

The Dollar Bride

By MARY IMLAY TAYLOR
Autocaster Service, New York.

THIRD INSTALLMENT

It was still in the room. The yellow light flared low in the lamp on the table. There lay the newspaper as it had dropped the night before, and her mother's work-basket was overturned by the hearth. Roddy had knocked it down when he sprang at his father.

Roddy was going to jail! Nancy gasped. On a chair were her furs, her hat and her gloves, just as she had tossed them. She drew a long breath, averting her eyes from her father's gray face and went to the chair. Swiftly and stealthily she put on her hat, her furs, and her gloves. Then she stole out into the hall, dropped the chain-bolt, opened the front door, and slipped silently out of the still house.

It was broad daylight outside now; the morning air touched her hot face gratefully like cold clear water. It was February and the pussy-willows swung over her head. At her feet some yellow crocuses shot up, just opening little yellow eyes in the grass like the yellow eyes of Roddy's steers. Nancy stamped her foot on the ground, it was that woman who had done it. She knew it with the unerring jealous second sight of a woman. It wasn't Wall Street, it wasn't curb-brokers, it wasn't gambling, it was that woman with the fascinating eyes; she wanted money and she had made a boy steal it for her!

Nancy opened the gate and walked rapidly down the street, never looking back. Sunrise made the flagstones white between the new green of the grass; keen little blades of it thrust up through

the new brown earth and gleamed in the sun like metal. The red maple buds were like a scarlet haze. There was Major Lomax's house, the little one standing back. Nancy walked faster; if she did not hurry she would never do it. There was the low, black iron gate—it was ajar, too, waiting for her! She drew her breath, opened it wider and went in.

She went up the steps, lifted the old brass knocker, let it fall with a clang and started, trembling, to run away again. But she was only just down the steps when the door opened wide and Richard Morgan stood there, looking at her.

He was not very tall, but so loosely built and lean that he looked taller. There was a white band on his forehead, above the tan of his lean face, and his eyes held you. Strange eyes, brown with green lights glistening in still brown pools.

Nancy put her hand out and laid it on the tall stem of one of his young trees. "I—I came to see you, Richard."

He came down the steps, holding out his hand. "Won't you come in then, Nancy?"

She breathed hard, her knees were shaking under her. She could never do it—never!

"I've got to come in, Richard," she said weakly.

He had her hand now and led her up the steps. Three times already he had asked her to marry him, and the last time she had tried to be rude to him, tried purposely, to stop him. They both remembered; she saw it in

his face, and he was blue about it; he did not look into her eyes just then. He took her into the library. It was big and square and friendly, and the books lined it richly. A log had just been kindled on the brass andirons; in a bowl on the table were some snowdrops and pussy-willows. A tight pain clutched at Nancy's heart. Like the closing of a vise. She saw Page Roemer's face as plainly as if he stood there, speaking to her. Then she heard Richard's voice.

"Sit down, Nancy. Here's mother's favorite chair. I'll let you have it."

His mother had been one of the rich Kentucky Wealthierills; she had brought her fortune to the little old town and made it wonder over her resources and Dr. Henry Morgan's luck. Her death two years ago had left all the money to her only son, Dr. Henry hadn't any to leave, but he had left a practice and a good name; Richard had those, too. It was called the Morgan luck.

Richard pushed his mother's big winged arm-chair forward now for Nancy. As he did it, the clock on the mantle struck six.

Nancy started. "What can you think of me? I know you haven't breakfasted—I had to come!" She had not accepted the chair, she stood by the fire, pulling at her gloves. She was shaking from head to foot with an ache of fear.

"I had to come, Richard!"

"Yes?" his voice was low, "what is it, Nancy?"

