

A DEAD PAST

By MRS. LOVETT CAMERON

CHAPTER I.

On the deck of a great Eastern bound steamer—crowds hurrying hither and thither, bales of luggage lumbering up the way, sailors and railway porters tumbling over each other, the officers of the ship shouting forth distracted orders, passengers, men, women and little children standing together in groups striving to hear each other's trembling words of farewell, and over all the screech of the steam from the two great smoking funnels overhead.

Ten minutes more and the shore bell will be rung and the farewells will all have to come to an end, and the India-bound ship will have started on her way. They clung round each other, these poor unfortunates who were parting—some for years, and some forever—repeating the last fond word, the last caress over and over again, gazing into each other's eyes despairingly as though they would fain carry away every line of the dear face from which they were so soon to be severed.

Such a couple stood thus together, a little remote from the busy scene, near the bulwarks of the ship. The crowded quay was above them, yet because everybody was so full of hurry and excitement, so wrapped up either with the business or the grief which specially engrossed them, these two people stood virtually alone—a man and a woman, both young and both tall; they clasped each other's hands with a straining despair, and looked with a speechless agony into each other's faces.

Brian Desmond was eight and twenty then, he had health and brains and good looks, and the vigor of a hearty vitality was in his strong, young limbs, but as he held Rosamond Earle's hands tightly clasped within his own and looked his last into her beautiful eyes, he said to himself that life was at an end for him.

"It is better," she said, brokenly, "far better that I should go away; try to look at it in the right light, Brian. What good could I be to you at home; and you will get used to it in time; there are many other things for you to live for."

"I have nothing to live for—nothing," he said, gloomily; "without you life is an absolute blank."

The tears streamed over her face as she strove to answer him. "And yet I should be an ever present sorrow to you were I to remain. Consider, Brian, how desperate, how hopeless is our condition; how much more terrible to bear were we to meet constantly than when a whole hemisphere stretched between us!"

"Ah! you might have waited—you might have waited," he groaned.

"What was there to wait for? Would your uncle and his sons have died so that we might be happy? Would any one have given you an appointment? Was there any chance that even a beggarly clerkship would tumble into your arms? And had we not already waited for this for years; hoping against hope, striving against certainty, leaving no stone unturned so that we might find only a miserable hundred a year to depend upon?"

"So you married old Samuel Earle instead!" he said bitterly.

"I have married a worthy, kind-hearted man, who is good to me, and who has placed me above want—why go over the old ground again? In these last few moments, Brian, spare me the reproaches which, perhaps, I may deserve, but which are certainly unavailing now."

"Darling—darling!" he cried, with a passionate despair, "mine always and ever, in heart and soul, wherever you may be."

She did not check him. This was no moment for the exhibition of a sham prudery which she did not feel. She was putting a whole universe between them, so that she might be as true to the man she had married as to the man whom she loved; and she would not in this moment of a farewell, that was in all human probability eternal, cavil at the strong expression of a love which had never been hidden between them. Her tears flowed fast, raining down thickly upon the clenched hands which grasped her own.

"You know," she cried, suddenly throwing back her head—"you know that to my dying day I shall love you the same, but you—you must be happy, Brian, not now, I know, but after a bit, time will reconcile you to life, and you will marry."

"I shall never marry," he answered resolutely, "never as long as I live. Rosamond, I swear to you that never will I make any other woman wife but you. I can always wait; how can one tell what changes life may not bring? Ten, twenty, fifty years! what is time to such a love as mine? Will it not last forever, shall anything ever change or dim its fervor? Can I not always wait—wait on and hope?"

And so Brian, as he swore, believed in his own oaths, and Rosamond believed in them too. Then glancing beyond the strong young form of the man she loved, Mrs. Earle's eyes rested suddenly upon another figure that came clambering up the companion stair on to the deck, a short, fat, little old gentleman, with gray whiskers, who emerged pantingly from the lower regions, looking hither and thither as he came up as though in search of some one.

She neither moved farther from Desmond, nor did she withdraw her hands from his—only she tightened her hold for one instant upon his fingers, and a swift warning glance shot from her eyes into his. Brian's back was turned to the newcomer, but he understood. He gently dropped one of Rosamond's hands,

and, retaining the other still in his grasp, turned round and met Samuel Earle as he came toward them.

