you, but I was wrong, oh, yes, I was very wrong, for it was unjust. Was it your fault that he loved you first and best—is it ever woman's fault? And she always has to bear all the punishment. Always, always, the sins of the man are laid upon her, as well as the burden of her own. Oh, yes, it is very hard, very hard, but it was not your fault."

"Say that you forgive me," pleaded the other, clasping the white hands between her own. "It is true that it was not my fault. When I came back free I sent for him, thinking he had kept his promises to me, and that he would be free, too. When he told me that he was married it was like a deathblow, at first, to me; but I sent him back to you. Still, since I have injured you unconsciously, say 'Rosamond, I forgive you!'"

She repeated the words in a whisper, with a little smile: "Rosamond, I forgive you." And Rosamond kissed her. "Perhaps some day you will remember, you and Brian together, that I gave my life so that you might be happy."

"No, dearest, you yourself will live to be happy, and Brian will learn to value the treasure he has so nearly lost. We have sent for him. He is coming; at any moment he may be here. Believe me, you will be happy yet."

But Kitten only shook her head, "No. For me there is nothing more, only sleep. Life's poor play is over."

"Do you think it was duty I should have looked for? Ah! no, I was not good enough. It was only happiness that I wanted. Can the one make up for the other? Never, never! When I knew that he loved you, then I would not stay to see the hollow mockery of a love that was never mine. I thought I would go, and that he would be happier, and I—I could, perhaps, forget."

She spoke very softly and sadly. There was no emotion in her voice. It was as though she was telling the story not of herself, but of some other woman who had loved and suffered.

Rosamond crouched before her, holding the two small hands in her own. Hot tears of pity dropped thickly upon them. It seemed to her all too sad and too pathetic, the faithful, childish heart, that having lots of illusions, had gone away alone to die, sooner than live on with only a shadow of its own dead hopes.

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"To think!" she cried, "that I should have been so dreadfully angry at her breaking that glass goblet, when all the time it was her own, and she was free to smash it into powder if she chose, and nobody dare say a word!"

"I would not be so very unhappy at that," Mrs. Succurden said. Rosamond, who happened to be the recipient of her complaints, "It was certainly not your fault that Mrs. Desmond chose to fill so humble a position in her husband's house; it is no use regretting the past; what we have to do now is to see if by any chance we can save her poor frail life now."

But though Rosamond spoke brightly and hopefully, she did not believe in her own words. As Roy entered the octagon room, bearing the small, frail form that was but a feather weight in his arms, she felt that it was impossible that in anything so white and fragile the flame of life should ever blaze up again into vitality.

Tenderly and gently Roy put her down in the big armchair, filled with cushions, that had been prepared for her. She smiled at him gratefully, but for some moments she was too exhausted to speak. Her breath came quick and short, her head sank back wearily against the pillows, and her thin little hand, which she lifted for a moment between herself and the fire, fell back again wearily into her lap. Roy, standing a moment behind her with wild anxious eyes fastened upon her, felt all at once that he could not bear the sight. There came a great choking lump in his throat, a singing in his ears, and a blinding mist before his eyes. He turned away swiftly and noiselessly, and left the room.

Presently Kitten looked up. No one was with her but Rosamond. Mrs. Earle knelt in front of her chair upon the hearth rug, the red fire glow shone upon her beautiful face, and upon the pitiful, tender eyes which she bent upon the sick girl.

A little while ago, perhaps, Kitten might have been startled at the sight of her, she might have shrunk away, turning from her with a great and miserable jealousy. But she was past all that now. Nothing surprised her or seemed wonderful now, nothing even distressed her. She looked at her steadfastly, with those strange eyes that Rosamond had likened to a human soul, and then glanced upward to where the colored miniature of handsome Rosamond Gray, in her drooping beaver hat and feather, smiled down happily upon the two women who had held Brian Desmond's heart between them.

"You are Mrs. Earle?" she said softly. For all answer Rosamond lifted the wasted fingers for a moment to her lips.

"And you love Brian?"

"My dear, all that is past long, long ago. Do not trouble yourself about it," she murmured soothingly.

