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LOVE IS BLIND.

By Alice Maud Meadows.

Chapter I.

"I wish," Nora Desmond colored ever so slightly, "one of you would tell me what Mr. Le Strange is like!"

Mrs. Desmond and Nancy Desmond looked at one another sharply, something like a warning glance passed between them.

"Like?" Mrs. Desmond repeated, faintly.

"Yes—like," Nora returned. "I know he's tall and big. I know he has a pleasant voice, a merry laugh; I know"—her strange, pretty eyes grew shy, though they saw nothing, never had seen anything since her fourth birthday—"he is the kindest man in the whole wide world; but I want to know what his face is like—that's natural, isn't it, since"—a trifle defiantly—"since we are such good friends?"

"Quite natural," Mrs. Desmond answered. "What would you like to know—the color of his eyes?"

Once more she looked at Nancy; the girl shrugged her shoulders, and made a helpless sort of gesture.

"Of course," Nora said, "the color of his eyes, his hair, what sort of a nose and mouth he has, whether he wears a mustache. I should like a word picture of him. You know," she sighed softly, "it's all the picture I can see."

For some reason or other, both Mrs. and Miss Desmond looked relieved.

"John Le Strange has very good features, indeed," Mrs. Desmond answered; "a straight nose, a good mouth and really beautiful eyes. His hair is brown, with a natural wave in it. I don't think there's anyone in the world who could deny John has good features. As for the nature of the man, it's absolutely the sweetest I have ever known."

A very pretty smile crossed Nora's lips, a tender expression entered the sightless eyes.

"The sweetest nature you have ever known," she repeated. "One couldn't have a nicer thing said than that. Looks are a great deal, of course—I so love everything beautiful, but a lovely nature is even more than a lovely exterior. I—why, that's John's footstep; he's earlier than usual today, isn't he?"

John Le Strange boarded in the house of Mrs. Desmond; had lived in her house now for ten years, almost ever since the death of Terrence Desmond, leaving his widow not very well provided for.

A look of pleased expectancy shone upon the girl's face; then, as the footsteps passed the door, went slowly upstairs, it died away.

"His footfall sounds tired tonight," she said, more to herself than the others, "as though some trouble is upon him. I wish, mother"—it was curious how directly she seemed to look at her mother—"you would go up to him, just to see that nothing is wrong. He's been an inmate of your house so long now, you must feel almost like a mother to him."

Once more Mrs. Desmond glanced at Nancy.

"I dare say he's fagged out," she answered. "Men mostly are when they come home from their work. Why not go and ask him yourself, Nora? You're his favorite."

A smile flashed into the girl's face, in her eyes, on her lips, dimpling her cheeks. She had been beautiful before; she was absolutely lovely now.

"His favorite!" she repeated. "Mother, do you really think so? Of course, he pities me— everyone does; everyone is kind to me—but, apart from that, do you really, really think I am his favorite—in spite of my blindness?"

Mrs. Desmond rose, cross the room, put her hand upon the girl's shoulder.

"I don't think—I know," she returned. "He thinks more of you than he thinks of anyone in the wide, wide world! That's something to be proud of, Nora."

She rose slowly, her little hands tightly clasped.

"Something to be very, very proud of!" she returned. "But how wonderful that is, mother!"

She moved across the room without stretching out her hands. No one who did not know would have supposed her to be blind.

"She will marry him, of course," Nancy said, when she was out of hearing, "because she is blind; she never would if she could see!"

Chapter II.

Just as quietly as she had gone from her mother's sitting room, Nora mounted the stairs, knocked at the door, and, in answer to a quiet "Come in," uttered in a singularly beautiful voice, entered.

By a table, with the full glare of a lamp shining upon him, sat a man. So far as his features went, Mrs. Desmond's description had been accurate. The eyes that softened so wonderfully as he saw the girl were beautiful; for all that, the man was not pleasant to look upon. Smallpox of the most virulent type had seamed and scared his face, making what should have been very fair almost terrible.

"You, Nora!" he said, springing to his feet. "How good of you to come and see me!" He made use, without thought, of the ordinary words. "Come to this chair; it's the most comfortable in the room. You know that, don't you?"

"And so you always give it to me, John," she said. "I think you can't help being like that—the best invariably for some one else. I wonder,"—her soft fingers closed on his hand as he led her to a chair—"why you are sad tonight—unhappy?"

He started, ever so slightly.

"How did you know?" he asked. "How wonderful you are, Nora!"

She was sitting now; he standing close beside her, worshipping her with his beautiful eyes, feeling he would give the whole world, were it his, to take this dear, blind girl in his arms and kiss her sweet lips.

