

A DEAD PAST

By MRS. LOVETT CAMERON

CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued.)

"You, Kitten! How can you be a servant in your husband's own house?" There is the agent, Raikes.

"Mr. Raikes has only seen me once, in evening dress. He is away now. I shall look very different; he will not recognize me. I must stay one day somewhere to change my clothes. You will find me some quiet hotel and tell me what to do?"

"But, Kitten, you bewilder me. You say you wish to go away so that Desmond may not find you, or know where you are, and yet you want to go to his own house."

"It is the last place on earth where he will ever look for me. If he can help it, Brian will never set foot in Keppington Hall again. Do not ask me why. I know it, and I shall be safe there—quite safe, for who can say a word against me if I am under his roof? Oh, yes, I have thought of all that, and what ill-natured things they would say; but, you see, there I am safe, and I shall be dead to them all—and to him," she added below her breath.

Brian did not come home that afternoon until nearly dinner time. A long day of almost complete isolation, devoted to earnest reflection, had had a good effect upon him.

He ran upstairs lightly, and opened the drawing room door. Kitten was not there. Then he recollected that it was late, and that she was, no doubt, in her own room, dressing for dinner. He went to her bedroom, but the door was wide open and the room empty.

He slammed to his door and went to his dressing table. Upon his cushion lay an envelope addressed to himself in his wife's handwriting. With a strange, sickening apprehension, he tore it open and read:

"My dear husband, we have made a terrible mistake, and we can never be happy together. I am going away so that you may be free, and may be often with her who has your heart. Do not look for me, for you will never find me; you will be far happier without me, but I shall always love you and think of you. I could not fill your life or your heart, dearest love, and to do less than that is too hard for me to bear, and so I am leaving you. Good by."

No more, no reproach, no agony of complaint, no anguish of despair. His wife had left him, and some one must have told her about Rosamond Earle.

CHAPTER XX.

Of all the persons who suffered because Kitten chose to run away from her husband's house, none endured at first a more acute sense of agony connected with that event than did Margaret Grantley.

The next day all the world knew of it. The scandal-mongers and the gossip-lovers, and all the crowd of tittle-tattlers, male and female, buzzed about like bees out of a hive over this one little delightful morsel of scandal which had come to disturb, with a pleasing excitement, the even current of a hitherto uneventful season. It was the talk of the clubs, and the popular topic of the park.

"It seems that Brian Desmond neglected her," said one.

"Well, who must be a thoroughly bad lot," asserted another; "and such a fool, too, to go and bolt!" This one, of course, was a woman.

And first and foremost among them all, as a matter of course, was Mrs. Talbot, and many were the knowing winks and nods and shakes of her head, half-uttered sentences, and half-completed revelations, by which she gave everybody to understand that she knew of a great many more horrible and dreadful details than did any one else, and that there were things—things connected with the whole business! Ah, well, if they were but known—well, she could only say that the hair on the heads of the whole population of London would simply stand on end with it!

"And it is really true, then, that that poor young fool, Sir Roy Grantley, has gone off with her?" asked some one.

"Not a doubt of it," answered Gertrude, almost viciously, for she was angry with Roy for admiring Kitten.

"Why, I met his sister at supper last night, and you should have seen the poor woman's face; why, she nearly fainted when she heard the news."

Three days thus passed away, and still conjecture and gossip ran rife, and scandal refused to be silenced concerning Mrs. Desmond and her doings. And then one fine morning, just when Margaret was nearly driven demented by all the rumors and hints which her dear friends in every direction took care to convey to her, up drove Roy himself in a hansom, to her door in Connaught Square, with his small portmanteau above him, and with an unconcerned air as though he had been away for a couple of days' hunting or shooting.

"For heaven's sake, Roy, what is the meaning of all this?" she cried breathlessly to him, as he entered her drawing room.

Roy looked surprised, almost more by her manner than by her words. His sister was very pale, her voice shook with emotion, and her hands, as he took them in his, trembled nervously.

