

It is with the destiny of the House of Alard, and the lives of its members, that the story deals. Sir John, autocratic, irascible, tyrannical, still possessed with the duty of maintaining the dignity of his House; of retrieving its ill fortunes, primarily through a wealthy marriage for his heir.

Peter, the heir, loved the land, and desired nothing better than to settle upon it in the capacity of agent and pull things together, but his affections were involved with the daughter of the village doctor. The struggle between his love for her and his family pride is graphically told; eventually the land triumphed for the time being, his decision being no doubt influenced by the failure of the marriage of his sister Mary with the man she loved, who ultimately was able to obtain a divorce from his quite innocent wife, owing to her extremely indiscreet behaviour.

Peter decided—probably quite rightly—to “stand by the land,” for his affections were evidently not so deep as his passion for his patrimony, since he shortly afterwards fell in love with and married a wealthy wife of Hebrew extraction who ultimately failed to satisfy him. He came in due time to realise that his choice was a fatal mistake, especially when she presented him with a daughter instead of with the ardently desired son.

One member after another sacrificed personal happiness to the family, and the family honour. The relentless struggle between the two is graphically developed by the inimitable pen of the author. The only one of the brothers who found freedom was Gervase, who went into an engineering business in preference to keeping his terms at Oxford.

There is a scene where Mary, tortured beyond endurance to contract a loveless marriage with the honourable man with whom her name has been associated, breaks free.

“It seems to me it would be much better if I went right away. I’ve made a hideous mess of my life, and brought trouble upon you all—I acknowledge that; but there’s one thing I will not do, and that is walk with my eyes open into the trap I walked into ten years ago with my eyes shut.”

Gervase swung her trunk upon his shoulder.

“As he did so, and Mary saw his hands with their broken nails and the grime of the shop worked into the skin, she realised that they symbolised a freedom which was more actual than any she had made. Gervase was the only one of the family who was really free, though he worked ten hours a day for ten shillings a week. Doris was not free for she had accepted the position of idle daughter, and was bound by all the ropes of a convention which had no substance in fact. Peter was not free, because he had, Mary knew, married away from his real choice, and was now bound to justify his new choice to his heart. George was not free; he was least free of all, because individual members of the family had power over him as well as the collective fetish. Jenny was not free, because she must

love according to opportunity. Slaves—all the Alards were slaves—to Alard, to the convention of the old county family, with its prosperity of income, and acres, its house, its servants, its ancient name and reputation—a convention the foundations of which were rotten right through; which was bound to topple over sooner or later crushing all those who tried to shelter under it. So far, only two had broken away, herself and Gervase—herself so feebly, so painfully, in such haste and humiliation; he so calmly and carelessly and sufficiently.

Ultimately Jenny also breaks away and finds happiness in her marriage with a prosperous yeoman farmer.

George, the Vicar of Leasan, died suddenly, and when Peter died, shot through the head, Gervase the youngest son, who had by that time joined a Religious Community, came into the title. He cut the Gordian knot by selling the estate.

“I wish I was dead,” cried Doris. “First father—then everything else. . . . I’ve nothing to live for now!”

“Why, you’ve got me,” said Lady Alard; you’ll come with me, Doris. I think I shall go to Worthing—it’s more bracing than the coast here. Gervase, do you think the dining-room sideboard would fit into a smaller house?”

“Oh, father,” sobbed Doris. “Oh, Peter! . . . What would you have done if you had known how it was going to end?”

P. G. Y.

#### THE MONTHS, OCTOBER.

Now spread afar are signals of farewell,  
A colour pageant that can only mean  
The flare before the dark, ere you shall swell  
The ghostly ranks that claim All Hallow e’en.  
But ere you go, while swift the hour-glass runs,  
There’s vintage time, and brewing of strong ale!  
And men (and women too) with snap of guns  
Set echo answering from vale to vale.

P.S.—

Night falls, October, and your chilly breeze  
Sweeps over haunts that day has left forlorn,  
Through coverts full of vacant roosting trees  
And frightened things that mourn.

C. B. M.

#### LEGAL MATTERS.

LONDON NURSE’S FREE TRIP TO AUSTRALIA.

“It is clear that the woman married the petitioner simply to get a free passage to Australia,” said Mr. Justice Mann, in granting a decree nisi at Melbourne for the dissolution of the marriage of Ralph James Clark, aged 31 years, of St. George’s Road, Northcote, and Elizabeth Margaret Clark, aged 28 years, on the ground of desertion.

The marriage took place on October 16th, 1918.

Clark said that at the time of the marriage he was in the Army, and his wife was undergoing a course of nursing at the Rotherhithe Infirmary, London.

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