"Ah, Desmond! not gone on shore yet? You are determined to see the last of us, then?"

"I was wishing—your wife," the words came out with an effort, "another good-by."

"And we are both of us crying over it," said Mrs. Earle, smiling through her tears; "such old friends as Brian and I are, Sam, it seems quite terrible to us to part."

"Ah, no doubt, no doubt, my dear! These partings are very trying, and old playmates, such as you two are, must not doubt feel it so," he looked kindly and sympathetically from one to the other. Something in his benign face touched Rosamond strangely, she twined her hands through her husband's arm, as though to gather strength from contact with him. Brian Desmond turned very white and fell back a step. And then the shore bell rang.

The Oriana steamed rapidly toward the sea. But still Rosamond stood, motionless and tearless, gazing back upon the swiftly vanishing shore, while still that other figure was left, solitary now, long after all others had turned away. Brian Desmond stood on alone until his eyes could no longer discern even the distant ship that bore away the woman who was lost to him forever.

CHAPTER II.

"Salmon trout, roast chickens, peas and potatoes. Now I wonder how a cherry tart would do, or would it be too frivolous, Daddy?"

The voice seemed to come from the floor, somewhere down by the white muslin window curtains.

Prof. Laybourne, who was engrossed in the minute examination of the mechanism of a grasshopper's thigh through his famous microscope, raised his venerable head for one moment as the small childish voice struck upon his ear.

"What is my Kitten chattering about down there?" he said, making a pencil note upon the manuscript by his side.

"I was only wondering if old men like cherry tart, Daddy?"

"Whenever they can get it, I should say, Kitten! Apropos of what is that wise remark, and what old man are you proposing to regale in so succulent a fashion?"

"What old man? Oh, daddy! I do believe you have beetles on the brain to such an extent that you are losing your memory. Have you forgotten that this is the day that your friend, Mr. Desmond, is coming to stay with you?"

"And you call him an 'old man,' Kitten? Why, he is quite a lad."

"You said he was thirty-eight, Daddy," replied the small voice reproachfully. "I call that quite old. Why, he is twenty-two years older than I am, old enough to be my father—why, it's nearly forty," in a voice of horror.

The professor laughed. "You must consider me a sort of Methuselah, a fossil of pre-Adamite date, then. Do you know that I am over sixty, Kitten?"

"Ah, but you are my Daddy," she answered, with indescribable tenderness in her voice.

"Pray, what have you got upon your mind, Miss Laybourne?" inquired her father, with a smile in answer to his daughter's last observation.

"Your dinner, Mr. Professor. I have noticed, daddy, that although you are a very great man, your intellect is often more sluggish than mine. Now give me a man about to arrive by the 6 o'clock train on a certain day, my mind instantly fixes itself upon one idea, and that idea is naturally dinner; your brain seems to be brought far more slowly and with inconceivable difficulty to this point."

"Not at all, Kitten," answered the professor, taking up a letter which lay upon the table; "since I have heard this morning from Brian Desmond that he will not arrive till 10 o'clock to-night, my intellect naturally bounded beyond the dinner hour at once, and fixed itself upon—"

"Supper!" interrupted Kitten, triumphantly.

"And what are we to have for supper, then?"

"Why, the same thing as dinner, to be sure; salmon trout cold, chickens cold, salad instead of peas, and cherry tart cold, too; that is to say, if you think he will eat cherry tart," she added, with a curiously childish anxiety.

"But you will have to go to bed, Kitten; little girls can't sit up to late suppers. Besides, Desmond is coming to see me upon business, so we shall do just as well without you to-night."

Kitten laughed. She did not often laugh. Her fun was more often expressed in a certain demure dryness peculiar to herself—laughter was not, perhaps, indigenous to the soil of the professor's household; but when at rare intervals Kitten laughed, her laugh was very sweet to hear. It was never loud or noisy, it could hardly even be called hearty, and yet it was pleasant to listen to, like the rippling note of a caged bird that warbles a response to some inner gush of feeling of its own.

She fluttered away out of the room, her thoughts back again with the cherry tart and the supper, and the professor was left alone.

But he did not go back to his microscope. He leaned his pale face, lined and scored like an ancient parchment with study and thought, upon his hand and sighed.