"I suppose I know," she answered, "because God, who is very just, has given me a greater power of perception of some things than those who can see—a fuller sympathy. Tell me what is wrong, John—why you are sad?"

He hesitated a moment; then very slowly, half timidly, he sank upon his knees.

"This is why," he answered, and his hungry lips almost kissed her hand. "I want something that I dare not ask for, and yet if it could be mine how I would love and cherish it! I want something—some one to work for, to make money for; some one to surround with adoration and comfort, but I dare not—I dare not say to her I love you, because——"

He paused. She stretched out her hand and laid it unfalteringly upon his shoulder.

"Because she is blind, John?"

He covered her hand with his—then he covered it with kisses.

"No, no! A thousand times no!" he answered. "Oh, Nora, you know I love you—want you—you know your blindness makes you all the dearer to me! But you don't know me as others know me—you have never seen me. If—if you should give yourself to me, you would be giving yourself to an unknown man. I think you care for me—but——"

"There is no but," she interrupted. "I love you. As for knowing you, there is no one in the world I know so well. And today my mother has told me just what you are like—has so to speak, painted the picture of your every feature. I can look at you now with my mind's eye—I am so glad, dear!"

He put his arm round her; he drew her gently to him; he kissed her lips.

"Little sweetheart!" he said. "Little wife to be! So your mother told you all? Are you sure you did not dislike the picture?"

With her slender, sensitive fingers she touched his features, one by one, smiling, but a little puzzled.

"Quite," she answered; "and mother was right; your features are beautiful. Your skin is rough and rugged, different from mine—that is because you are a man, but you must not think"—one could scarcely believe she was not looking at the scarred face—"I love you for your beauty; I love you just because I love you—because I can't help it. And I hope—I do hope, with all my heart—you will never regret your goodness in taking a blind girl to your heart—wanting her for your wife."

Chapter III.

Many times during their short engagement something almost compelled John Le Strange to paint a word picture of himself as he really was, not as he knew she believed him to be; but, after all, is it necessary? She loved him, and, God knows, he loved her! She would never look upon his face; always to her he would be beautiful. So far as utter affection could, he would keep all sorrow from her, surround her with every comfort. She was more helpless than most women; would need all her life more care and cherishing.

More than once he asked Mrs. Desmond if it would not be better to undeceive the girl. She, however, was emphatic in her negative.

"You'll just spoil her life and her happiness if you do," she answered. "What the eye does not see, the heart does not grieve for; as every one knows, the blind in their hearts and souls worship at the shrine of beauty more ardently than those who see. To her you are all that is desirable in every way; let that content you."

And so, with the truth still untold, the two married, and in the whole wide world there was no happier wife than Nora Le Strange. Never once did he let her feel her blindness; never did he tire of telling her of beautiful things, describing every place he took her to so vividly, with such care, that always she smiled and nodded as she pressed the hands she held.

"I see—I see it all quite plainly!" she would say. "Oh, John, what a beautiful place this world is! And what a pair of seeing eyes you lend to me!"

It was not until her little son was born that Nora craved passionately to see, if only for a moment. Time after time, as she held the little creature, as she passed her fingers ever so gently across his downy head, his tiny features, over and over again, John described just what the little one was like—the most beautiful baby in the world. But for once, she seemed hardly satisfied.

"Oh, if I could only see him!" she said; "just once. John, I've wanted terribly sometimes to see you, though I know just what you are like. I want even more to see him, because he's you and me, and our dear love all rolled up in this sweet, warm bundle."

It was just about this time that a stranger, meeting John, Nora and the beautiful child in a public conveyance, looked at the girl's eyes with an interested, professional glance. A day later, having discovered where they lived, he called upon John Le Strange.

"Your wife is blind," he said, after a preliminary word or two. "I think, however, she was not blind from birth?"

"No," he answered, "she was not blind until her fourth year. Her blindness is the outcome of some juvenile complaint."

"And can, I believe, be cured," the doctor said, gently.

John's heart gave a great leap. Nora's blindness cured! That would mean that she would see him; look upon the man she had believed beautiful—see how he had deceived her—perhaps hate him!

"Cured!" he repeated, and Dr. Winter wondered why the man's scarred face grew so pale.

"Will you allow me to examine your wife's eyes?" the oculist said. "From what I have observed, I have little doubt that your wife may yet see."

There was a struggle for a moment in John's heart. The happiness of his life, the dear, utter happiness, seemed slipping away. Then the beauty of the man's nature conquered; he fetched his wife.

