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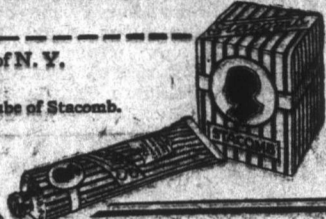
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**At the Mouth of the Treacherous Pit**

STORY OF LOVE, INTRIGUE AND REVENGE

CHAPTER IX.

Her hand lingered in his; the beautiful face was upraised to his; the dark eyes and fresh, sweet lips invited a caress; but he was resolved that there should never be anything more than friendship between them. He did not touch with his lips either the white brow or the white hand.

"Good-by, Lola," he said. "I will see you safely into your carriage."

But as the girl still held his hands tightly clasped in her own, he saw that tears were falling down her face.

"It is no pain for you to part with me," she said. "To me it is more bitter than death."

"Nay, not that, Lola."

"Yes, and more than that. You do not know, you do not understand! Do you think if the pain had not been more than I could bear, that I should have come here to see you, have risked so much and dared so much to spend those last minutes with you? If I could tell you all that is passing in my heart now, you would not go away."

"I must go in any case, Lola," he said, firmly. "Now let me see you to your carriage. I am afraid it will be dark before you reach home."

She lingered with him as long as she could; the arrangement of the rugs and wrappers afforded an excuse for keeping him by her side. It was so sweet and pleasant to her that he should interest himself in her comfort. Then the groom took his place, and there was no further excuse for delay.

"Good-by, once more," she said.

The little ponies started off, and she had seen the last of him.

"He will be mine yet," she soliloquized. "I shall win him. How many a heart is caught in the rebound! Who was it that he loved, and loved in vain? I wish I had been in that woman's place. How I love him and how foolish I am! Yet I will win him, if love and patience can do it. People laugh at love and think it weakness or a girl's sentimental folly. Why, it is the strongest of human passions."

When she came to think over her interview with him, she was not dis-

satisfied. She felt a certain hope that when he returned it would be to her. She smiled at her own beautiful image in the glass.

"I must not repine or be dull while he is away," she said to herself. "When he returns he must find my beauty fresh and undimmed. When he returns! Ah, Heaven is good, and he will not be long away from me!"

CHAPTER X.

Sir Karl Allanmore had gone, leaving Scargdale to the care of servants, and the one topic of conversation in the county now was the wedding at White Cliffe. Lord Rhyworth had made great preparations at Deeping Hurst. A beautiful suite of rooms had been redecorated and refurbished for his young wife, containing everything that taste could suggest and money furnish.

The day fixed for the wedding came at last—a fine, bright day, near the close of autumn. The little church at Deeping was prettily decorated for the occasion, and the school children were there with flowers to throw before the bride.

The Squire, in the pride of his heart, had invited almost more guests than White Cliffe could accommodate. The elite of the county were present at the ceremony. The bridesmaids wore costumes of cream-color and pale blue, and were remarkable for their beauty. The Squire, erect and handsome, seemed to have grown twenty years younger—so all declared; the bridegroom's appearance was high-bred and aristocratic; but the bride attracted the most attention. Dolores had never looked so lovely. The fair, flower-like face was not rosy with blushes; it was pale, with a calm, steadfast expression; the violet eyes did not droop, nor did her voice falter when the solemn words were uttered which bound her heart, life, and love, to another.

After the wedding-breakfast, Lord and Lady Rhyworth departed for Deerhurst Manor for their honeymoon. Lady Fielden kindly consented to remain at White Cliffe to superintend the hall which the Squire intended to give in honor of the event.

Lola had acted as chief bridesmaid.

and on her dark face there was a look of triumph. All was safe now that Dolores was married; there would be no likelihood that Sir Karl would let his thoughts wander in that direction again. She had spoken a few words to Dolores before she started for Deerhurst.

"It has been a pretty wedding, Dolores," she said, as she followed her to her room to bid her farewell. "Indeed I may say more than that. I have never seen a more beautiful one. I shall tell Sir Karl all about it when I write." She wished to let Lady Rhyworth know that she corresponded with Sir Karl. "He will be greatly interested in it," she continued.

But no crimson flush of pain or embarrassment rose to her friend's face—only a calm, sweet smile; and Dolores' fervent protest dismissed Lola.

"I am sure he will."

Still Lola was not quite satisfied. She kissed the fair face, and said— "I hope you will be happy, Dolores. I never thought you would be married first. It is stealing a march on me; but I will forgive you. You must not be surprised if you hear of a marriage when Sir Karl returns."

She had the satisfaction then of seeing the sweet face glow pale; and, with a kiss, Lola withdrew.

