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DARK DAYS

BY HUGH CONWAY.

Author of "Called Back."

CHAPTER I. A PRAYER AND A VOW.

When this story of my life, or of such portions of my life as present any out-of-the-common features, is read, it will be found that I have committed errors of judgment—that I have sinned not only socially, but also against the law of the land. In excuse I can plead but two things—the strength of love, the weakness of human nature. If these carry no weight with you, throw the book aside. You are too good for me; I am too human for you. We cannot be friends. Read no further about my childhood; nothing about my boyhood. Let me hurry on to early manhood—to that time when the wonderful dreams of youth begin to leave one; when the impulse which can drive a sober reason aside must be, indeed, a strong one; when one has learned to count the cost of every rash step; when the transient and fitful flames of the boy have settled down to a steady, glowing fire which will burn until only ashes are left; when the strength, the nerve, the intellect, is or should be at its height; when, in short, one's years number thirty.



Philippa as I saw her then—as I see her now. Heavens! how fair she was! How glorious her pink, dark beauty! How different from the pink-white and yellow dolls which have been exalted as the types of perfection! Warm Southern blood ran through her veins and tinged her clear brown cheek with color. Her mother was an English woman; but it was Spain that gave her daughter that exquisite grace, those wondrous dark eyes and long, curled lashes, that mass of soft black hair, that passionate, impulsive nature, and perhaps that queen-like carriage and dignity. The English mother may have given the girl many good gifts, but her beauty came from the father, whom she had never known; the Andalusian, who died while she was but a child in arms. Yet, in spite of her foreign grace, Philippa was English. Her Spanish origin was to her but a tradition. Her foot had never touched her father's native land. Its language was strange to her. She was born in England, and her father, the nature of whose occupation I have not been able to ascertain, seems to have spent most of his time in this country.

the pinch of poverty from their lives. The mother was a sweet, quiet, ladylike woman, who bore her sufferings with resignation. Her health was, indeed, wretched. The only thing which seemed likely to benefit her was a continual change of air and scene. After attending her for about six months, I was in conscience bound to endorse the opinion of her former medical advisors, and tell her it would be well for her to try another change. My heart was heavy as I gave this advice. I adopted, it meant that Philippa and I must part. But why, during those six months, had I not, passionately in love as I was, won the young girl's heart? Why did she not leave me as my affianced bride? Why did I let her leave me at all? The answer is short. She loved me not. Not that she had ever told me so in words, but she never asked for his words for her love. But she must have known—she must have known! When I was with her, every look, every action of mine must have told her the truth. Woman are not fools or blind. A man, loving as I did, who can conceal the true state of his feelings must be more than mortal. I had not spoken; I dared not speak. Better uncertainty with hope than certainty with despair. The day on which Philippa refused my love would be as the day of death to me. Besides, what had I to offer her? Although succeeding fairly well for a beginner, I could only ask the woman I made my wife to share comparative poverty. And Philippa! Ah! I would have wrapped Philippa in luxury! All that wealth could buy ought to be hers. Had you seen her in the glory of her fresh young beauty, you would have smiled at the presumption of the man who could expect such a being to become the wife of a hard working and as yet ill-paid doctor. You would have felt that she should have had the world at her feet. Had I thought that she loved me I might perhaps have dared to hope she would even have been happy as my wife. But she did not love me. Moreover, she was ambitious. She knew—small blame to her—how beautiful she was. Do I wrong her when I say that in those days she looked for the gift of rank and riches from the man who loved her? She knew that she was a queen among women, and expected a queen's dues. (Sweetest, are my words cruel? They are the cruellest I have spoken, or shall speak, against you. Forgive them!) We were friends—great friends. Such friendship is love's true friend. It buoy's false friendship; it hurls to security; it leads astray; it is a staff which breaks suddenly, and wounds the hand which leans upon it. So little it seems to need to make friendship grow into love; and yet how seldom that little is added! The love which begins with hate or dislike is often luckier than that which begins with friendship. Lovers cannot be friends. Philippa and her mother left my neighborhood. They went to London for awhile. I heard from them occasionally, and once or twice, when in town, called upon them. Time went by. I worked hard at my profession the while, striving, by sheer toil, to drive away the dream from my life. Alas! I strove in vain. To love Philippa was to love her forever! One morning a letter came from her. I tore it open. The news it contained was grievous. Her mother had died suddenly. Philippa was alone in the world. So far as I knew, she had not a relative left; and I believed, perhaps hoped, that, save myself, she had no friend. I needed no time for consideration. That afternoon I was in London. If I could not comfort her in her great sorrow I could at least sympathize with her; could undertake the management of the many business details which are attendant upon a death. Poor Philippa! She was glad to see me. Through her tears she flashed me a look of gratitude. I did all I could for her, and stayed in town until the funeral was over. Then I was obliged to think of going home. What was to become of the girl? With or kin she had none, nor did she mention the name of any friend who would be willing to receive her. As I suspected, she was absolutely alone in the world. As soon as my back was turned she would have no one on whom she could count for sympathy or help. It must have been her utter loneliness which urged me, in spite of my better judgment, in spite of the grief which still oppressed me, to throw myself at her feet and declare the desire of my heart. My words, I cannot recall, but I think I know I pleaded eloquently. Such passion as mine gives power and intensity to the most unpractical speaker. Yet long before my appeal was ended I knew that I pleaded in vain. Her eyes, her manner, told me she loved me not. Then, remembering her present helpless condition, I checked myself. I begged her to forget the words I had spoken; not to answer them now; to let me stay near her for some months' time. Let me still be her friend, and render her such service as I could. She shook her head; she held out her hand. The first action meant the refusal of my love; the second, the acceptance of my friendship. I schooled myself to calmness, and we discussed her plans for the future. She was lodging in a house in a quiet, respectable street near Regent's Park. She expressed her intention of staying on here for a while. "But alone!" I exclaimed. "Why not? What have I to fear? Still, I am open to reason if you can suggest another plan." I could suggest no other. Philippa was past twenty-one and would at once succeed to whatever money had been her mother's. This was enough to live upon. She had no friends, and must live somewhere. Why should she not stay on at the present lodgings? Nevertheless, I trembled as I thought of this beautiful girl all alone in London. Why could she not love me? Why could she not be my wife? It needed all my self-restraint to keep me from breaking afresh into passionate appeals. As she would not give me the right to dispose of her future I could do nothing more. I bade her a sad farewell, then went back to my home to conquer my unhappy love, or to suffer from its fresh inroads. Conquer it! Such love as mine is never conquered. It is a man's life. Philippa was never absent from my thoughts. Let

