

The Dollar Bride

Mary Inlay Taylor

SEVENTH INSTALLMENT The Story So Far

Nancy Gordon trades herself in marriage for fifteen thousand dollars—the price of her family honor—and the freedom of her brother, Roddy, who stole for a woman that amount from the bank in which he works. Nancy, desperately in love with young Page Roemer, nevertheless agrees to a secret elopement with Dr. Richard Morgan, and with the money he loans her prevents Roddy's arrest. Dr. Morgan is loved by Helena Haddon, a sophisticated young married woman, but he adores Nancy and hopes to win her after marriage. In Washington they are married. Nancy is Richard's bride—and afraid of him.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

He could keep her, he had a right to keep her. Then he saw her shaking like a leaf. By a kind of violence then, blinding himself, he had married a woman who did not love him, who shrank from him now with terror and repulsion. He turned away, without a word, and began to walk to and fro in the room.

If he looked at her he might yield to the natural impulse of his own love for her; he might take her to his heart, and it would be against her will. It would be, actually an act of violence rather than an embrace for she was afraid of him; he saw it! It moved him, perhaps, more than anything else. Then the tumult of his feeling drowned even thought itself.

He crossed the room quickly. In a moment his arm was around her, his hand on her shoulder.

"Nancy," he said softly, "my wife!"

She tried to answer him, but her white lips refused to move. She could not even lift her eyes to his.

He felt it, felt that she actually shivered at his touch. He let her go, his arms fell at his sides, and stood still, regarding her.

"I knew you didn't love me," he said at last; "I gambled on the chance that I could make you—God forgive me, I took advantage of you, I—"

He turned away, and then at last hurriedly: "I'm going to take you home!"

"You mean—?" her lips shook. "I mean I don't want you to hate me. Nancy this thing can't go on. I see it! This marriage—"

"Richard—" she began faintly, taking a step toward him.

He looked around at her and their eyes met. She was shaken again by the power and passion of his glance.

She had never really known the man and now, in the depths of those strange, green-brown eyes of his, she saw love and passion and rage, not untouched, too, by compassion, the compassion a man might feel for a spoiled child. Nancy's face burned suddenly. She came nearer, holding up her head.

"Forgive me, Richard," she said faintly, "and give me a little time."

His face softened wonderfully. "Nancy," he gathered her trembling hands into his, "you don't know what love is, you child, you!"

He drew a little nearer. "I wonder if

you've ever really been in love in your whole life?"

She winced with such a tremor of feeling, that the red blood mounted from her bosom to her throat.

"I've married you," she said in a low voice, "I'll try to do my best—I will truly, if you'll give me a little time, Richard."

"And you take no thought of me?" He laughed a strangely bitter laugh.

"You've married me and you forget I'm a man like other men—I have feelings, too, Nancy; I'm not a stone—and you can feel how I love you!"

"Oh!" she gasped, "I—I was wrong to do it! I—you love me, and I—"

She wrenched one hand free and reaching back behind her, caught at the edge of a heavy table and leaned against it, weakly.

Her agony reached through even his passionate emotion. She had recoiled from him like a blow. He let her hands drop with a gesture of passionate rage.

"I don't want a wife who doesn't love me!" he cried with sudden fury. The moment was primal; the tornado of his passion and his revulsion tore down to his very heart.

She shrank before it, clinging—white-faced—to the table against which she leaned.

He did not heed it. "I'm going to take you home. You—" he stopped again, unable to go on, then, mastering himself—"you're free—if you will, you can keep this marriage secret—it's no marriage except in name. I'll take you home now—tonight!"

She caught her breath, staring at him wildly, but, instead of relief she felt the sting of his rejection.

"You mean—," her stiff lips refused to frame the words in her mind.

"I mean I don't want a woman who can't love me, that's what I mean!" he flung back at her like a challenge.

She took it as such and faced him, quivering from head to foot.

"I—I didn't pretend I did!" she said very low, her lips twitching painfully with the effort to force speech—"I—I didn't mean to cheat you—I told you—I pledged myself, I've kept that pledge—I've married you."

"Oh, have you?" he mocked. He was shaking with fury. All the pent-up passion and misery of the love he was crushing down to spare her broke loose in his anger.

He caught one of her hands in his again and kissed it passionately, then, when he felt it lie there, unresisting, as if she dared not take it away, he flung it from him.