She did not answer; she averted her face, and he saw her delicate chin trembling. A pang of bitterness shot through him; he knew well enough why his love for her had never reached her, she cared about that Roemer boy. But she was here, at his hearthstone now, and he could let his eyes rest on her. He saw her as no one else in the world could see her, he thought. How little she was, and delicate; he could crush her body up against his with one arm! Her little head, too, was so defiant, and the round trembling chin and the white throat. He could see it move and quiver as she breathed. The exquisite turn of the cheek, the little ear and the lovely glossy hair. How dear she was. He drew a deep breath and she looked up sharply, met the passion in his eyes and shrank. She shrank so visibly that it pained him again. He thrust the chair nearer.

"Sit down, Nancy," his voice sounded harsh and unnatural.

This time she sank into the chair, a little huddled figure, her head down.

"I don't know how to begin, Richard!"

He became aware suddenly of her anguish. He held himself in check with a strong hand. "Are you in trouble, Nancy?"

"Yes."

He went over to the mantel and stretched his arms along it, steadying his fingers on the edge. He had the long thin fingers of the artist and the poet, but his hand had strength and power, too. It was the hand of a surgeon. He was watching her with his strange eyes, but he was not helping her.

"Richard, I tried to be rude to you—you know—last time—"

"Last time I asked you to marry me," he said quietly; "yes."

She caught her breath. He was not bitter, but there was something in him that was like granite. There was power in his look, too, it frightened her; he seemed to have himself so well in hand, and yet—she began to feel that his love must be a power; she had always been afraid of it, she knew it now! She cast a frightened look toward the door. Could she get away?

Then suddenly she saw her father's bent gray head and his white face, his mouth hanging open—as if he had died as he slept in the chair by the hearth; he would look that way when he was dead, she was sure of it! She tried to raise her eyes, but her lids seemed to weigh them down. They traveled along the dull blue rug to the fireplace, they reached his feet, and then slowly—up, up to his narrow prominent chin, his tight mouth, his nose—it wasn't quite straight—his green-brown eyes! She started and the blood went up from throat to brow, her own eyes quivered and fell, she gasped.

"I've come to take it back," she whispered. She could not speak loud.

"What do you mean, Nancy Virginia?"

She twisted her hands in her lap. Her gloves had fallen on the floor at her feet. She couldn't raise her eyes at all.

"I mean my rudeness to you, then. I—I take it back."

He caught his breath. "Nancy, you can't mean—?"

She straightened herself, clutching at the arms of the big chair. Her dry lips moved but muttered nothing. Then with a frightened effort, she dragged it out, tumbling her words together.

"I've come to you for help—I'm in awful trouble, I've got to borrow money—borrow it today, too! A great deal of money—I've come to ask you to lend me fifteen thousand dollars, Richard."

His eyes held hers now against her will. She did not know what he thought; she felt humiliation, it beat down on her like rain.

"It's a great deal to borrow," she faltered weakly, childishly, "but I've got to have it—today! Richard, can you lend it to me now?"

He seemed to answer with an effort, but his voice had a strange thrill in it. "I'd do anything for you, Nancy—you know that, surely! I'd give you all I've got if I could—if you'd let me!"

She raised her eyes slowly, reluctantly, and met his again. There was a glow in his, as if some hidden fire had leaped up in there like a flame. The sight of it set her heart beating wildly again.

"I want to borrow it, Richard," she said hoarsely. "I'll—return it, I'll—I'll give you a pledge for its return."

He started and changed color. "What did you say, Nancy?"

She rose, trembling, and stood, holding him off with her wide frightened eyes, her very lips, white.

"I even pledge myself—I'll marry you, Richard."

Silence followed, a silence so thick and tangible that it pressed down on Nancy's shaken nerves until she wanted to scream. Her heart began to beat against her side, the throbs were like the heavy strokes of a hammer on an anvil.

"Did you mean that, Nancy?"

"Yes."

"You'll marry me?" He drew nearer. She could feel his passion for her, it shook him so she recoiled, sinking again into his mother's chair, hiding her face from him.

"Yes, I—I said so," she faltered in a broken voice. "I meant it, Richard."

