

# 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 MACDONELL, SENIOR,  
of Jacksonville, Fla.  
By  
THE AUTHOR.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

HAPPY REUNION—SAINT RUTH'S CHAPEL IN THE FIELD OF ALFALFA. CONCLUSION.

"Who is it Pedro?" came from a feeble voice within, and the next moment Imogen had pulled herself away from Diana's protecting grasp, rushed past the astonished Mexican, and with a sob of thankfulness, knelt by her father's bed.

Diana, who had followed her young mistress into the room, stood a moment in silent contemplation of the sweetly pathetic scene of the reunited father and child clasped in each others arms, while they mingled their tears and prayers of thankfulness together.

"Tank de Good Lawd, for all his mercies," she exclaimed at last, starting toward the front entrance where the Mexican stood guard.

"Senorita," he began in broken English, putting out a detaining hand: "Dont Sin'retto me, nor stop me to heah you talk Dutch nor Spaniard nether; move, man! and le'me out, I'se gwine fo' Miss Alva whose out yonder in de waggin, waiten to hear dis glorious news," and Diana's ample figure went flying down the walk through the faint light made by the dawning day, just beginning to tremble in the clear eastern sky.

"Oh, Miss Alva," she cried when she reached the wagon where Mrs. Murriatte still sat, guarded over by Johnston, who when he saw that Imogen was safe from harm, had returned to the wagon, "come honey, come to your ole Mammy and let her tell you how good the good Lawd is after all he put on us to beah, Mars Neweil is alibee! and not so awful sick nuther, I dont belibe, frum de way he is setten up in de baid, an' taken, on ober Miss Imogen. Johnston, has you don loss your senses? What all you nigger! Git down out'o dat wagin lif Miss Alva out, an gib her to me."

"Oh Diana, is it true; is it true; is my husband alive?" cried Mrs. Murriatte, as Johnston tenderly lifted her from the wagon to the ground.

"Yes my lam, jest as true as preachins," Diana said as she put her arm supportingly about Mrs. Murriatte's trembling form.

"Why honey you is all of a tremble Miss Alva; you is not gwine gib up and break down is you, after you habe been such a brabe soger thru ebberthing? Shorely you is not going to let joy kill you," "No Diana," the lady said making a powerful and successful effort at self control; "joy seldom kills. Take me to the house."

When they entered the long low room where, Imogen, her face illuminated with her new found joy, stood by her father's bedside clasping his happy hands in hers, Diana said: "Come wid me, Miss Imogen, and let youh paw and maw alone. De 'fessions dey hab to make, and de words dey hab to say, is, only fitten to be heard by de dear Lawd, and deyselves," and taking the happy daughter's hand she led her out of the house, and seating her on a rustic bench under an arbor in the yard, sat down on the ground at her feet.

The pale dawn in the east deepened into a rosy flush, and flung out crimson banners proclaiming the near approach of the king of day.

The fragrant morning air fresh from the bosom of the night was filled with lowing of kine and the distant bleating of thousands of sheep. A band of merry cow-boys seated on their lean bronchos on their way to the day's roundup, swept past the gate and greeted the stately Johnston who stood by the wagon in dignified silence, with, "Hello, Mr. Nig; is you king of Africa, or is you only a colored gem' man out foh yo heith?" and cracking their whips with loud reports they galloped on their way, laughing.

The sun rose from his gorgeous bed, and looked smilingly down upon the dewy earth with every shrub and

blade of grass sparkling beneath a diadem of diamonds.

Imogen, all unconscious of weariness, sat with moist hair and limp clothing, her thoughts busy with the scenes of the last seven years and her heart swelling with thankfulness at this happy denouement, Diana, half asleep, rested her weary head against the bench on which her "chile" was sitting.

Pedro, finding his presence not necessary at the house, came and took Johnston and the driver with his weary team away for rest and refreshments, casting a kindly look on the young lady and her servant as he passed.

