

THE LOVE OF ALISON BARNARD

BY MARINE TYNAN

The Handsome Branded, &c.

CHAPTER XXIV

Miss Rodney lingered in the castle...

She was always glad to see the ladies...

She found Sister Veronica unexpectedly cheerful...

She asked anxiously, her imagination and her heart alike had been impressed...

"I am so glad," Alison forgot the time when she had said that the Carmelite vocation was her young'st...

There were two sharp little strokes of an unseen bell...

That she was about to hear? That the children of the French wife lived? Why, if that was so, she was free of Castle Barnard...

She started to find Sister Veronica beside her. "The postulants have come, Reverend Mother," she said.

"Ah! I must go to welcome them. But while I am absent, Veronica, I want you to tell Miss Barnard the whole story of the gentleman who came to purchase the vestments...

"Why, I think," said Alison, in a bewildered manner, "that they must be the children of the French lady."

"I am so glad," Alison forgot the time when she had said that the Carmelite vocation was her young'st...

"The children came from a congenial home; she has run away from an unhappy marriage...

new daughter is a widow who has lost her husband and little child. For such as her the convent is full of healing. Has Veronica told you?"

CHAPTER XXV

The Lawful Heirs. When Alison reached home there were yet some hours before the carriage was to meet the train from Cork...

Her steward awaited her on some business connected with the purchase of some cattle. She tried to give her mind to the matter, hearing in a far-off way how the grass was springing so fast in the fields...

It was the hour when the servants were at tea downstairs, the green baize door which shut off the staircase to the kitchen being discreetly closed...

"That proud back will have to bend," she said, "if it is to get into the cottage. There won't be any room for pride there at all."

The upper regions of the house were quite deserted at this hour. She wandered about it like a ghost, in and out of the beautiful rooms, up and down the wood-paneled corridors...

"A year ago it would have broken my heart, Bran," she said. "To-day I am hardly grieved."

house to Paul and Tessa. Alison was minded to be clear of Castle Barnard. Her real life would begin over there at Kylinee, where there was no shadow in the bare, bright, faded rooms...

At the thought of her father Alison's head went up. "I am the child of my father's repentance," Anthony Barnard had said. She remembered the immortal tranquility of her father's gaze...

As she thought of it the evening sun flooded the western rooms of Castle Barnard with a transfiguration of light. It was like an omen for the future, when the shadow that had lurked in every corner of the house for her sensitive soul, should have passed away for ever...

"I wish to dress now, Justine," she said, "as I shall be busy just before dinner."

"Mademoiselle looks young tonight," Justine said, with an air of apology. She had twined a blue ribbon through the soft, fair coil of hair...

"You have had a good day?" she said. "Ask Tessa," answered Mr. Peter. "You have been smiling her as usual, buying her pretty things to her heart's content."

(To be Continued)

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