He threw himself on one knee beside her chair; she felt his arms around her. "When, Nancy, when?" His arms trembled.

She lifted her head and looked at him, her blue eyes still wide with fear. "On Monday—in Washington."

He held her, his strong arms like a thing of iron about her; she felt as if they pressed into her heart, and yet there was a quiver in them; the thrill of his own heart-beats shook them. But his eyes were searching her. She tried to turn them away but she could not, he had a power in his that seemed to hypnotize her. But she saw the flush on his face die out and leave him white.

"God!" he whispered. "I can't lose her—my wife! Nancy—I've raised one hand to her shoulder, touching her white throat; I'll give my immortal soul to know—that moment you loved me!"

She writhed, dragging herself away from his touch. The very act, hysterical as she was, betrayed her. She hated his touch. He caught his breath, releasing her and rising slowly to his feet. He stood looking down at her.

"You don't love me, Nancy," he said bitterly, "and it's madness, I know it—but I'll make you—I'll risk it; I'll marry you on your own terms, I—"

He drew nearer again, looking down at her. "I'm taking you at your word, Nancy; you'll marry me on Monday—anywhere on God's earth—say the word and I'll be there!"

She was glad that he had let her go; she could breathe now and she remembered. She had to save Roddy—she had to save the Gordon family honor.

"On Monday, Richard."

He caught her hands in his, drawing her impetuously toward him again. His deep eyes kindled but she shrank, shivering.

"It's a gamble, Nancy, but I'll

do it—I'll make you love me!" He lifted her hands and kissed them passionately, first one then the other. "Don't be afraid of me," he felt, then, "staring, I'll do anything for you—you want to borrow money? Listen, Nancy, I know you must have some great need of it, but I shall never ask you, never! You can tell me when you're ready, but I shall never ask you one word about it, never question you. I'm going to take you at your word though, and marry you on Monday—because I'll make you love me, I swear I will! It's Monday then in Washington!"

His voice was low still, but it

NOTICE OF SALE OF LAND
Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust executed by R. E. Key and wife, Bessie Key, dated July 28, 1927, and recorded in Book 148, Page 70, in the office of the Register of Deeds for Wilkes County, North Carolina, default having been made in the payment of the indebtedness thereby secured, and demand having been made for sale, the undersigned Trustee will sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, at the Courthouse door in Wilkesboro, N. C., at twelve o'clock noon, on the 27th day of February, 1934, the following described property, located in Wilkes county, North Carolina, in Edwards Township.

Adjoining the lands of R. J. Settle, J. M. Vanhoy, J. B. Blackburn and Ardle Settle, and lying on the North side of Tucker road about 1-2 miles westerly of the road from Trapphill to Elkin, and about 6 miles northwesterly from Elkin, and bounded as follows: Beginning on a white oak stump on the north side of Tucker road, J. B. Blackburn's corner, runs with the Tucker Road northwesterly 111 poles to Little Creek, J. B. Blackburn and R. E. Key's corner; thence with the Little Elkin Creek northwestwardly and northerly 71 poles to a stake on the east bank of Little Elkin Creek, R. J. Settle's and R. E. Key's corner; thence with R. J. Settle's line West 30 poles to a crab apple tree; south 2 deg. west 30 poles to a stake; north 87 1-2 deg. west 66 1-2 poles to a small white oak; south 18 deg. west 9 poles to a white oak; south 3 1-2 deg. west 8 poles to a hickory; south 5 deg. west passing Ardle Settle's corner at 20 poles, 40 poles to a Spanish Oak; thence with his line south 87 deg. east 53 3-4 poles to a sourwood; south 1 deg. west 32 poles to the beginning corner, containing 60 acres.

This, January 26, 1934.

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J. S. DUNCAN, Attorney.

seemed to reach through space and touch some quivering, pulsating spot in her soul. She tried to rise, dashing tears from her blue eyes, and her lips shook, but she answered, dragging out one word, the word he wanted. "Yes."

(Continued next week)

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