my frame of mind be gay or grave, Philippa was always present. Now and then she wrote to me, but her letters told me little as to her mode of life; they were short, friendly epistles, and gave me little hope. Yet I was not quite hopeless. I felt that I had been too hasty in asking her for her love so soon after her mother's death. Let her recover from the shock; then I will try again. Three months was the time which in my own mind I resolved should elapse before I again approached her with words of love. Three months! How heavily they dragged themselves away! Toward the end of my self-imposed term of probation I fancied that a brighter, gay, tone manifested itself in Philippa's letters. Fool that I was, I augured well from this. Telling myself that such love as mine must win in the end, I went to London, and once more saw Philippa. She received me kindly. Although her garb was still that of deep mourning, never, I thought, had she looked more beautiful. Not long after our first greeting did I wait before I began to plead again. She stopped me at the outset. "Hush," she said; "I have forgotten your former words; let us still be friends." "Never!" I cried passionately. "Philippa, answer me once for all, tell me you can love me!" She looked at me compassionately. "How can I least answer you?" she said musingly. "The sharpest remedy is perhaps the kindest. Basil, will you understand me when I say it is too late?" "Too late! What can you mean? Has another—?" The words died on my lips as Philippa, drawing a ring from the fourth finger of her left hand, showed me that it concealed a plain gold circlet. Her eyes met mine imploringly. "I should have told you before," she said sadly, and bending her proud head, "but there were reasons—even now I am pledged to tell no one. Basil, I only show you this because I know you will take no other answer."