Trembling, he stood by while the beautiful eyes were examined; slowly he sat down as the doctor gave his verdict.

"The operation would be painful," he said, "but I have no doubt whatever of its success."

With a laugh of excitement, Nora spoke:

"Painful, John? That won't matter; I can bear pain. Think of it, dear! I shall see the sky, the flowers—see you, and the baby! Oh, John—John, it's too good to be true! No, no—I won't say that. John, how quiet you are!"

As the days passed on, and certain preparations for the operation were made, John grew more quiet than ever; a silent tragedy had come into his happy life. Within another week his wife would see—would look at him, perhaps with aversion!

"Will you tell her," he said to Mrs. Desmond, "before she sees—will you tell her? Directly the bandages are removed, she will turn to me, and she won't know me. Will you prepare her?"

"It's most unfortunate," she said, slowly. "Yes, I mean it; I look upon this hope for Nora's sight as a great misfortune. She was perfectly happy, perfectly content, I know"—neither of them heard a soft step coming along the passage—"she longed to see the child, but, after all, her sense of touch is so delicate, she knows as well as I know what he is like. This interfering doctor had better have left things alone."

The soft steps stopped outside the door. The blind girl stood and listened, her heart beating strangely. Sight a misfortune for her! Why—why? She could not understand.

"After all," Mrs. Desmond went on, slowly, "she loves you dearly; she will grow used to your looks in time; even if she is shocked at first, it will wear off, and any one can see that it's your misfortune that you're not a handsome man; your features, as I have told Nora often, are beautiful. You ought to be a handsome man, but for the smallpox marks you certainly would have been."

The blind girl, standing so motionless outside the door, shivered a little.

"I shan't be able to bear it," John said. "Blind as she is, she worships beauty. What will she feel when she sees she is bound for life to me! I ought not to have married her; but when a man loves"—he made a hopeless gesture—"and I wanted to take care of her."

Mrs. Desmond rose, and walked about the room.

"You're her husband," she said; "you have the remedy in your own hands—forbid the operation!"

"And rob her of one of life's greatest blessings?" he answered. "No, I'm not so selfish as that, and she wants to see the little one. Ah, well; she, at all events, is perfectly beautiful; she will turn from me, perhaps; but she can feast her eyes on our little son."

As quietly as she had come, the blind girl stole away, up the stairs to her little one's nursery, where he lay crooning in his cot. With a half sob, she bent over him, kissed him—touched the tiny face.

A little later, with a quick, light step, she ran down the stairs, her hand just touching the banisters; listened an instant, then went straight to the room in which John sat. He glanced up, and she went to him, kissed him softly.

"John," she said, a tremble in her voice, "dear John, don't be angry with me—I know you've been put to trouble—trouble and expense, but—I'm a coward, dear—the doctor said it would be painful; I can't"—she almost sobbed now—"I can't face the operation!"

He held her from him for a minute; no inkling of the truth entered his mind. Then he snatched her to his heart. Was he wicked, selfish, to be so glad?

"Not to face it!" he returned. "But think, Nora, just a little pain, or even a great deal, and then to see! To see," he said the words bravely, "to see baby!"

She trembled from head to foot. Oh, to see—to see!

"Yes, I know," she answered. "I have wanted to, but after all, you have been my eyes—such good eyes, John—and I'm not brave at bearing pain. You're not vexed with me?"

"No, darling—no; but think, think again."

"I have thought;" she answered, "and I can't risk it. You must thank the doctor, and tell him I'm afraid. John, I don't seem selfish to you because I won't bear pain—because I must be your blind wife, and baby's blind mother always?"

"No," he whispered. Was he selfish, wicked, that so great a glow of joy pervaded his whole being? "But, dearest, to be blind all your life, when you might see!"

She lifted her lips and kissed him—kissed the scared cheek, the beautiful eyes.

"I don't mind," she answered. "Why should I, John, when the most beautiful thing in the world is blind?"

"The most beautiful thing?"

"Love, dearest!"—New York Weekly.

COLOR CHANGE IN MARSH.

Proof That the Erythrean Sea Is Not a Sea at All.

The recent telegraphic announcement to the astronomical world that on the morning of April 4 observations on Mars showed a striking change in the color of the Mare Erythraenum (the Erythraean sea) is significant, in that it is a striking corroboration of the laws discovered at this observatory of the seasonal change of the Martian physical features, says Percival Lowell of the Lowell Observatory, Flagstaff, Ariz.