"What is to become of her?" he said

aloud. "Strange creature, half mine, half her mother's, inheriting something from each, and from both the fatal delicacy of constitution that was common to us both; who is to care for her when I am gone? Into whose hands am I to leave my frail treasure, with her wild, untrained mind and her shrewd, sensitive soul? Will Desmond help me, I wonder, for the sake of the service I once rendered to his father? Ah, we shall see, we shall see. I can leave my manuscripts and collections to my country, but to whom shall I leave my child, sweeter legacy than any other?"

The remains of the cold supper, which had caused so many anxious thoughts to the young housekeeper, lay still upon the table; ample justice had been done to it by the late-arriving guest. A lamp with a wide red silk shade lighted the room with a warm radiance, some roses in glass bowls decorated the simple feast, while a dish of crimson currants, piled up high in an antique Chelsea dish, added yet another touch of feminine taste to the repast.

"The old boy has a good housekeeper," said Brian Desmond to himself, as he leaned back in his chair.

He was a little at a loss, certainly, to understand exactly why the sage had asked him to come and stay with him. Brian had no scientific tastes, and he knew nothing whatever about beetles and grubs and winged creatures of the air. He was not even a clever man, according to the modern ideas of cleverness. He was neither an author nor an artist. Mr. Desmond was simply a moderately well-educated gentleman of expensive tastes and luxurious habits, which an acquisition of most unexpected wealth had, within the last few years, enabled him to gratify. He could not, therefore, conceive why the professor, who was an old man, and in his way a great man, had chosen to seek his society in so marked a manner on the present occasion.

While he was pondering upon this subject, Mr. Laybourne interrupted his meditations by the following words:

"Now, I daresay, my dear Desmond, that you are at this very moment wondering why I have invited you to come down all this way to spend a few days with me. I take it very kindly of you. I lead a life of retirement and study. I have no inducement to offer to a man of your age and tastes, and yet you have done me the honor to leave your London friends and your London gaieties to come down and see an old Diogenes in his tub."

"The honor, Professor, is all for me," replied Desmond, "that a man with so world-wide a reputation as yours should seek the society of an insignificant person like myself—"

"Wait, wait, my friend," interrupted the old man, with his gentle smile, "if you had studied animal life as much as I have, you would know that there is no effect which has not a cause."

"Perhaps you have heard, Desmond, that I was once married," he said quietly, not looking at his guest. "My wife died in child-birth."

"Yes," Desmond looked up with interest.

For a few seconds Mr. Laybourne was silent, then looking up and meeting his guest's eyes, he continued: "My little girl is a great source of anxiety to me. She inherits her mother's tendency to consumption, and, I fear, my own unsound constitution. Desmond, I have an original disease of the heart."

"I am deeply distressed; are you sure?"

"There is, unfortunately, no doubt whatever about it. I have been aware of it for some years and I have the first medical opinions to confirm what had long been my own conviction. I am in no appreciable danger, I may live years and die of something else, again I may drop down dead this very night; what I want to know is," he added, with a sudden break in his voice, "what is to become of my little girl in that case?"

Brian was uncertain how to answer; he balanced his knife more anxiously than ever and murmured something about female relatives.

"She has none, not one, either on her mother's side or my own; all are dead. I have followers and worshippers by the score; these go for nothing; and I have also a number of professional acquaintances, but where among them all shall I find a man fit to take charge of a child—a woman child? For half a moment he paused, then said again, very earnestly: "Brian Desmond, will you take the charge of my orphan child?"

Brian looked startled.

"I? I am not fit. My life is a wandering one. I am here to-day, gone to-morrow. Sometimes I travel in wild countries, sometimes I spend months in the racket of a London season; do you indeed think such a man as I am can be fit for the charge of a child?"

The professor sighed deeply. "Then you decline," he said, sadly.

"No, no, do not think that. But your proposition is so strange, so unexpected; give me but a moment to think. Ah! yes, I have a cousin, a sweet, good woman with children of her own; your little girl could be left with her and I could see after her occasionally; that would be a happy home for her; I am sure she would take her gladly. Mr. Laybourne, do not be uneasy about your child's future, I will do what you ask of me."

(To be continued.)

It All Depends.

"Don't you think," said he, "that singleness of purpose is an admirable trait in a man?"

"It is," she answered frankly, "unless it tends to make a confirmed bachelor of him."