"Too late! What can you mean? Has another—?" I rose without a word. The room seemed whirling around me. The only thing which was clear to my sight was that cursed gold band on the fair white hand—that symbol of possession by another! In that moment hope and all the sweetness of life seemed swept away from me. "Something in your face must have told her how her news affected me. She came to me and laid her hand upon my arm. I trembled like a leaf beneath her touch. She looked beseechingly into my face. "Oh, not like that!" she cried. "Basil, I am not worth it. I should not have made you happy. You will forget—you will find another. If I have wronged or misled you, say you forgive me. Let me hear you, my true friend, wish me happiness." I strove to force my dry lips to frame some conventional phrase. In vain! words would not come. I sank into a chair and covered my face with my hands. The door opened suddenly and a man entered. He may have been about forty years of age. He was tall and remarkably handsome. He was dressed with scrupulous care; but there was something written on his face which told me it was not the face of a good man. As I rose from my chair he glanced from me to Philippa with an air of suspicious inquiry. "Dr. North, an old friend of my mother's and mine," she said, with composure. "Mr. Farmer," she added, and a rosy blush crept round her neck as she indicated the new comer by the name which I felt sure was not also her own. I bowed mechanically. I made a few disjointed remarks about the weather and kindred topics; then I shook hands with Philippa and left the house, the most miserable man in England. Philippa married, and married secretly! How could her pride have stooped to a clandestine union! What manner of man was he who had won her? Heavens! he must be hard to please if he cared not to show his conquest to the light of day. Carl sneaked toward! villain! Stay; he may have his own reasons for concealment—reasons known to Philippa and approved of by her. Not a word against her. She is still my queen; the one woman in the world to me. What she has done is right! I passed a sleepless night. In the morning I wrote to Philippa. I wished her all happiness—I could command my pen, if not my tongue. I said no word about the secrecy of the wedding, or the evils so often consequent to such concealment. But, with a foreboding of evil to come, I begged her to remember that we were friends; that, although I could see her no more, whenever she wanted a friend's aid, a word would bring me to her side. I used no word of blame, I risked no expression of love or regret. No thought of my grief should jar upon the happiness which she doubtless expected to find. Farewell to the one dream of my life! Farewell, Philippa! Such a passion as mine may, in these matter-of-fact, unromantic days, seem an anachronism. No matter whether to sympathy or ridicule, I am but laying bare my true thoughts and feelings. I would not return to my home at once. I shrank from going back to my lonely heart and beginning to eat my heart out. I had made arrangements to stay in town

for some days, so I stayed, trying by a course of what is termed gaiety to drive remembrance away. Futile effort! How many have tried the same reputed remedy without success! After Thanksgiving, winter, in the Atlantic states, east of the Hudson, good sleighing is expected at this date. Here nothing more than a few white frosts indicate that winter has come. There have been frosts in the lowlands during the past week. Last night the frost crept up on the hillsides a little. The crystals lay on the plank sidewalks in the suburban towns and sparkled as the rays of the rising sun touched them. For a moment or two there were millions of diamonds, then small drops of water, and then nothing. But the frost makes crisp mornings, and a coal or wood fire most enjoyable morning and evening—the wood fire especially. Moreover, the frosts help to color the foliage, although in this country the deciduous trees drop the greater part of their foliage before the frosts come. The soft maples, elms, white birches and locust trees, which have been naturalized here, for the most part, have cast their leaves. Yet the maples take on a wreath of color before the leaves fall; so the frost does not do all the coloring. Even the eucalyptus, which casts its leaves at midsummer and continues dropping them until late in autumn, has a wealth of color which is hardly noticed. The coniferous trees prevail so largely in California that the high colors of deciduous trees which grow on the hillsides and mountain slopes of eastern states are rarely seen here. Yet in every dell after the first frosts have come in this latitude, one may find patches of color shading off from gold to scarlet, with a great many subdued tones, which artists, who are good colorists, do not fail to notice. The firs and the pines clothe many of the mountains in eternal green. When they are bare, they are as desolate as in Spain until the vernal season sets in. The first rains have already come. But the winter rains have not yet appeared. There is a sort of hush between the autumn and winter. If one goes to the wood, he will hear hardly any other sound than that of the harsh and obstreperous bluejay. Here and there will be a tapping on the trunks, and an occasional squirrel descends to see what provision in the way of acorns there may be left on the ground. In the open, where the ground is bare, there are the tracks of the sneaking coyote. Even owls cease in a measure to hoot in the winter season, and the mournful sound of doves has altogether ceased. A great silence has fallen upon the woods. There is hardly a singing bird. The linnets in the suburban gardens, which two months ago were so active in feasting on the ripe fruit, beginning even earlier with cherries, and continuing until the last ripe pear had disappeared, have become silent also. No more songs and no more deprecations, for the good reason that there is nothing to steal, and the pairing season has not begun. The white frosts are the fitting introduction of winter. They precede the heavier rains. The trade winds have died out. They will not prevail in this latitude before the middle of next May. Some are unkind enough to say that it is a pity that they should ever prevail. But these winds are the Lord's scavengers, sent up as so many messengers from the salt ocean to deliver the city from plagues and pestilence. San Francisco has not been a clean city from the day of its foundation. There is Oriental dirt, and Occidental dirt. It has come to be a foreign city. Merchandise fills the sidewalks, and in many places crowds the pedestrian into the street. Offal is thrown there. The six months' trade winds of summer and the six months' rain are the two sanitary agents which keep watch and ward over the city. The most dangerous weeks of the year, on the score of health, are those when neither the trade winds nor the rains prevail. The winter season being less pronounced in this latitude, there is less disposition to store up anything. All the season is open, and even now the bees are making honey, or are going to rob other hives. For in this state even the bees have caught the spirit of the monopolist. They get a part of their honey honestly, and, as to the rest, they do not scruple to get it dishonestly.