"Is love ever past?" Kitten said dreamily, almost to herself.

"Yes, yes," broke out Rosamond impatiently. "Thank God, yes!—or else it were too great a burden for a woman to bear."

The ready tears rushed into the elder woman's eyes, but Kitten's grave eyes were dry, only she looked away into the fire glow and sighed.

"I left him to you," she said softly, after a pause.

"Dear child!" cried Rosamond eagerly, "if I had only seen you or known you, if you had but come to me, I would never have let you leave him. In time the madness would have died out of his heart, and he would have loved you, and you only. Is it not a wife's duty to be ever with her husband?"

Kitten shook her head, and a small, sad smile stole into her face.

you have mentioned you need have no anxiety."

It was wonderful what a pain it gave him even to allude to the woman whom he believed to be Sir Roy's wife.

"Edgar," he began somewhat nervously, "you are the best friend a man ever had."

"My dear Brian—"

"I know there is nothing you would not do for me."

"Nothing, my dear old chap. What is it now?"

"Will you leave me to go home alone?

I can think, bear to get there to meet her—unless I am by myself."

"I will do better than that," said his cousin promptly, and in spite of his utmost efforts, his heart beat with a sudden gladness that was a dismay to him.

"I will stop at Smackton-on-Sea. It is the next station now, and I will join you by the first train in the morning. Mr. Talbot," he said aloud, to their fellow traveler, "I have half a mind to stop with you at Smackton-to-night, and renew my acquaintance with your charming wife."

Mr. Talbot expressed himself overjoyed. "Do so, my dear sir, do so by all means," he cried heartily. The train was slackening its speed. Edgar began gathering his rugs and sticks together.

"And I shall see her again," he said to himself. And as he said it, his heart was filled with a wild and insane delight.

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At Keppington that morning there were anxious hearts who waited with gloomy forebodings to see what the day would bring forth.

Kitten lay still in her armchair. She was too weak now to be moved. Rosamond and Roy took it in turn to watch by her. Upon the tips of each, as they passed each other with hushed footsteps upon the threshold of her room, there was ever the same question:

"Will he be in time?"

And as they stood for one half minute together, Rosamond heard all at once the distant sound of wheels upon the gravel drive.

"Listen, there is a carriage."

Rosamond stood quite still at the open door and waited. Soon she perceived a lumbering one-horse dray that was creeping slowly up toward the house, but, to her surprise, it came not from the station, but from quite the opposite direction. She could not imagine who it could be bringing. Certainly, however, it could not be Brian.

Gertrude Talbot was filled with delighted astonishment at the spectacle of the very person whom her insatiable curiosity had been dying to discover.

"My dear, it must be—it is she!" she cried breathlessly, clutching at Margaret Grantley's arm, as the fly came slowly up to the front of the great white horse.

"Who is it?" whispered Margaret back.

"Mrs. Earle, of course! Then I stake my existence that Brian Desmond is here, too!"

"Then—then—where is Roy?" stammered Margaret, bewildered.

Roy came quickly forward.

"Margaret—here?" he looked from one to the other in bewilderment.

Col. Trefusis drew Rosamond away. Roy took their place in the open doorway. He looked stern and angry. There was a frown on his brow, and the lines of his mouth were hard and fixed. Margaret had seen him look like that before.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he said, coldly and hardly.

"What brought you here, Margaret, and you, Mrs. Talbot? Had you not the sense to keep away from this house? What was Felicia about to let you come?"

"Oh! don't be angry, Roy." He was so like his father now that it frightened her. "Indeed, it was not Felicia who sent me; but what do you suppose Felicia will think of you, who should become your wife? And, Roy, pray come back with us. We have been so anxious about you, Felicia and I, and what good can you do here? You cannot surely be wanted. It cannot be right for you to stay here. Come back with us to Felicia."

Then Roy answered her.

"Once and for all, understand me, Margaret. Neither Felicia, nor any other woman, will ever be my wife. Once, long ago, I wanted to marry the girl I loved, but you—you were worldly and calculating, and you came between me and her—you robbed me of my love and of my happiness. After that, can I ever listen to you again or be guided by what you say to me? As you have made my life, so must that life remain, unloved and desolate to my death. And so I will not come with you now—is it likely? She, the only woman I ever loved, is in her deathbed. Do you think I would leave her? Go home, Margaret, and repent, if you can, of the evil you have brought upon me."