To the day of her death Dolores remembered the close of her wedding—the chiming of the bells at Deeping, the cheers of the crowd, the hall of the old house lined with friends and servants, the pretty group of bridesmaids, with Lola prominent among them, the white head of her father, the shower of old slippers and rice, the dear, happy home she was leaving forever. She recalled it all through a mist of tears—tears which her husband kissed away.

"You shall never regret it, Dolores, my darling," he said. "This shall be the beginning of a new and happy life."

And it was a happy life. When the honeymoon was over, Lady Rhyworth decided to go abroad as her husband suggested, and they came back to Deeping Hurst. There was a series of brilliant wedding festivities, to which half the county were invited; and Lord Rhyworth, in his anxiety to please his young wife, pressed her to invite Lola de Ferras to remain at Deeping Hurst until they were ended.

"You would like a young companion, Dolores," he said, "and I was much struck with the high spirit and vivacity of Miss de Ferras."

He little guessed how his young wife in her heart longed for rest and peace—nothing more. Her husband's wish was however law to her, and she never, even in thought, rebelled against it. He wished her to invite Lola; she did so at once; and the beautiful French girl was only too pleased to accept the invitation.

"May and December," she said to herself. "May finds herself lonely, and December would rather have me there to amuse her than intrude; that task to a fine jeune homme. I go to Deeping Hurst in a kind of missionary capacity."

Lola never heard a word of disagreement between husband and wife. There was never the least coolness. On one side were devoted attention and lavish love; on the other was cheerful obedience.

"It is not my notion of a married life," thought Lola. "I should feel compelled to quarrel with my husband at times, just for the pleasure of making it up."

Lola thoroughly enjoyed her visit to Deeping Hurst; and perhaps what she enjoyed most was having the opportunity of talking to Lady Rhyworth about Sir Karl. She revealed in it. She liked to watch the lovely face as she recounted all the different interviews she had had with him, and all what she was pleased to call his protestations to her. Lady Rhyworth listened in silence; the time was coming when she would know all.

(To be continued.)

**The Man You Didn't Marry**

WIVES WHO DREAM OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

A girl has two suitors, one of whom comes up to her ideal, while the other, fresh her fancy. One man is upright, thrifty, and industrious, the type of man who makes a kind and generous husband, while the other is a good-looking, idle, shiftless never-do-well. The girl wanted to know (writes Dorothy Dix) if I think she will be happy if she marries the one who is the good

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catch instead of the one she prefers. Frankly, I think not. It is dangerous for a woman to marry one man when she craves for another, because it gives too much scope to her imagination.

The "other man" is a lay figure about which she can drape all the dreams and romances and unsatisfied yearnings of her nature. She endows him with impossible perfections. And, needless to say, any husband cuts a very poor figure beside this ideal with whom he is continually being secretly compared.

Things Dreamers Forget. Blessings brighter as they fade, especially matrimonial ones, and the man a woman did not marry has an attraction for her that the man she did marry does not possess. She does not have to live with him. She does not come in contact with his faults and shortcomings. She does not have to overlook his annoying peculiarities and habits, and so she can idealize him and picture marriage with him as a grand sweet sort of domestic bliss.

She has nothing to wake her out of her dream, as she has when she deals with an everyday man in an everyday world, where both men and women have tempers and nerves and selfishness and clashing wills and temperaments. And the woman forgets that there would have been all of these elements of discord, multiplied a hundred times, if she had married a man who probably had all of her husband's faults and lacked his virtues.

But the woman brushes these facts aside as she reflects despairingly upon what life might have been if she had married the man she didn't marry.

She is sure, for one thing, that the man she didn't marry would never have been grumpy and unreasonable. He would never have to be wheedled and cajoled into doing the things he should do, and leaving undone those he should not do. He would never bury himself in the paper of an evening and merely grunt when spoken to.

On the contrary, he would always be a ray of sunshine in the house. He would save his most entertaining conversation for home consumption, and after a hard day's work at the office he would just love to take his wife out to dine or dance.

Life would be so different, she believes, if she had married the man she didn't marry, and she turns the thought of it over and over in her mind, until she forgets that it is all a dream.

Perhaps most women have this sort of Castle in Spain to which they flee when the cares of domestic life bear too heavily upon them, and it is a harmless enough diversion when the man they didn't marry is nothing but a vague ideal of their desires.

But when there is some particular man that a woman cared for more than she did for the man she married, it is another story. Then she is apt to fall more deeply in love with him after marriage than she was before, just because she is never disillusioned about him.

The only perfect husband is the man you did not marry!

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