

A DEAD PAST

By MRS. LOVETT CAMERON

CHAPTER XV.

In the month of December, when the days were short and dark, and a black frost and biting east wind made winter hard to the young and unbearable to the old, Sir Hugh Grantley shuffled off this mortal coil and was buried in the family vault in Friery churchyard by the side of all the Sir Hughs and Sir Johns and Sir Gregorys who had preceded him. He died as he had lived, unloved and unregretted. His selfishness stood him in good stead up to the last.

He was buried with all becoming pomp and ceremony, and Roy, his son, reigned in his stead. But poor Roy's reign was but a short and troubled one in the house of his fathers. Sir Hugh's affairs were found to be in greatest confusion, the property was heavily mortgaged, the farms had depreciated in value, the rents had been left overdue. Poverty stared the young heir in the face. Margaret, who had partly guessed at the state of things, stood by him, with her strong mind and good common sense, to help him through his calamities.

"There is nothing for it but to let the house. You cannot afford to live in it," she said to him.

"Let Friery! Oh, Margaret!" "It is the only thing to be done, Roy; face it like a man. If you let it well, you will be able to live comfortably as a bachelor in London, and when you marry, you must marry well, and then you will be able to come back to your own again, pay off mortgages, put the farms in repair, and start fresh again. You see how important a good marriage is for you."

"You mean a rich wife. I am afraid that I am not at all likely to restore the fallen fortunes of my family in that way. The only woman whom I could ever have married is lost to me."

"You are not, I suppose, going to remain a bachelor for ever because of a married woman?" cried Margaret, with real irritation. She could not believe it possible that he was still mourning over Kitten Laybourne—there are women to whom a steadfast faithfulness appears in the light of absolute stupidity. Was not Kitten married and safely got out of the way? What on earth possessed the boy to be thinking about her still?

"But, Roy, you are the last—the very last. It is your duty to marry. The baronetcy will become extinct if you do not," cried Margaret in despair.

"Somebody must be last, I suppose, just as somebody else must be first. You are a wonderful woman at counting your chickens, Margaret; but, to begin with, where is the rich wife?"

"There is Felicia." "I am not wicked enough for her," said Roy, with a little smile to himself over sundry speeches of his cousin's which still linger in his memory.

Margaret looked indignant and severe. "I really do not pretend to understand the character and manners of the young ladies of the present day. I am afraid that Felicia is becoming rather reckless in her conversation since her father has left her so much alone."

"Exactly, and I could not marry a person who was reckless, even for her money," laughed the young man.

"Well, there are plenty of rich girls to be picked up in London, and if we must let the Hall, we will go up to town and live there. My own money will enable me to take a small house; and you, of course, will live with me. You will be able then to live comfortably and suitably upon the remnant that can be saved out of the fire, together with the rent of the house. You can have your horse and your brougham, and do everything that is fitting to your position. As to your food, that need never cost you a farthing. Whatever is mine is yours."

They went up to London, and Margaret installed herself and her household goods in a small house in Connaught Square. Here, too, Roy had his own rooms and his own belongings, and he stayed at home as much as he liked, and went away also as much as he felt inclined. Nobody, either, could have said of Sir Roy Grantley that he lived the life of a woe-begone and despairing lover. He had plenty of friends, and his friends took care to make his life pleasant to him.

One afternoon, in the month of May, Roy found himself in a certain tiny drawing room in Mayfair, where, in these days, he was always sure of a cordial welcome. The house altogether was of the most minute dimensions, and was as thoroughly dirty and dingy as "bijou" residences within a stone's throw of Park Lane have a habit of being. The very door, as it was opened by the tall footman, seemed narrower and lower than other people's front doors, and the footman himself, as he preceded the visitor up the narrow wooden staircase, looked too large for the house.

One end of the room was filled completely with a wide, low sofa, across which Eastern embroideries and pieces of Italian brocade—all rather dirty—were flung in careless confusion. At one end of this sofa invariably reclined a black poodle, at the other was his mistress. By Mrs. Talbot's side was a small table, upon which were arranged a hand looking glass set in silver, several bottles of perfumes of different kinds, the poodle's silk bag of French sweetmeats, and the photographs of her pet admirers. To these latter Roy had been lately added in a resplendent new frame of crimson plush.

Gertrude, in her white muslin draperies, lay back among her embroidered

cushions and sniffed at her salts bottle. Felicia, who had found herself a small, low seat on the other side of the little table, had seized upon a Japanese fan and was agitating it violently. Roy, upon a footstool between the two ladies, was made much of by both of them, and seemed to be enjoying himself amazingly.