"I'm going to take you home—there's a night train, or rather a morning one, at half-past two. We'll go on it. Meanwhile—" he swept the space about them with his gesture of disdainful courtesy—"these rooms are yours. Lie down and rest, I'll have you called in time. I'm going out—good night until—the train goes."

She did not answer, she stood quite still, watching him with startled eyes. She only half understood; she felt as if a great hot whirlwind had blown past her. She only half glimpsed the disappointment, the wrath, the mortification he felt.

Then, suddenly, he returned. He flung himself on one knee beside her chair; she felt his hands, hot and shaking, close on hers, and she lifted her eyes and met the passionate pain in his.

"Listen to me, Nancy," his voice passionate still, had softened, it was shaken now by a new emotion, a deeper one, his tenderness for her. Not even anger could drive it out when he looked at her bowed head.

"I love you—never dream but that I love you. But I won't take a wife who shrinks from me—like a pestilence! I'm setting you free. You can say nothing of this marriage, if you will. I've made no announcement. I'll make none without your sanction. I've married you—I'm going to try to win you now. When you can come back to me with love in your heart—then, Nancy, my heart is waiting for that day—until then—"

He caught her hands and kissed them, pressing them against his breast.

She felt his passionate lips upon her two hands, she felt the tremor that ran through him, and then—almost as quickly as it reached her—he was gone. She was alone in the strange room, alone and free—and yet not free!

When the train moved out of the station, Nancy knew that it was already morning. Richard had had her sleeping-berth made up and ordered her to lie down and rest, with the detached tone of a professional adviser.

A sensation of relief shot through her, she drew her breath deeply, and then suddenly abruptly, she felt the hard circle of the wedding-ring

on her finger. She stared at it curiously, abhorrently. She was not even now quite clear as to what had happened. She had gone to Richard openly, brazenly, begging help and pledging herself, she had married him and he—! It seemed to her that he must scorn her as tremendously as he seemed to love her. And though she did not love him, it shook her horribly—she had married him.

Her thoughts did not come in sequence; she had glimpses of outside things, and swift, poignant visions—of her father—looking gray and broken—and her mother, of Roddy delivered from jail, of Anyie Fuller's spaniel eyes, and of Page Roemer. The thought of him was like a sword thrust, it made her cringe back and cover her face with her shaking hands. Would she, have to tell him she could not—she was sure she could not!

The sun was rising when she got up and dressed in a swift, absent-minded way. She did not know where Richard had gone. He had been merciful, he had left her alone. She was very pale when he came and, in his authoritative way, made her go into the dining-car.

"You can't starve yourself," he said grimly, and added in an undertone: "don't hate me so much you can't eat, Nancy!"

She raised her eyes suddenly and looked full at him for the first time. She was shocked at the change in him in one night. He looked old. He was ten years older than he was, five years older than Page—he might be fifty now in the crude light of the swaying train. He was looking at her and their glances met, met with a shock of mutual feeling. He put his hand out involuntarily and took hers and felt it icy cold.

"You poor child!" he exclaimed softly.

Sitting opposite her in the dining-car, with the little white-covered table between them he had another change of heart. He could not give her up! "She's mine!" he thought cruelly; "she's mine—I'll never let her go!" and then he was ashamed.

"Eat something, Nancy," he urged, "you've got to."

She tried, choking down her food, but her hands shook.

He saw it, saw that she would not—or could not—even look at him now, and choked down his own food and took her back to her place in the sleeper, and left her to herself.

"I think you want to be alone," he said.

She assented without words and they made the rest of the journey apart.

It was late afternoon when they finally got home. There were only a few people at the station and Richard and Nancy walked up the street unmolested. They did not speak until they reached his gate and Richard stopped there.

"Won't you come in, Nancy?" His very tone appealed. For an instant his pride broke, there was hunger and longing in his voice. She gasped.

"I—I'd like to go home first—I what do you mean, Richard?"

He gave her a tense look. "I'm human—God, I'm human!" he said, "you know what I mean!"

She hung her head, she did not know what to do, but—unconsciously—she wrung her hands.

"Can I come home with you now," Richard pleaded, "and see your father and mother—or am I to stay here?"

"Oh, I must go!" she gasped, "I must!"

"Go? As you will, Nancy; see—I keep my faith," and he stepped back aside his own gate and stood there, waiting to watch her.

She felt his eyes, gave one glance back, whitened to her lips and fled.