"My dear Margaret, I do not understand you. Is anything the matter?"

"Anything the matter? How can you ask such a thing? Do you take me for a child, Roy? Do you suppose I do not know, have not heard everything—everything?"

"I have no idea to what you are alluding," he answered her in calm surprise, looking slightly puzzled and bewildered.

"Where is Mrs. Desmond?" she asked him almost in a whisper, so terrible was her anxiety.

"What has that got to do with you?" he answered her impatiently, almost roughly.

"Ah!" she cried, "then it is true what everybody is saying? It was you who took her away from her husband's house—you know where she is," she answered recklessly.

Once before Margaret had seen that wild blaze of anger in her young brother's face—once before, when she had said things against Kitten. In one moment Roy was transformed, his eyes flashed, his brow contracted, a storm of passion broke out all over the smooth, young face. He reminded her of his father.

"How dare you," he said hoarsely, "how dare you speak such a thing of her, she who is as pure as an angel, as holy as a saint. What can you be like to venture to smirch the whiteness of her name by your vile slanders?"

Margaret fell back a step. Almost it seemed to her as if Roy would have struck her, the rage in his face was so terrible. This boy—her boy, who had been as a child to her, was a boy no longer, but a man, and a man with whom it was not safe to meddle. He frightened her.

White with anger, and incapable of replying, save in a blind torrent of strong and disjointed words, Roy broke away and betook himself to Felicia. He sprang upstairs three steps at a time, and burst into his cousin's drawing room.

Mrs. Talbot was sitting with her. As he entered Felicia uttered a cry of surprise and delight, and ran eagerly forward to meet him.

"Oh, Roy! Roy! how delighted I am; why have you been away? But, of course, now you will be able to explain where you have been. How glad I am that you have come back; now all these horrid, wicked scandals will be stopped. Did I not tell you, Gertrude, that it was not true?"

"Well, that remains to be seen, my dear Felicia," answered Gertrude airily. "Sir Roy has not cleared himself yet—you see, to say the least, it is unfortunate that he and Mrs. Desmond should have been both 'missing' on the same day. It remains to be explained, of course."

"Why on earth should Roy's absence be connected with Mrs. Desmond," cried Felicia impatiently; "or who indeed can say that he has been away at all?"

"Why, my dear"—docking them off on her fingers, "three dinners to which he was engaged, and at which he never turned up nor even sent any excuse," remarked Gertrude, with a careless shrug of her shoulders.

This was true, and Roy for the first time recollected these broken engagements, with a sort of horror at his own carelessness. He looked from one to the other of the ladies in absolute dismay; he began to perceive in what light his conduct appeared to the world.

"It is not true?" pleaded his cousin, with a wistful entreaty in her dark eyes.

"No, of course it is not true," he answered quickly. "How could it be true? But everybody seems to have gone mad. For heaven's sake tell me how this has got about, and what I am to do to stop it?" He was no longer angry, only dismayed and distressed beyond measure.

"You have only to say you don't know where Mrs. Desmond is," said Gertrude.

"But I cannot say that. I do know where she is," he answered gravely.

And then Mrs. Talbot laughed.

CHAPTER XXI.

In all his life Roy never hated Mrs. Talbot so cordially and so intensely as he did when she uttered that short laugh.

It was a laugh that meant so much. Contemptuous disbelieve in mankind, triumphant confirmation of the suspicions of the world, the ruin of Kitten's fair name, all seemed to be comprised in that short, sneering outburst of ill-timed hilarity.

Felicia, on the contrary, seemed oppressed with despair at her cousin's most unexpected answer. She sank down into a chair with a look of helpless distress, and tears gathered thickly in her eyes.

"Oh, Roy," she cried, "don't, don't say that, it cannot be true—don't say it."