"Nothing makes one so hot as a fan," said Gertrude. "Do keep that thing still, Felicia; you set all my nerves on edge."

"It is deliciously cool and breezy out of doors," said Felicia. "You ought to go out, Gertrude. I wish I could drive you, but I have promised to call for papa."

"I am going out this very minute in a hansom," said Gertrude, jumping up. "Sir Roy, will you go with me? I am going to pay a call. I am going to see a charming, lovely, delightful little woman. Somebody quite young, quite unsophisticated; better than all, quite new."

"I wouldn't go with her if I were you, Roy," said Felicia, when the door had closed upon their hostess.

"Why not—will it create a scandal if I go in a hansom with the beautiful Gertrude?"

"Don't you know—cannot you guess, Roy, who it is she wants you to call upon? It is Mrs. Desmond."

"Kitten—?" A pause. Felicia would not have lifted her eyes for the world; her glove buttons seemed to give her an infinity of trouble.

"How does she know her?" Roy asked presently, and she could hear that his voice was altered.

"Oh, it is very simple. Gertrude met Mr. Desmond in the park two days ago. I was with her, and he introduced us to his wife, and asked us to call on her."

"I—I would not go if I were you, Roy."

"Did she look—happy?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so; she was very well dressed. You have not got over it, I am afraid."

Mrs. Talbot came back gay and gushing; the hansom was summoned, and Felicia was driven away in her brougham.

"I—I don't think I'll come with you to-day," said the young man hesitatingly when he had helped Gertrude into the hansom.

"Oh, Roy—She dropped the 'Sir' when they were alone—you promised; oh, do come."

"Well, I will go a little way, then, and he got into the cab. "You can drop me, you know."

"To Lowndes square," said Mrs. Talbot. She had no mind to drop Roy anywhere.

And Roy went with her. "I can't help myself," he said to himself; but it was the old story of the moth and the candle.

Brian, on leaving his wife to go out alone, intended to wend his way to his club. Had he gone there straight from his own door, he would have received a certain note which had been waiting for him there all day, three hours earlier, and—so little does it take sometimes to alter the whole history of a man's life—had he done so, it is probable that most of the events which ensued would have so far been changed or modified that they would not have been fraught with certain important circumstances to himself and to others. But as he was strolling idly along he met an old college friend, who hailed him joyfully and linked his arm within his. So that it was just 7 o'clock when he turned leisurely up the steps of his own club.

The hall porter gave him a letter as he entered. He stood with it in his hand without looking at it for several minutes, talking to an acquaintance whom he met in the hall. Then Brian looked down at his letter, turning it round as he did so.

And suddenly he recognized the handwriting! It was years since he had seen it. A whole century of new thoughts and feelings seemed to divide him like a yawning gulf from that other far away life, in which those even rounded characters had played so important a part. It was like an electric shock to Brian Desmond to see it once more—to hold a letter from her once again in his hands.

A letter from Rosamond! An unstamped letter, too—sent not by post, but by hand. What could it mean? He had thought of her vaguely, dimly, as a something dear, yet dangerous to his peace of mind, that was on the other side of the world. She had been to him but a distant memory of a past which was over forever, a something which he had hoped and prayed might never again cross the new life he had built up for himself. Often he had thought of her thus, in misty dreams, thinking that he and she had drifted apart forever, and would meet no more, save in that other world where those who have loved and despaired shall meet again under other conditions, and be perchance at last—happy!

And lo! she was here—at his very doors—in London—alive, and writing to him! He tore open the letter and read: "I have come home, and am longing to see you. I arrived late last night, and am at the Langham Hotel. Come to me as soon as you receive this. I shall not leave the house until I hear from you or see you."

He glanced quickly up at the clock. It was ten minutes past seven. He tore upstairs three steps at a time into the writing room, and wrote two lines to his wife.

"Do not wait dinner for me. I shall not be back."

This he gave to a club messenger to

take to Lowndes Square, and springing into a hansom, drove rapidly away to the Langham Hotel. He had given himself no time to think or reflect. He did not consider whether it was a wise or an unwise thing he was doing. A wild joy possessed him. Rosamond was back, and he was going to see her! He could think of nothing else. After all the long, black, empty years they were to meet again.

She was very tired of the desolate hotel sitting room by this time—tired and weary. She had almost given him up by now.

"He cannot be in town!" she said to herself, in despair. "I wish, now, that I had written before from Alexandria. Does he have his letters forwarded, I wonder—and will he get my note in the course of time? How can I find out?"