The Mare Erythraeum lies between ten and thirty degrees south latitude, and just above the gulflike marking known as the Syrtis Major. Of the large dark regions upon the planet, the characteristic color is blue green, but the tint deepens or lightens according to the season of the Martian year. The change in the color of the Mare Erythraeum from blue green to brown observed here on April 4 we now know to be of a temporary and a seasonal nature.

During the previous presentation on March 2 and succeeding days this region of the planet was carefully scanned, and no change in hue from that generally present was observed.

By a presentation of a region of the planet is meant the time at which Mars and the earth present the same face to each other at the same hour, and so place that region in the most favorable position for observation. This occurs about every 37 days, and is due to the difference in length of the Martian and terrestrial days, the one gaining upon the other.

At the next presentation on April 4, on coming again into view the region in question was at once seen to have changed tint, being now of a pronounced brown. The season of the Martian year in that hemisphere corresponded then to Jan. 24 of our own chronology.

The first symptom of the change of color that has just been observed was first discovered here in the case of the Mare Erythraneum on April 19, 1903, when this region, previously blue green, had turned to a pronounced brown tint, though no such color had been observed in it 37 days before. At the next favorable occasion for observation of this region, in the last part of May, the brownish color was absent, except at the extreme south.

All traces of the brown tint later disappeared, and the change in the mare Erythraneum, which has just been observed, both as regards place and time, appears to be an exact seasonal repetition of what occurred in the same region at the opposition of 1903, and is a remarkable confirmation of the laws recognized here of the variation of the surface features of the planet.

The change observed may be best explained by the fact that it is due to vegetation. We now know that the so-called seas are not seas. The blue green is without much question due to vegetation, and the brown color assumed by the sea at what we know to be its dead season is a further and very suggestive inference that it is the denuded soil itself exposed to view.—New York Times.

SOUTHERN FARM NOTES.

TOPICS OF INTEREST TO THE PLANTER, STOCKMAN AND TRUCK GROWER.

Poultry Pests.

This is the season of the year when lice are beginning to be most troublesome to poultry. Without question, lice and mites are the greatest nuisance of the poultry business and their raids on the fowls will do more to destroy the prospects of a dividend than anything else known. They are constantly at work, never allowing the fowls a minute's rest from the everlasting torture. No wonder, then, that the poor, suffering hen is not laying her usual quota of eggs. The circumstances under which she is compelled to work are certainly the most discouraging any one could imagine—trying to produce eggs and flesh from the food supplied her, while legions of lice and mites are sapping her very life blood. Very often a setting hen will leave the nest or die thereon. If the farmer, the owner, will blame the fowl and say she is no good, and if the latter, he will say the death was caused by cholera, when nine times out of ten the cause was lice.

If your hens are lousy you will find that, although the lice are almost invisible to the naked eye, they do an immense amount of damage. So much so that we feel safe in asserting that the person who is successful in raising poultry and makes money in the business is one who keeps down the lice, one who will not tolerate them about the premises. It is comparatively easy to rid fowls of lice, by the use of good insecticide and readers who are troubled with this pest are advised to keep a supply always on hand and use it early and often, for lice breed very fast.

There are many varieties of lice which infest poultry, the exact number being nine. These live and breed on fowls. They lay their eggs or nits on the down of the feathers; the nits hatch in ten days, so you see, if they are not kept down and continually warred against you will have three crops of them each month in warm weather.

The hen louse does not suck the blood of the fowls, but eats the skin and feathers; thus they are a source of much irritation and discomfort to the fowls.

By the introduction of a single lousy bird among your fowls, this pest is spread through the whole flock. It is a good rule to look each new fowl over carefully, and as a precautionary measure give it a good dusting with insect powder before allowing it to run with the rest of your poultry. Hens are seldom free from lice entirely, yet it should be the practice of the breeder to keep them as free from them as possible.

Another pest which is of no little importance is the mite. This is not a louse, but is a blood-sucking creature. There are several varieties of mites. They live in the nests, cracks of the houses, old knot holes, etc. These vermin attack the fowls at night and suck the blood of their victims. Cracked roosts, dirty nests and cracks in the walls are favorite breeding places for them; in fact, they will stay and breed in any place which will afford them a hiding place by day and from which they can attack the fowls at night. In straws, filth, or behind the sheathing boards of the poultry house these mites can be found, and they should be avoided by careful methods of the breeder, who should not allow such places to exist in his coops. These mites will live for a long time and have been found in vacant poultry houses long after the fowls have been removed from them.

Don't try to find an excuse for the existence of lice and mites on your premises; there are no valid ones. These vermin can be overcome, and it is the duty every poultry raiser owes to himself that his fowls be free from vermin of all kinds.

