

## XXIX

LUDOVIC ARGENT sometimes thought that the understanding of Mrs. Tregaskis seemed hardest of all to Rosamund. Had she anything at all left of her very own?

He found himself wondering.

He went across the valley on many days, and Mrs. Tregaskis always welcomed him with eager cordiality. It was only after a time that Ludovic admitted to himself that he sought another welcome than hers with an insistence which surprised him vaguely. One day in the autumn his halting step came slowly up the narrow garden path where Bertha Tregaskis, in the short, dark tweed of determinedly unconventional widowhood, was crouching over a border. She raised herself briskly enough at the sound of his stick upon the gravel.

"Splendid!" she cried exuberantly, showing a pair of earthy palms. "I can't shake hands—too grubby. But you'll help me tie up these poor dear things, won't you?"

Ludovic adjusted his crutch-like stick, and fumbled obediently with long pieces of bass and the top-heavy overgrown dahlias.

"Rosamund is not good at this sort of job, although she offers to help me most regularly, poor dear! But it's not in her line at all."

"Why don't you have in old Jones or someone two or three times a week?" said Ludovic with the more earnestness that his own wrestlings with the bass were strangely unsuccessful.

"We do have him every now and then, but I love pottering about, and so does Minnie. We've practically made the whole of this border—the place was in a dreadful state when we came."

Ludovic looked round the small garden.

"It h  
His v  
Berth  
"The  
quickly.  
are the t  
that bel  
they we  
instinct—  
favourite  
spring.  
things lil  
Rosamun  
"Yes."  
"It's c  
"how qui  
of a belo  
myself, th  
on Rosam  
associatio  
children—  
died—and  
hers. You  
hasn't it?"  
"You de  
Bertha st  
"No," s  
"The love  
through an  
things mat  
Oh, it's no  
mother and  
bought its o  
the need of g  
fancy that y  
She looker  
but Ludovic  
"Your mo  
if the whole  
Roman Cath  
at Francie's