Hollow Ash... Hall

BY MARGARET BLOUNT

CHAPTER XX

The stranger ceased to speak, and Mr. Cowley stared at him with much bewilderment.

"How did you know all this?" he asked at last.

"Because I am Stanley Vernon, the only brother of that unhappy man," he said, quietly.

Rose uttered a little cry of astonishment.

"Yes, it is true," this shamefaced family history made me almost forget my name. I have borne that name for many years. Until that time I met and loved your daughter, I had no other. I shall look on you for her sake."

"But for the present let it be my task to keep up this mystery."

"I came home from Italy as soon as I heard that the boy was left. It was a mistake upon the part of the agent, but I thought the child was dead. I traced it. But I was then very much against a public avowal. The publication would have been most painful to Mr. Cowley, and I knew that Mrs. Vernon would follow my lead."

"Then it was because of Mr. Cowley that you kept silence?"

"I feared the publicity for his sake. But I am not afraid now. I have proofs, and I am ready to face the world."

"Then, Mr. Vernon, you will claim your own name and your own child?" said Mr. Cowley.

"I shall claim her from you, as I could claim her from any one else. I could wait for that happy moment for all the years I have waited, but I could not wait patiently when I knew that another was reaping the harvest of my sowing. Now that I have found her, I claim her as my own."

"Then I must tell you that I have already given my consent to her marriage with Mr. Cowley," said Rose, with dignity.

"Then I must withdraw my consent," said Mr. Vernon, with a smile.

"Then I must withdraw