"Why should I not say it?" he answered, a little defiantly, because of that other woman who sat by with a sneer upon her lips, "it is quite true. I do know where Mrs. Desmond is now. Why should I deny it? She was in great trouble. She sent for me because I am her oldest friend, and I helped her to leave town and to go to a place where she wished to stay for a little time."

"And where is that, pray?"

"That is her secret and mine," he answered frowning. And then Mrs. Talbot laughed again.

She got up and shook out her skirts, and prepared to take her leave of Felicia.

"It won't wash, Sir Roy, it won't wash!" she said, with odious laugh still upon her lips. "Will it, Felicia, dear?"

"I don't see why you should doubt my cousin's word," said Felicia, rather doggedly; "there is nothing extravagant in what he has told us. If he is Mrs. Desmond's oldest friend. If she was in trouble it was quite natural that she should send to him."

And then Gertrude laughed again and took her leave of the cousins.

There was one thing which Roy understood, and of which Gertrude and the world knew nothing, and that was the peculiarity of Kitten's character, which had led her to do a thing which, to the eyes of others, was foolish and reprehensible; but which was in entire accordance with the natural simplicity of her own mind. Even Felicia, who was affectionate and sympathetic, could not enter into this.

"Roy," she said to him, when the door had closed upon Gertrude, "this is too dreadful! How is this business to be bettered? How are these two people to be brought together again?"

"I have no power to interfere," he said sadly. "Kitten is no child. I can only do as she tells me to do."

Now to Felicia, it seemed that Kitten was not only a child, but also an exceedingly foolish one; but knowing Roy's infatuation, she forbore to express her opinion.

"Do you think of the husband, poor Mr. Desmond? It is dreadful for him." But Roy could not be brought to pity Brian. The man who had dared to win the deep love of Kitten's soul, and to give her back nothing but the empty husks of his life, was to him an object not of compassion, but of abhorrence.

"What is he doing—is he looking for her?" was all he said gloomily, after a pause.

"No, he seems stunned, I hear, you know, because—because—Mr. Raikes, his cousin, is with him."

Felicia spoke of Edgar Raikes with a little telltale confusion of manner, which Roy was far too much absorbed in his own troubles to observe.

"Raikes!" he said sharply. "Surely that is his agent, who lives at Keppington? Is he in town, then?"

It had been Roy's secret hope that this gentleman might recognize Kitten, and be the means of restoring her to her husband.

"Yes, he went to Lowndes Square at once, and has been there ever since," answered Felicia, who thought her hero a very prince among men for this act of charity. "Mr. Desmond has kept him."

"He is going back to Keppington, I suppose?" inquired Roy eagerly.

"No I don't think he is. Mr. Raikes ran in this morning, knowing I should be anxious," added Felicia, coloring a little, "to tell me that Brian Desmond has asked him to go abroad with him at once."

"To go abroad!" cried Roy, aghast. "Do you mean to tell me that he is going to make a search for his wife? That he is content to give her up without an effort? To leave her without even knowing what has become of her, or whether she has got enough to live upon? Good heavens, the man cannot be such a brute as that!"

"Mr. Raikes certainly told me he was going abroad at once. I know nothing more."

"Felicia!" he cried, "it cannot be. Do you think that he—her husband—believes in this wicked slander against her, which Mrs. Talbot and venomous women of her description have set afloat?"

"No, no. I hope and trust he has not heard of it," she answered eagerly. "I do not think he has yet. But at any moment it might get to his ears. Oh, Roy, if only it could be stopped!"

And that was what Roy, too, said, over and over again to himself, as he went slowly back to his sister's house.

"If it only could be stopped!"

But how can the voice of scandal be stopped? It is often hard to make people believe in an absolute truth, but to believe in a lie, that seems to come easily to everybody; and once fairly started on its way, a lie is as hard to stop as is that magic fiddler of German fairy lore, who has been dancing his way over the world ever since the Middle Ages.

He was very depressed and unhappy, a she flung himself wearily into a deep armchair in Miss Grantley's drawing room. Margaret was adding up her weekly bills.

