

CAMILLA

BY BEATRICE MAREAN,

Author of "The Tragedies of Oakhurst," "Won At Last," "Her Shadowed Life," "The Fireman's Heart," "When A Woman Loves," Etc., Etc.

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Respectfully Dedicated to
CAPT. AUGUSTUS OSWALD MACDOWELL,
SENIOR,
of Jacksonville, Fla.
By
THE AUTHOR.

CHAPTER XXX. THE CONFESSION.

"Very well, Johnson, I will excuse you," the lady said, and Johnson bowed himself out of the room while Mrs. Murriatte broke open the envelope and drawing forth its contents read this note which was enclosed in the letter:

TALLAHASSEE, FLA., July 18, 18—
"MRS. NEWELL MURRIATTE.

"I take the liberty of sending you the enclosed letter which I received yesterday, as I am convinced its contents concern your happiness even more deeply than they do my own.

"Very respectfully,
"CAMILLA WHITHAM,
"(nee Bennett)."

Mrs. Murriatte had so accustomed herself to self-control that even her daughter who was lying on the couch near her mother's side did not suspect that there was anything in the letter to disturb her as she calmly folded the note in its envelope, laid it in her lap and unfolding the letter began to read it. It was written in Governor Murriatte's hand and ran thus:

"LAS VEGAS, N. M. July 12, 18—
"MRS. RAPHAEL WHITHAM,
"Tallahassee, Fla.

"What strange and unlooked for events happen to mortals in this world. That I should write to you and make the confession I am about to make was something I had never imagined would fall to my lot. But when a man realizes that death is approaching him with rapid footsteps he will, if he has any care for his soul's salvation, make restitution as far as lies in his power for the misdeeds he has committed.

"The confession I have to make concerns your sainted mother and yourself, and I feel even at this late day that to you I must make this confession, and beg from you the pardon which, God be praised, I feel He has accorded me.

"When I was a young man not yet having reached my twenty-second year, I met, loved and married your mother, Miss Ruth Bennett, in New York City. It was a case of love at first sight, and in six weeks after I was introduced to her she left the stage to become my wife. A better, purer, truer woman than your mother never graced God's green earth. That I should have deserted her, knowing her as such, and realizing the depth of her love for me as I did, is only another evidence of how far the Evil One can lead a man astray when once he has claimed his victim. I was only a clerk on a small salary at the time of our marriage and we began housekeeping in three small rooms in an unpretentious street in New York, but my sweet wife was always happy, courageous and industrious, and our little home was ever in the most perfect order and my wife ready to welcome me home after my day's work was over.

"When we had been married a year, God sent you, Camilla, to bind our hearts still closer together. Oh, had I been true to my vows as husband and father, and loyal to the young wife who looked upon me as the embodiment of manly courage, truth and honor, what awful hours of agony and remorse would I have been spared! But it was not so, and now, I, your father, Camilla, confess to you that all true happiness fled from my life when I permitted my worldly ambition to lead me away from the paths of rectitude and honor.

"I was head clerk in a law firm and was sent to St. Louis by my employers to transact some business for them when you had only reached the first milestone in your life's journey. While in St. Louis I met some old friends of my father who had left Tallahassee directly after the war and settled in the former city. By them I was introduced to a very wealthy young widow, Mrs. Alva Shaw. This young lady, who had only reached her twentieth year at the time of my introduction to her, had married when she was eighteen years of age, an aged millionaire, who, dying a year later, made her the sole heir to his vast wealth. The friend who introduced me to her, not knowing that I was already a husband and father, said laughingly to me the next day: 'If I were as handsome a young man as yourself I should lay siege to this beautiful young widow's heart, for she is not only the wealthiest woman in the west, but she has one of the most noble characters of any woman I ever met.'

"This gentleman, a former resident

of Tallahassee, had never married and he was at the time about sixty years of age.

"Why not lay siege to the lady's heart yourself, Colonel? I said jokingly, 'you are a handsome and distinguished man yourself,' but he shook his head saying, 'No, my lad, my love is waiting for me in that land where partings are unknown. Win the widow for yourself, if you can.'

