

AN ORDINARY ALRESFORD MAN

by Rosalind Wade.

While on my walks I am companioned
By phantom figures from the famous past.
Beside the still sheen of the frozen pond
A mare carries the boisterous doctor,¹
With his frail daughter murmuring ballads.
Behind them. Thomas rides, their humble groom:
He does not dream of wealth or borrowed power,
But warmth beneath the thatch and rabbit stew.
So it is Tom I pause to greet,
For on my way I want to meet
An ordinary Alresford man.
Out of declining winter comes the Spring.
Then are the buried lanes alive with sound;
Not only of the mating cuckoos call,
But fighting-men contesting for the ground
On which the church and Tudor rectory stand,
The sky glows with the blood of burning books,
The scholar-cleric² flees, disguised in clothes
Loaned by his clerk, the fulling miller's son.
I might learn more of this retreat
If at the lych gate I should meet
That ordinary Alresford man.
Bring forth the cannon. Let the gunfire boom,
The flag is hoisted; yet the sailor lord³
Sees through the spray a park of noble trees
Burnished by autumn. While the battle, sways
His bailiff tends the land and keeps the fox
At bay. And once through ring of steel on stone
The planner-bishop⁴ watched his legions toil.
He knew them not by name, yet they were men....
So resting on the churchyard seat"
Out of the past I'll hope to meet
One ordinary Alresford man.

Rosalind Wade

1. Dr. George Mitford
2. Dr., Peter Heylin
3. Admiral Lord Rodney
4. Bishop Godfrey de Lucy