Hard words for her to hear from the boy to whom her life had been devoted. She bent her head in bitterness.

And the fly turned slowly round and went back to Smackton-on-Sea. Neither of its occupants spoke a word on the way home.

"Perhaps, then," he continued, "you can kindly inform me what sort of place is Smackton-on-Sea?"

"It is a very dull place, sir," replied Roy.

"Ah! — and the accommodation there—"

"Clean, but very homely and unpretentious; there is only one hotel, and that is a second-rate one."

"Then what I want to know, sir," replied the big man, bringing down his red fist upon his knee, "is what the deuce can take fashionable woman there in the month of January?"

"True," rejoined the demoralizer, "but instead a lot of men give according to their meanness."

**Sympathetic.**

"Why did you set your cup of coffee on the sofa, Mr. Newcomer?" asked the boarding house landlady.

"It is so weak," was the reply, "that I thought it would be a good idea to let it rest awhile."

**Doubtful Remark.**

Dolly—And when our auto was speeded like the wind, just think of his proposing to me!

Dorothy—I'm not surprised. They say running an automobile makes a man reckless.

**New Style.**

"We will add a bit to the fashion," remarked the gray moth.

"In what way?" asked the white moth.

"Why, some people will be wearing open-work overcoats this autumn."

The roots of the hair penetrate the skin about one-twelfth of an inch.

# FARMS AND FARMERS



## WHAT OUR FARMERS PRODUCE.

The American farmer raised in 1905 2,708,000,000 bushels of corn, 740,000,000 bushels of wheat, 1,000,000,000 bushels of oats, 35,000,000 bushels of rye, 150,000,000 bushels of barley, 30,000,000 bushels of flaxseed, 250,000,000 bushels of potatoes, 28,000,000 barrels of apples, 8,000,000 bushels of onions, 910,000 bushels of cranberries, 650,000,000 pounds of rice, 280,000 tons of beet sugar, 11,000,000 bales of cotton, 58,000,000 tons of hay, 42,000,000 pounds of broom corn and 150,000,000 pounds of tobacco. In addition milk, butter and cheese from 17,570,000 cows, which products alone will be worth over \$495,000,000. He values his cows at \$482,000,000, to say nothing of the 43,700,000 other cattle, worth in round numbers \$923,000,000.

Just to make the figures even up, add another \$1,500,000,000 for horses

and mules and \$7,400,000 sheep and swine in the barns and fields. Next year he expects to handle 1,800,000,000 dozen of eggs.

## WHITE AYLESBURY DUCKS.

The soft white plumage is one of the chief attractions of the Aylesbury breed, and like most white plumage has a tendency to assume a yellow hue if exposed to the sun. The breast will also lose its delicate pink hue and become yellow if exposed to too much sunlight in summer. The bill of the Pekin should be yellow, but the bill of the Aylesbury should be a delicate pink or flesh color, and birds intended for exhibition must possess this quality or they will suffer at the hands of the judge. Birds raised for exhibition purposes must be guarded against too much exposure to the sunlight in the summer. Of course, these delicate points are of no consequence to the market poultier other than to show the true type of the breed.

For farm purposes the Aylesbury is to be recommended, second only to the Pekin; it possesses the many good qualities of the Pekin, and can be bred with almost the same success. The advantages claimed for Aylesbury are the ease with which it is acclimated, thriving in every country and climate; its early maturity; its great hardiness; its

## PROVIDE WARMTH FOR HOGS.

Says a swine-grower in the West: You think of the hog as being covered with a two or three-inch layer of pure fat. You think of that fat as being a poor conductor of heat and cold, letting little body heat escape and letting little of the cold of the weather get at the real hog.

If you stop to think, you will remember that hogs are hot-weather animals. All summer they spend much time in the sun, and in winter they pile up so as to keep warm. They come from the house or pen steaming in the cold air of winter. They shiver with the sudden chill.

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