"Well, Roy?"

"Well, it is as you said," he answered gloomily. "You were right and I was wrong. It is not, I suppose, for the first time in our lives that I have been forced to acknowledge as much."

"There is, of course, one thing you could do, Roy, which would effectually stop this uncomfortable scandal at once and forever."

"I wish to goodness you would say what it is, then," he answered. "God knows, I would do anything."

"If you were to give out at once that you were engaged to be married to some girl, everybody would perceive instantly the impossibility of there being any truth in the reports which have coupled your name with Mrs. Desmond's."

"Engaged to be married!" he cried, contemptuously; "how can that be done, pray? What utter nonsense! To be engaged, I must ask some woman to marry me. How can I go out and do that at a moment's notice? If that is your plan, Margaret—"

"There is always Felicia," said Miss Grantley, quietly, without venturing to look at him.

Roy did not answer, and Margaret continued, after a pause; "Felicia would marry you to-morrow; there is no preliminary love-making to be gone through with her. Uncle Gregory is so sick of London and parental cares that he will bestow her gladly upon the first comer, and you above all others. Felicia herself is fond of you—"

Here Roy rose violently from his chair, and with an exclamation of angry impatience went out of the room, slamming the door after him.

(To be continued.)

Musky.

Pearl—I hear that Jennette and Harry were about the softest couple that were ever married in this town.

Ruby—I should say so! Why, they were so soft that their friends boiled the rice before they threw it at them.

IN THE NATIONAL HALLS OF CONGRESS

Monday, Jan. 8.

Washington, Jan. 8.—The senate today gave attention to the Panama canal, the situation in Santo Domingo and the merchant marine shipping bill.

The canal bill question came up in connection with a message from the president, in which, among other things, he invited the closest scrutiny into all that had been done by the government in the Isthmus of Panama. Gorman made that utterance the text for a speech, in which he criticized the salaries paid for work in connection with the canal, and urged congressional inquiry. He said that the president was not so much to blame as congress for his assumption of control on the isthmus, and that the chief mistake had been made when congress released its hold upon canal affairs. He agreed with Gorman in urging the rights of congress in connection with the canal, and said that, while congress had delegated the matter to the president, the latter practically had referred the whole matter back to congress.

The senate took up the merchant marine shipping bill and Gallinger spoke in support of that measure. Quoting the utterances of Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt on the importance of building up the merchant marine, he urged congress to heed these admonitions by passing a law that would relieve the situation.

Gallinger estimated that the aggregate expense to the government for the entire ten years of the proposed subsidies would be \$40,000,000, and that the amount being devoted to the encouragement of irrigation is many times larger.

The senate then, at 4:13 P. M., went into executive session, and at 4:20 adjourned.

Washington, Jan. 8.—With over an hour devoted to the District of Columbia, there was left but a half-hour to be devoted by the house today to tariff discussion. This was utilized by Sullivan, of Massachusetts, who spoke strongly for tariff revision from the Democratic standpoint.

HILL ON PHILIPPINES.

Occupies Attention of House Three Hours Telling What He Knows.

Washington, Jan. 6.—In a session of five hours today, the house placed on record a speech in favor of the Philippine tariff bill, one against it, and a 20 minutes' talk for tariff revision according to the Republican demand of Massachusetts. Hill, of Connecticut, occupied three hours, and was listened to with the greatest interest in detailing the knowledge he gained from two visits to the Philippines, the last as a member of the party of Secretary Taft last summer. He paid particular attention to the tobacco feature of the measure, and explained away much of the misapprehension as to the enormous products that might be expected from the islands. Their territory, he said, was small, and the fertile lands still further limited.

Mondell, of Wyoming, who has led the fight against the bill in the interest of the beet sugar industry of this country, spoke vigorously against the measure and against the policy of helping the Filipino people by granting them open markets in the United States. He said the passage of this bill would be the death knell of the beet sugar industry in the United States.