All at once her quick ears caught the sound of approaching footsteps along the corridor. She sprang to her feet; her hands, womanlike, went instinctively up to smooth her ruffled hair; her eyes shone, her lips parted and her heart beat. How wildly her heart beat! For he had come at last!

Through a mist she seemed to see him, a mist of her own glad tears. The love of her life, whom she had loved and had forsaken, but to whom her faithful heart had clung, through all absence and time, he stood before her at last! She reached out her hands to him; she felt the strong grip of his as he grasped them, one in each of his. He only spoke her name hoarsely and huskily:

"Rosamond!" And she—she it was who spoke first—who found the words, poor, weak, trembling words—that shook with the greatness of her joy.

"Yes; it is I—Rosamond—come back to you at last—my Brian—my only love—my heart's delight—never, never to be parted from you again. For I am free, and I am yours for ever."

Oh, why—why then did he not clasp her in his arms? Why did he not draw her to his heart, and rain such kisses upon her eager lips as she had dreamed of and thirsted for so long? Why did he stand so, and look upon her with that awful look of deepening horror and woe in his eyes? Why did his cold hands slacken thus their eager hold, and fall away at last, nerveless and helpless from out of hers?

"Brian! Brian!" she cried, with the sharp ring of a nameless terror; "do you not hear me? Do you not understand? I am free!"

"You—are—free?" he repeated slowly and painfully, bringing out each word separately with a sort of labor, as though each one hurt him to utter. "Your—husband—is he dead?"

"Yes, yes—do you not see my clothes? I am a widow. Heaven forgive me if I am too glad, but how can I help my joy, when, from the day that he died, I knew that I might love you once more? I did my duty. I was a good wife to him, but, oh, how I suffered! But now it is all over and I have come back to you, and—Brian! Brian!" she broke out wildly, for still he stood there blanched to the very lips, and stared at her with those horror-stricken eyes. "Are you not glad? Speak to me, for heaven's sake! What is it? Why do you look at me so?"

"When did he die?" was all he said, in a number, dreary voice.

"Eight months ago." And then he flung up both arms wildly, with an exceeding bitter cry of anguish.

"Ah, it was my wedding day!" and fell prostrate before her upon his knees, burying his face in his outstretched arms.

Rosamond spoke never a word. She stood erect and stiff, cold as ice, and motionless as marble; not a word broke the stillness of her agony, save those awful choked sobs from the bowed form at her feet. Afterward she could not recall what she had felt and thought in those first moments—only that in some vague fashion Fate was revenged upon her. Once long ago she had ruined this man's life, and now—now it was he who ruined hers!

(To be continued.)

Counting the Buttons.

"Yes," said the tailor, "Councilman Crookit ordered a four-button cutaway, but he changed it to a three-button."

"Is the three-button more stylish?" asked the other.

"Oh, no. But as he was going out he saw some children on my doorstep playing that old game, 'Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief.'—Philadelphia Press.

Logical Deduction.

"Ah, my friend," said the passenger with the unbarbered hair, "what can be more delicious than clear, cold water in the early morn, fresh from the pump."

"Water," rejoined the hardware drummer, "is certainly a good thing. By the way, are you in the milk business?"

Caution.

Bill—Why didn't the author of the piece come out and show himself when the audience called for him?

Jill—Well, you see, he'd just been getting married, and he's got light eyes. If he went home with black eyes, he was afraid his wife wouldn't know him.—Yonkers Statesman.

One Woman's Wisdom.

"Alas!" groaned the discouraged husband. "I am unable to find work, and there isn't a thing in the house to eat. What are we to do?"

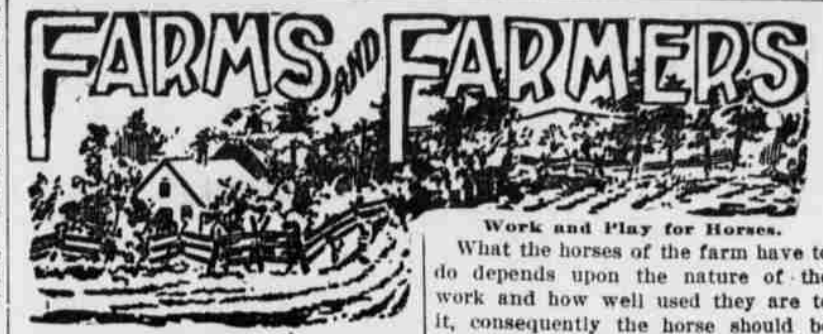
"Oh, I know!" exclaimed his wife, who had a short-order inspiration. "We'll take in boarders."

His Real Love.

Eva—The count is going to marry the Montana heiress.

Edna (in surprise)—For the love of goodness!