"With that suggestion the devil entered my heart. I had never felt the galling yoke of poverty as I did at that moment. My salary was barely enough for the modest wants of my wife and child. What was I to hope for, encumbered as I was with poverty and a helpless family. What was before me but a life of slavery, and what grand triumphs might I not achieve, socially and politically, had I wealth at my command? I asked myself these questions as I tossed on my restless pillow that night, wrestling weakly with the mighty temptation which assailed and finally overpowered me.

"The next day I met the young widow again, and every day for days afterwards. Camilla, do you not curse me for the base cowardly wretch I was? I tried to win Mrs. Shaw's love, and she thinking, of course, that I was an unmarried man, favored me in the most flattering terms. When I was convinced that I could win her consent to become my wife, I announced that business called me away, but before bidding Mrs. Shaw farewell I won a confession of her love for me, and gained her consent to correspond with me. I went to an out of the way town in Indiana, and wrote my employers from there, stating that circumstances forced me to sever my connections with the firm. I turned the business with which they had entrusted me over to them in good shape, and then wrote a long letter to your mother, I told her that a splendid opportunity was presented me if I were not encumbered by a family, and now I was able to see what a blind idiot I had been to marry her and condemn her to a life of poverty and drudgery.

"I cannot endure it longer; to endeavor to do so would drive me mad, so I have resolved to free myself from poverty's grasp before it is too late, and for your sake, Ruth, more than my own, I falsely added, 'I shall get a divorce from you. When I have gained this wealth which lies nearly within my grasp, I shall place you and your child in such comfortable circumstances that you will bless the day that freed you from a husband, who, at best, could hardly keep you from starvation.'

"I enclosed in this letter a check for two hundred dollars, being within a few dollars of all the money I possessed in the world. Within a week's time I received a letter from my wife in answer to the one I had written her. The check was returned to me. She did not upbraid me for my unfaithfulness in a manner that one would have supposed she would have done.

"I am too much overwhelmed with shame to know that I am the mother of a child whose father is capable of such heartless wickedness to say more than this," she wrote. 'Go your way, enjoy the wealth which Judas-like, you have obtained, rest assured that your day of reckoning will come, and that the Father of the fatherless, and the widow's God, in whom I put my trust, will avenge the wrong which you have perpetrated against me. Your innocent child, God help her! shall never hear the name, if I can prevent it, of her father, who for gold and its allurements, turned traitor to his family—the helpless loved ones who trusted him. I have no idea what plea you will base your divorce suit upon. It may be that you intend to blast my fair name as well as to break my heart. It matters not. The worst misfortune that could happen came to me on the day I became your wife.'

"This was the substance of the reply I received to my heartless and contemptible letter. I began proceedings at once for a divorce upon the grounds of desertion, and as the suit was not contested, in three months I was a free man.

"I had corresponded regularly with Mrs. Shaw during this time, and after the decree was granted, I returned to St. Louis and asked her hand in marriage. I was accepted, and three months later I led her to the altar.

"We spent three years abroad, and then returning to the United States took up our residence at Beaumont.

My wife loved and trusted me implicitly, and I loved her with a devotion you would not deem possible of a man who had trampled another woman's loving and trusting heart so cruelly beneath his feet.