The abolition of the tariff on hides was pleaded for by Lawrence of Massachusetts, who presented the position taken by the Republicans of that state.

Information regarding immigration from Austro-Hungary contained in reports by Marcus Braun was asked for from the secretary of commerce and labor.

FAVORS PHILIPPINE BILL.

Clark, of Missouri, Occupies House Floor for Three Hours.

Washington, Jan. 5.—"Champ Clark Democracy" was expounded to the delight and entertainment of the house for three hours today by Clark, of Missouri, and constituted the feature of the debate on the Philippine tariff bill. Clark's speech took a wide range and he labeled his political beliefs as above,

Will Defeat Statehood.

Washington, Jan. 8.—The Republican "insurgents" of the house now contend they have formed a combination that will defeat the statehood bill and carry the Philippine tariff bill with it. They say they have 70 Republican votes which will be supported by a united minority, to defeat a rule prohibiting any amendment to the statehood bill. They will amend this bill, they say, by admitting Oklahoma and Indian Territory as one state and leaving Arizona and New Mexico out for the present.

New Lightship and Tender.

Washington, Jan. 8.—In the absence of representation in the house from Oregon, Representative Hepburn, of Iowa, introduced a bill authorizing the lighthouse board to immediately expend \$120,000 for the construction and equipment of a new light vessel to take the place of light vessel No. 50, off the mouth of the Columbia river, which is now undergoing repairs; also a bill authorizing the construction of a new lighthouse tender, costing \$150,000 to replace the Manzanita, which is deemed unworthy of repairs.

CONGRESS RESUMES.

House Takes Up Consideration of Philippine Tariff Bill.

Washington, Jan. 4.—The cause of the Filipino was advanced on the floor of the house by the Republican leader, Payne, for nearly four hours today. He represented the views of the majority of the ways and means committee on the Philippine tariff reducing the duties on sugar and tobacco to 25 per cent of the Dingley tariff rates and admitting other products of the islands to the United States free of duty. Before and following Mr. Payne's speech brief discussions indicated that there is to be a protracted debate on the measure, and that the Republican opponents representing the cane and beet sugar interests of this country will speak and vote against the bill.

In the Senate.

Washington, Jan. 4.—After waiting for almost a year, R. M. La Follette appeared in the senate when it reconvened today, after the holiday recess, to claim his seat as senator from Wisconsin, and the oath of office was administered to him by Vice President Fairbanks. The ceremony was witnessed by a crowded gallery, which manifested much interest in the proceedings.

After La Follette had signed the oath which he had taken, he was again joined by Spooner and escorted to the seat assigned him among those Republicans who have seats on the Democratic side of the chamber.

Assignments of La Follette and Garin to committees was made as follows:

La Follette—Potomac river front, chairman; census, civil service, claims, immigration, Indian affairs and pensions.

Garin—Claims, pensions, forts and fortifications, industrial expositions, national banks and District of Columbia. Simmons resigned from the last-named committee to make room for the Oregon senator.

The senate discussed at some length a proposition to reprint a magazine article by Newlands, entitled "A Democrat in the Philippines," and also a resolution for the regulation of senate patronage. Both were adopted. A resolution calling for information concerning the status of affairs in Santo Domingo was presented by Tillman, who made an unsuccessful effort to secure immediate consideration of it.

Gallinger had expected to open the debate upon the merchant marine shipping bill today, but, when the bill was laid before the senate, he asked to be excused from talking until next Monday, when the bill will be formally taken up as the unfinished business.

After a brief executive session, the senate adjourned until Monday.

Give Pensions to Steptoe's Men.

Washington, Jan. 8.—Senator Ankeny today introduced a bill extending the provisions of the late Indian war veterans' pension act to include all those who served as volunteers during the Indian hostilities in Washington and Idaho in 1855 with the military commands of Colonel Edward I. Steptoe and Colonel George Wright, including the volunteer company of friendly Nez Perces Indians, who acted as guides and scouts under Colonel Wright.