

# ASPHODEL

A NOVEL

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ETC. ETC.

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LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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# ASPHODEL.

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## CHAPTER I.

“AY FLETH THE TIME, IT WOL NO MAN ABIDE.”

NEARLY six months had gone since that wintry parting, when the lovers clasped hands and blessed each other under the sign of Aries; and now it was midsummer, and all the fields were green, and the limes were breaking into blossom, and the hawthorn-flower was dead, and the last of the blue-bells had faded, and all the white orchard-blooms, the tender loveliness of spring, belonged to the past; for the beauty of earth and nature is a thing of perpetual change, so closely allied with death that in every rapture there is the beginning of a regret.

Gerald Goring had returned, not quite so soon as he had promised beside the winter hearth, but in time to offer birthday greetings to Lina, and to assist in those legal preparations and argumentations

which preceded the marriage settlement; in this case a formidable document, involving large interests, and full of consideration for children and grandchildren yet unborn; for daughters dying unmarried, or requiring to be dowered for marriage; for sons who might have to make marriage settlements of their own. There was to be a complete family history, but hypothetically, in Miss Lawford's marriage settlement.

Vainly had Lina tried to dower her sister with half, or at least some portion of her own wealth. Daphne obstinately refused to accept any such boon; and Edgar as obstinately sustained her in her determination.

"I won't accept a penny," said she.

"I don't want a halfpenny with her," said he; a refusal which Mrs. Turchill considered supreme folly on the part of son and daughter-in-law; for what improvements might have been made at Hawksyard with a few spare thousands, whereas her son's income, though ample for all the needs and comforts of this life, left no margin for building.

"Why should not Daphne have a range of hot-houses like those Mr. Goring has built for her sister?" argued Mrs. Turchill. "Or why should not you rebuild the stables, which are dreadfully old-fashioned?"

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"I would not change the dear old fashion for worlds, mother, now that I have made every sanitary improvement," answered Edgar; "least of all would I improve Hawksyard into a modern house with Goring's money."

"But it is not Mr. Goring's money that is offered; it is Miss Lawford's."

"That is the same thing. The loss would be his. Don't talk any more about it, mother; Daphne and I have made up our minds."

This was decisive; for Mrs. Turchill knew that Daphne's word was Edgar's law. She was reconciled to the idea of the marriage, but in her confidences with Rebecca, she could not help talking of her son's attachment as an infatuation.

Gerald had come back considerably improved in health and spirits by his Canadian and Hudson's Bay adventures. He had crossed the Turtle Mountain, and the arid plains beyond, and from the crest of one of the Sweet Grass Hills had seen the rugged and snowy outline of the Rockies, standing out in full relief against the western skyline. He had shot a bear or two, and had some experience of wolves. He had eaten pemmican, and ridden a woolly horse; he had slept at a Hudson's Bay station, and had passed a night or two half-frozen and wholly awake, under canvas. Variety and adventure had done