Eva—No, for the love of money.



Work and Play for Horses.

What the horses of the farm have to do depends upon the nature of the work and how well used they are to it, consequently the horse should be treated accordingly. If the horses have heavy spring plowing to do, with more or less road work in the summer, then harvesting and more plowing in the fall, and it is intended to use them for heavy drafting in the winter, it will pay to divide the work in some way so that they will have a little chance for rest. The argument that rainy days and Sundays are sufficient for the animals does not hold good in all cases. In our experience we find it pays to have reasonably short hours for the horses, and not to give them driving every day there happens to be a little lull in the work of the farm. We feed strictly in accordance with the work to be done, and contrive, in some way, so that every horse will have a turn at the pasture, even though it be only an hour or two at night. It is not a good plan to attempt to carry the horses through from year to year without the pasture. Green food cut and placed in the manger is not the same. The open air, the freedom from the harness, the yielding of the soft turf and the biting of the grass are essential to horses, and it pays to let them have a spell at it.

Feed Bag for Animals.

The driver of every team should be supplied with a bag of some kind for holding feed for his horses, as he seldom is sure where he will be when feeding time comes. Some drivers are very careful in this respect, while others make use of anything that is available. Quite a large number of feed bags are in use, the majority being constructed so that they can be attached and suspended to the side of the horse's head. This does not give the horse any freedom to move his head without moving the bag also. A Philadelphia man has patented an exceedingly simple feed bag which overcomes this fault, an illustration of which is shown here. The bottom and sides are made of canvas or other flexible material, while the top consists of a circular frame divided into two sections, which are connected by small loops. Supporting the bag are two metal rods, one on each side, having hooks at the end which fit into the loops in the frame. In the center and at the other end of the rods are circular loops which are shaped to fit over the shaft of the vehicle. It can easily be seen how easily this could be done, the bag always remaining in position where the horse could conveniently reach the feed, at the same time being able to move his head freely. This feed bag has the additional advantage that it can be folded up when not in use.



FEED BAG.

A Barrel Feed Rack.

An ideal way of feeding a few sheep or calves is to take a large barrel, such as crackers are packed in, and cut out openings in the staves between the two layers of hoops, making these openings just large enough so that the animal can get its head in and out readily. Place the barrel in position and hold it in place by driving several stakes into the ground and fastening them to the barrel. Of course the top of the barrel is open. The hay or oth-

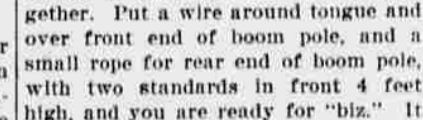


er roughage is thrown in the top and the animals eat through the holes cut in the staves as described. This is a simple feeding rack, which any one could make and one which will save much waste of roughage. The illustration shows the idea so clearly that no further explanation is needed.—Indianapolis News.

Fodder-Hauling Sled.

Take two scantlings, 24x4 inches, 10 feet long; dress top of scantling off to fit under side of second bench of sled

with notch to fit over rear bench, to give right slant to scantlings. Nail a board on top of scantlings to hold them together. Put a wire around tongue and over front end of boom pole, and a small rope for rear end of boom pole, with two standards in front 4 feet high, and you are ready for "biz." It is much handier than a wagon for one man to haul on, and he can haul a third more at a load with it than without the attachment. It can be set off when desired.



Hog Hints.

It does not take either very much money or very much time to keep the porkers right.

It is taken for granted that they get enough to eat, because every farmer knows what it means to feed right, but feeding is not the whole thing.

It is, of course, the most important factor in hog life, but very close to it comes the dry house and good, clean bedding.

It is too common a conclusion that anything will do for the hogs and that they will wax fat under any conditions and with all sorts of feed.

Hogs, although apparently strong, are very susceptible to sudden changes in the weather and once they take cold fall easy victims to lung troubles, which often result fatally, and then when hog meat means money there are no hogs to sell.

In the Dairy.

The cow knows by instinct what feed ration suits her best.

Every cow in the dairy barn should have a window to herself.

Dairyman, study your cows and then yourself and see if you are fitted to take care of them.

Swinging stanchions are comfortable, not expensive and do not obstruct the interior of the stable.

Cement floors cost more at first, but their permanency makes them cheap.

From 62 to 64 degrees is about the proper temperature for the rinse water in winter butter-making.

If you have raised and put by lots of feed the cows will take care of it, and incidentally of you.

If the dairy floor is cement, plenty of bedding must be used so that the cow's udder may not touch the floor.

When you go out to buy cows this fall don't buy the first one you see. Look around and see if you can't find a better one.