Look for mites in all cracks of the buildings, in the nests in the cracks of the roosts, and behind the sheathing boards. They are sometimes found on the fowls in the daytime, but not often, as it is not their natural abiding place.

Lice are always found on the birds, and sometimes they will leave the fowls and crawl over the hands of human beings when the birds are handled, but they do not stay on or live on the human body. To prevent lice and other vermin, the poultry house should be whitewashed, all cracks be filled with plaster, and roost poles and nests painted with kerosene. And lastly, dust the birds with a good insect powder.

To keep down the lice and mite pest is a work that will pay a good dividend.—Charlotte Observer.

Improving Run-Down Land.

Question: I have recently purchased 150 acres of red soil land, one-half in timber, in the South. This ground has not been under cultivation for fifteen years. All land in that territory was formerly rented. I would like your advice as to what treatment this soil should be given under the conditions named.

Answer: Much of the so-called abandoned land in the South can be brought into condition to produce very good crops in a comparatively short time, all things considered. The land in question should first be broken deeply. Probably this land has not had a good plowing in twenty years; some of it perhaps never since it was reclaimed from the primeval forest. This may seem like an exaggerated statement, but in many sections the practice has been to simply break out the middles between the old corn rows, bed up and replant to corn, cotton or tobacco. Good plowing, therefore, is the first essential for reclaiming the soil. Of course, the land should not be broken too deeply in the beginning; say, commence with six inches, then at the next plowing go to eight and then to ten, and aim eventually to turn the land at least twelve inches deep. If the sub-soil is very heavy and tenacious use a sub-soil in the fall. When the land has been thoroughly broken work down well with a disk and harrow until a good seed bed is prepared, and then sow in cow peas, soy beans or such other leguminous crops as will grow to advantage in the vicinity of Richmond. It is best as a rule to sow cow peas and soy beans in drills twenty-four to thirty-six inches apart and cultivate so as to destroy weeds and hasten growth.

Before planting the crops it would be advisable to use a complete fertilizer on the land, say at the rate of 150 pounds of 16 per cent. acid phosphate and 50 pounds of muriate of potash. As soon as the peas or beans come up a light application of nitrate of soda at the rate of 50 pounds per acre will be an advantage on land in this condition. On land cultivated in peas for several years it would not be necessary to use the nitrate, but in this instance it will be an advantage. The peas and beans may be grazed down with hogs or made into hay. The hay will bring $10 to $15 a ton and you can obtain from 400 to 600 pounds of pork from each acre of land and have a great mass of vines and leaves left to turn under early in the fall. This will make an admirable seed bed for winter wheat or rye, which may then be seeded down to grass.

In the section of the State mentioned some of the stronger growing varieties may be used. For pasture, orchard grass, meadow fescue, red top and red or alsike clover may be used to advantage. When the land is in better condition timothy may be used with fair success. Under present conditions tall oat grass, orchard grass and red top will be most likely to prove satisfactory for hay production. This combination will provide satisfactory hay.

By this method of treatment the land can be made to pay something on the investment from the beginning, and if green manures, as provided through leguminous crops, are used freely and the crops raised feed on the land and the manure put back on the soil it will improve rapidly in a comparatively short time. As a rule these soils need phosphates and in many instances potash as well, so that these forms of plant food should be supplied in liberal amounts. As a rule, persons who have farms of this kind to deal with attempt to reclaim too much at once, and the undertaking embarrasses them and proves unprofitable as well. Go slowly but do the work thoroughly and remember that persistent cultivation, followed up with a good crop rotation means salvation in the long run.—Knoxville Journal and Tribune.

Spraying the Orchard.

Hundreds of people who own small orchards would like to spray their trees, but are deterred therefrom by the cost of a spraying outfit usually recommended by writers. For spraying a few trees all the outfit this is necessary is a barrel to mix the poison in, and a small sled. One made of two planks four feet long will do. Lay them side by side and fasten them securely together by means of strips of board nailed across them. Chip off the under side of the front edges, set the barrel on it, mix the spraying materials, and with one horse draw it into the orchard and wherever needed. A good spray pump for a few trees does not cost much; a piece of half-inch rubber hose about eight feet long, having the spraying end attached to a light stick the same length, will raise the nozzle high enough to spray most trees. If the trees are very large, one can climb into them, draw up a bucketful of mixture, set it firmly among the branches and spray the over the entire tree.—Farm and Fireside.

A buffalo bull recently slaughtered in Iowa brought its owner nearly $1000.