WINTER IN CALIFORNIA. How the Weather Differs from Winter in New England. (San Francisco Bulletin.) After Thanksgiving, winter, in the Atlantic states, east of the Hudson, good sleighing is expected at this date. Here nothing more than a few white frosts indicate that winter has come. There have been frosts in the lowlands during the past week. Last night the frost crept up on the hillsides a little. The crystals lay on the plank sidewalks in the suburban towns and sparkled as the rays of the rising sun touched them. For a moment or two there were millions of diamonds, then small drops of water, and then nothing. But the frost makes crisp mornings, and a coal or wood fire most enjoyable morning and evening—the wood fire especially. Moreover, the frosts help to color the foliage, although in this country the deciduous trees drop the greater part of their foliage before the frosts come. The soft maples, elms, white birches and locust trees, which have been naturalized here, for the most part, have cast their leaves. Yet the maples take on a wreath of color before the leaves fall; so the frost does not do all the coloring. Even the eucalyptus, which casts its leaves at midsummer and continues dropping them until late in autumn, has a wealth of color which is hardly noticed. The coniferous trees prevail so largely in California that the high colors of deciduous trees which grow on the hillsides and mountain slopes of eastern states are rarely seen here. Yet in every dell after the first frosts have come in this latitude, one may find patches of color shading off from gold to scarlet, with a great many subdued tones, which artists, who are good colorists, do not fail to notice. The firs and the pines clothe many of the mountains in eternal green. When they are bare, they are as desolate as in Spain until the vernal season sets in. The first rains have already come. But the winter rains have not yet appeared. There is a sort of hush between the autumn and winter. If one goes to the wood, he will hear hardly any other sound than that of the harsh and obstreperous bluejay. Here and there will be a tapping on the trunks, and an occasional squirrel descends to see what provision in the way of acorns there may be left on the ground. In the open, where the ground is bare, there are the tracks of the sneaking coyote. Even owls cease in a measure to hoot in the winter season, and the mournful sound of doves has altogether ceased. A great silence has fallen upon the woods. There is hardly a singing bird. The linnets in the suburban gardens, which two months ago were so active in feasting on the ripe fruit, beginning even earlier with cherries, and continuing until the last ripe pear had disappeared, have become silent also. No more songs and no more deprecations, for the good reason that there is nothing to steal, and the pairing season has not begun. The white frosts are the fitting introduction of winter. They precede the heavier rains. The trade winds have died out. They will not prevail in this latitude before the middle of next May. Some are unkind enough to say that it is a pity that they should ever prevail. But these winds are the Lord's scavengers, sent up as so many messengers from the salt ocean to deliver the city from plagues and pestilence. San Francisco has not been a clean city from the day of its foundation. There is Oriental dirt, and Occidental dirt. It has come to be a foreign city. Merchandise fills the sidewalks, and in many places crowds the pedestrian into the street. Offal is thrown there. The six months' trade winds of summer and the six months' rain are the two sanitary agents which keep watch and ward over the city. The most dangerous weeks of the year, on the score of health, are those when neither the trade winds nor the rains prevail. The winter season being less pronounced in this latitude, there is less disposition to store up anything. All the season is open, and even now the bees are making honey, or are going to rob other hives. For in this state even the bees have caught the spirit of the monopolist. They get a part of their honey honestly, and, as to the rest, they do not scruple to get it dishonestly.