Wages in Russian factories are 2 cents an hour and upward. There are thousands who work for a cent an hour, and tens of thousands who do not receive 20 cents a day for 10, 11 and more hours work.

HOW TO SLEEP AND WHEN.

A Physician's Advice on the Subject—Exercise, Bathing and Eating. The following brief quotations are from "Sleep and Its Regulation," by Dr. J. Madison Taylor, in The Popular Science Monthly:

During childhood and exhaustive states too much sleep is rarely possible. For those in full tide of vigor too much sleep is often distinctly hurtful.

The action of narcotics presents none of the characteristics of normal sleep except the temporary arrest of consciousness; hence narcotics is not true sleep.

The best position to assume in sleep to invite the least disturbance of the functions of the great organs is on the abdomen, or nearly so.

Many obscure forms of digestive or circulatory disorders may have been initiated in infancy through lying too long upon the back.

To secure the most perfect repose the temperature of all parts should be equalized before retiring. Cold feet induce delay in securing sleep, and it is then shallow when attained.

It is most unwise to overfill the stomach before retiring; thus disturbs sleep almost as much as hunger, but moderate eating before sleeping is not hurtful, and is often salutary.

Body clothing at night should be loose, not dense, permitting the ready passage of air, never of wool next to the skin.

Bed clothing should not be too close of texture, blankets being preferable to dense "comfortables" and not "tucked in" too closely. Air should be allowed to pass occasionally under the sides at least as one turns about more or less freely.

Early rising is a salutary custom, especially when the day comes early, not otherwise.

More sleep is required in winter than in summer. The best sleep is had during the hours of darkness.

The sleeping room should be cool, abundant air being always admitted. This should not be interpreted to mean that the room may safely remain intensely cold.

In the modern treatment of tuberculosis fresh air is recognized to be imperatively needed all day and all night. Artificial heat can, and should, be supplied along with the fresh air, till the temperature of the room be at or near 50 or 55 degrees Fahrenheit, for some even 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

THE TRAGIC ISLE.

Some of the Abuses Which Prisoners on Sakhalin Suffer.

Sakhalin, the island which Japan is taking, or rather, retaking, from Russia, is the place to which Russia sends her violent convicts. The convict at Siberia has some liberty to console him for his detention, but the convict at Sakhalin none. When a party of convicts (having been pronounced "violent" by the governor at the Siberian station) is landed at Sakhalin the procession to the jail is as follows: First among the prisoners come men with fetters on their legs and linked together in pairs, the clanking of their chains making a lugubrious noise. Next come half a dozen men each without fetters, but secured by the hands to a long iron rod. Then follow female prisoners and after them the most affecting part of the whole—the wives and children who have elected to accompany into exile their husbands and fathers.

Behind them rumble "telegas," or rough wagons, wherein are transported baggage and those children who are too young or infirm to walk. When on the march the prisoners are allowed three pounds of bread and one-half pound of meat each day, and they are not forbidden to receive alms. But when they arrive at their destination their lot is a pitiful one. Their cells are damp and fungus covered, their food is less than the allowance during the journey and their work in the salt mines is most exhausting. Many of the prisoners are very ignorant. Few of them can read excepting the Caucasians, but they are all put to the same laborious work and in the event of their being physically unable to perform their allotted tasks their punishments are very cruel.

The English "cat-o'-nine-tails" is nothing to the terrors of the "bodgan." In this instrument of torture the prisoner is so fixed that he can neither move nor cry out, and wire thongs bound at the end with pointed tin strike his back at frequent intervals. Other tortures to which prisoners are subjected are too dreadful to write about, and during all these tortures the prisoner is prevented by gags from obtaining the poor relief of a scream. Surely the horrors of the salt mines of Iletskaya are nothing compared with the abominations of Sakhalin.—Pall Mall Gazette.

Wise and Wealthy Treasure.

"Well, you married a wealthy woman. Is she the treasure you hoped for?"

"Can't say she is. She won't give me any of her money."

"Then, by George! she is a treasure. She not only has money but common sense, too!"—Cleveland Leader.

MRS. EMMA FLEISSNER. Suffered Over Two Years—Health Was in a Precarious Condition—Caused by Pelvic Catarrh.



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"No, pa. But you know you told me not to eat fast. And if you give me a second piece now I shan't eat so fast, because I won't be afraid that the second piece will be gone when I get through with the first piece. Please, pa."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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