"Four years after we came to Tallahassee, your mother came there not knowing that that city was my home. I met her accidentally and talked with her. She did not expose me, angel that she was. I learned from her that she had placed you in a convent in St. Augustine, and offered her money for your support. She refused it with righteous indignation. The next day she left Tallahassee and I made a visit to the convent shortly afterwards and tried to induce the Mother Superior to take a sum of money for your support. She refused, saying that she had promised your mother not to accept help for you from anybody except herself. I told the Mother Superior that I had been a dear friend of your father's and that I was under an obligation to him to help you if you needed help, and obtained a promise from her that if you ever needed a friend or financial aid to advise me. After your mother's death Mother Laurence advised me of your penniless condition, and you already know how I befriended you and after your education was finished brought you to my own home as governess to my daughter Imogen. The first suspicion that my wife had that I was playing a double part was the discovery she made of a letter written by yourself in which you returned me the money I had sent you as your first year's salary as governess in my family. But by garbling the facts I partly allayed suspicions, but not tully. On the night of your accident when we thought you were dying my wife discovered me on my knees beside your bed. I do not know what I said, but what she did hear convinced her that we had been deceiving her, and that I was as vile as man could be. I begged her to hear my explanation, but she refused me with scorn, and denounced me in the most bitter and unforgiving terms. Again I implored her to listen to me but she turned away in haughty contempt and sequestered herself from me. Driven to desperation by wounded pride, chagrin and shame, I left the house immediately, and three hours later she took our daughter and two servants and fled from the house. I have never seen my wife or daughter since that night or had any communication with them. I know their place of residence, however, which is near St. Louis, Mo., and I hear of them frequently, although they are not aware of the fact, through Mrs. Murriatte's attorneys, whose address is No. 77 Locust street, St. Louis, Mo.

"I have been living in the wilds of New Mexico ever since I left Tallahassee; have shunned society and lived the life of a recluse, with only the upbraiding of my remorseful conscience for company. The agonies that I have suffered can never be described by either tongue or pen. My health is wrecked and I know I only have a few more days to live. What my punishment in the world to come will be, God only knows. But whatever it is, it cannot exceed the anguish I have suffered since my exile.

"I have wearied heaven with prayers for forgiveness and although I do not deserve it, yet God is merciful. I have left a long letter to my wife and one to my daughter, Imogen, which my lawyers at Las Vegas will forward to them after my death. My money and property which I have accumulated myself, independent of my wife's fortune I have left by will to you, my poor wronged and misjudged child. The whole will aggregate \$50,-

000. Will you accept this from the hands of your dying and repentant father and pray for his soul's repose? My darling, teach your sons and daughters this one great lesson, that there is no peace, nor permanent happiness, and no rest for the soul, outside of the paths of honor, truth and integrity. If they permit the gilded glitter of these Gods to allure them away from these paths, sorrow and despair will surely overtake them—'As ye mete it unto others, so shall it be meted unto you again.' Ah, how many times in the still hushes of the night have these words rung through my distracted brain, till I prayed in my despair and remorse, for jeath to relieve me from a life that had grown unbearable. through my own misdeeds, and my cruelty to your sainted mother.

"Farewell, my daughter—sweet child of my first love—God bless you and yours, and grant that I may one day meet you in our 'Fathers House,' with my soul through His mercy cleansed from every blemish.

Your dying father,
NEWELL MURRIATTE."

Compliments to Miss Miller.

Miss Eddie Sparkman has as her attractive guest, Miss Eloise Miller, of Ocala.

PARTY TO GO TO PABLO.

Mrs. R. N. Sparkman will take Miss Eddy Sparkman, Miss Eloise Miller, of Ocala, Miss Elsie Riles and Miss Lizzie Clark to Pablo, Saturday to spend the day.

COUNTRY CLUB PARTY.

Today Mrs. R. J. Riles, Miss Sara Freeland and Mrs. A. G. Davis are chaperoning Miss Eddy Sparkman and her attractive guest, Miss Eloise Miller, of Ocala, Miss Elsie Riles, Miss Lizzie Clark, Miss Gertrude Champlain, Miss Eleanor Cassidy, Miss Lolla Jordan and Miss Janie Craotree at the Country club. The party is in compliment to Miss Sparkman's guest, Miss Miller, and the bevy of attractive girls enjoyed the day at the popular club, where luncheon was served at noon.—Jacksonville Sun.

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N. C. Apple Brandy	3.25	3.25	4.85	9.70
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Eureka N. C. Corn, XX	3.00	3.00	4.60	9.00
Eureka N. C. Corn XXX	2.75	2.75	4.15	8.30
Eureka N. C. Corn, XXXX	2.50	2.50	3.75	7.50
Old Crow Bourbon	4.50	4.50	6.75	13.50
Sunny Brook Rye	3.75	3.75	5.65	11.30
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