"Bress my soul and ole blackbody!" cried Diana suddenly springing to her feet as the form of a tall slender young man stood at the arbor's entrance. "Is I asleep, and dreaming, or has my old eyesight dun gone crazy wid all dis joy, or is dis sho'nuff Marse Ray Cameron?"

"It is Ray Cameron sho'nuff mammy", laughed the intruder while Imogen sprang toward him with out stretched hands crying joyfully: "Ray, is it possible?" and then it suddenly occurred to Diana to go immediately and see what that "fool nigger Johnston was about."

Shall I try to describe further the meeting of those fond young lovers, through no fault of their own, had been so long and cruelly separated, and repeat their loving and tearful sentences?

No, I will drop the curtain on the scene as one too sacred for intrusion.

By and by Camilla, with her two pretty prattling children, found them where old Diana had left them, and if anything had been wanting to complete the young matron's joy, it was furnished in the great joy that shone in the faces of the young man, the dear friend of herself and husband, and the sweet girl, her former pupil, whom she joyfully greeted as "sister."

When Camilla received her father's letter and confession she had, following her husband's advice, made Mr. and Mrs. Cameron acquainted with all the sad facts, and had been advised by them to send her father's communication to Mrs. Murriatte in her exile. Then her young wife said to her husband through her fast falling tears: "Raphael, I must go to my father, perhaps I may be able to restore him to health or comfort him in his last earthly moments."

"You shall go, my darling," Mr. Mr. Whitham said, drawing her to him and wiping her tears away. "I will go with you and we will take the children with us."

"May I go also asked Ray Cameron, who, with his mother was present when the journey was decided upon.

"Certianly, Ray?" Mr. and Mrs. Whitham assured him warmly. "We shall be delighted to have you join us," and Mrs. Cameron and Mrs. Whitham exchanged glances which said: "How much the poor boy loves Imogen!"

They arrived at Santa Gertrudes Ranch one week prior to the coming of Mrs. Murriatte and Imogen, and was rejoiced to find Governor Murriatte in a better physical condition than they had expected to find him.

The man's mental state was one of extreme melancholy, brought about by long broodings over his sorrows and disappointments of other days, augmented by remorse for the wrong, he in his worldly ambition, had been led to perpetrate against Camilla's young mother.

These had prayed upon his sensitive mind until his health was such a wreck that small wonder his physicians had diagnosed his case as one beyond medical skill.

When a man has sounded the depths of grief and remorse, brought upon him as a natural consequence of his sin against another, and has made all the

restitution within his power, and obtained forgiveness both divine and human, and a great happiness has come into his shattered life, as it came to Governor Murriatte with the coming of his family and friends; the efforts of medical science may well cease, while its disciples look on with wondering eyes at the magic healing wrought by the touch of this great physician that ministers to "the mind diseased."

Governor Murriatte's quick convalescence was wonderful indeed, and a happy month was passed by the reunited family, and Ray Cameron at Santa Gertrudes Ranch, with its extensive acres and signs of fertility and thrift.

Then the thoughts of Governor and Mrs. Murriatte as well as their young daughter, turned lovingly towards Beaumont, their long deserted and mysteriously closed home.

Imogen, with her parents hearty consent, was Ray Cameron's promised wife; and his parents were waiting with loving hearts to welcome the wanderers home, and witness the consummation of their happiness at the altar.

Ray was in no haste, however, to return to the city of his birth. He was much in love with this great western country, with its freedom from conventionalities; and its grand open air life, where if one was a lover of nature he might live very near to her warm true heart, indeed, so he surprised Imogen by saying: "Why should we return home, sweetheart, before we are married? Why not walk up to the sweet quaint little chapel of Saint Ruth that your father built in that grand field of Alfalfa clover which is now in full bloom, and let Father Leonardis make us one for time and eternity?"

Imogen laughed and blushed as she replied: "What would your parents say to such a proceeding, foolish boy?" They wouldn't object, darling," he said, drawing her to his bosom. "You know that what ever pleases their badly spoiled boy, pleases them?"

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