OH, HAD I KNOWN! (Harriet Prescott Spofford.) If I had thought so soon she would have died He said, I had been sparing in my speech I had a moment lingered at her side, And told her, ere she passed beyond my reach, If I had thought so soon she would have died That day she looked up with her startled eyes Like some bright creature where the woods are deep, With kisses I had stilled those breaking sighs With kisses closed those eyelids into sleep That day she looked up with her startled eyes Oh, had I known she would have died I soon, Love had not wasted on a barren land, Love like those rivers in her torrid noon Lost on the desert, poured out on the sand— Oh, had I known she would have died so soon SOCIETY AT WASHINGTON. How to Get into the Whirl of the Official Circle—Feeding the Multitude. ("Bubamah" in Globe-Democrat.) Matrimonially, Washington is the poorest market in the country, as many of the deluded ones have found before the first season was half over, and while to a certain extent anybody can get into society here, and go to the public receptions at the White House, and call on every official family, the privileges cease there. A bar is set against those not in official life that can only be lifted by winter residents of great wealth, who will entertain the officials. A very frank and a very vulgar woman bluntly asked a prominent society matron how she should manage it to get into the whirl of the official circle, and the astute matron answered: "Feed them! Spread your table well the first time, and all Washington will be eager to come on the next occasion." That ambitious soul was simply the wife of a rich retired tradesman who came here to spend her money, but without official position, or relative in office, she had a weary and expensive up-hill struggle, and had to take many snubs and buffetings from those who feasted and danced in her house. It was better that their fortune from trade was acquired in another city than here, for the richest of the Washington merchants have no standing in what is distinctively known as Washington society. A man may make his fortune in junk, old clothes or street-sweeping, any place else, and with his money come to congress, and gain entrance to the great social circle for his family, but if he made his money here society would scorn him utterly. There was a woman here once, the wife of a western statesman, who, a dozen years before her appearance at Washington, managed a laundry and hotel and drummed up her patrons at the depot from her omnibus stops. She was familiarly known by her first name everywhere. Together the couple acquired a fortune, and, taking a home as soon as they reached Washington, they fed the multitude and won their way by terrapin and champagne to the place the ambitious wife coveted. Her grammar was beyond all parallel and her language not always marked with propriety. Though her manners lacked the repose and polish of the Vere de Veres, every one flocked to her house when it was open, danced for her favors, ate and drank of her abundance and went away to ridicule her. Foreign ministers and attaches would go there, but only the unmarried men, as the ladies of the foreign circle did at least draw the line at the ex-lauder. After a season or two the statesman's wife broke down and, plaintively saying "I have overdone," retired from active life, and felt the keen sting of disappointment and what she called ingratitude at the way she was passed by, overlooked and forgotten, when no longer able to minister to those who had rioted at her expense so long. An Art Well Worth Acquiring. (Titus Munson Coan in Harper's Weekly.) The cure of sleeplessness depends upon the cause; how various the causes are we have seen. I will not enumerate the devices for procuring slumber in the ordinarily healthy; they are very numerous, and none of them have any general application. One counsel may be given, for it is not hackneyed; it is this: "Learn to sleep in the daytime. This art is one which everybody has not acquired." People there are—I know such people—who are wise enough to eat when they are hungry, but who have never attained that higher reach of wisdom, to sleep when they are sleepy. But occasions come to all of us when we need to be able to sleep in the daytime at will. Have you failed to get your needed sleep, whether because of work or watching, sorrow or pleasure? Then repose in the daytime is the restorative needed. There is great virtue in naps—even in short ones—and the art of napping in the daytime, if you have not learned it already, is one to be learned without further delay. It may require a little practice, but nature is on the side of the learner. And lastly, here is a bit of philosophy, written by a wise man and a physician, Dr. Frank Hamilton. Let me hope that at least one of my readers, if only one, will be wise enough to profit by its wisdom: "Gloomy thoughts prevent sleep. The poor and unfortunate magnify and increase their misfortunes by too much thinking. 'Blessed' be he who invented sleep," but thrice blessed be the man who shall invent a cure for thinking."