Richard was a proud man and he reddened under his tan. He had seen the agony in her face when she shivered at his touch, she, his wife—incredible! Then the flame of passion leaped up again. "She's mine—mine!"

He was startled at a voice. "Richard, I've been waiting ever so long for you!"

It was Helena Haddon standing at his door.

He was taken aback without reason. It was no unusual thing for Helena to come. He was the Haddon's physician and she came—sometimes with bald excuses, sometimes in real need of something to quiet her nerves, but today—

"What's the trouble?" he asked, striving to be natural. "Nerves again, Helena?"

"Oh, it's everything!" she smiled at him. "It's nerves and King—and the spring weather."

"Principally the spring weather, I fancy," he said reassuringly, opening the door for her.

He meant to take her into his office, but she walked straight into the library. He saw her mood and he had begun sometimes to fear its consequences; today he was thinking hard: "At least I don't have to tell her now!"

"I hope you haven't got the same old headache, Helena?"

"No, it's not my headache," Helena laughed, looking around at him, opening her green eyes wide and laughing at him. "I see there's been a visitor here before me," she added mockingly.

"Continued next week"

Pumpkin is that part of the pie you can't taste for the spices.

That is, Welfare Island prison was the first one managed by criminals on the inside.

NOTICE OF SALE OF LAND

Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain Deed of Trust executed by A. M. Andrews and wife, Virginia Andrews, dated March 14, 1932, and recorded in Book 115, page 89, in the office of the Register of Deeds for Surry 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, in front of the Post Office, Elkin, North Carolina at 2:00 o'clock P. M. on the 23rd day of March 1934, the following described property, located in Surry County, N. C., in Elkin Township.

A certain tract or parcel of land in Surry County, State of North Carolina, adjoining the lands of J. S. Gentry, Tom Calloway and the Elkin & Alleghany Railroad on west side, and others, and bounded as follows:

Beginning on a white oak, J. S. Gentry's in Tom Calloway's line and runs north 85 degrees west with Tom Calloway's line 282 feet to the railroad right of way; thence southward with the railroad 190 1-2 feet to a rock on the east side of the railroad; thence north 85 degrees east 252 feet to a rock in Gentry's line; thence North 9 degrees West with Gentry's line 190 1-2 feet to the beginning. Containing 1 acre more or less.

Also a second parcel of land adjoining the lands of Bill Douglass on the north, Highway No. 28 on the west, M. M. Hamby on the south and the E. & A. Railroad on the east, and bounded as follows: Beginning on west side of R. R.

Douglass' corner and runs south 68 degrees and 30 minutes west 147 feet to a rock on east side of State Highway, Douglass' corner; thence southward with Highway No. 26, 90 1-2 feet to a rock; thence north 68 degrees and 30 minutes east 147 feet to a rock at the railroad; thence northward with the railroad 90 feet to the beginning. Containing 1-2 acre more or less.

This the 21st day of February, 1934.

HARRY H. BARKER, Trustee.
W. M. Allen, Attorney. 3-15

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE OF LAND

Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain deed of trust executed the 26th day of January, 1933, by L. R. Key and M. E. Key, his wife, to W. R. Badgett, Trustee, for J. A. Whitaker which is recorded in Book No. 126, page No. 192, in the office of the Register of Deeds of Surry County, North Carolina, default having been made in the payment of the note therein secured and the holder thereof having directed that the deed of trust be foreclosed, the undersigned Trustee will sell for cash to the highest bidder at public auction at Level Cross Mills, in Rockford Township, Surry County, North Carolina, on Tuesday, the 27th day of March, 1934, at 1 o'clock P. M., the following described real estate:

First Tract: Lying and being in Rockford Township, adjoining the lands of W. G. Whitaker, W. J.

Evans, dec'd., lands and others, and bounded as follows, to-wit, viz: Beginning on a small white oak (now dead and down) in the old Pilon line runs South 32 chains and 50 links to pointers in Frank Whitaker's line; thence E. with Whitaker's line 7 chains and 50 links to pointers, Whitaker's corner; thence North 5 chains to pointers, his corner; thence E. 18 chains to a white oak, said Whitaker's corner; thence N. 7.50 chains to a stake; thence E. 19 chains to the Rockford Road; thence with said road N. 7 deg. E. 4.50 chs.; thence N. 11 deg. W. 11 chs.; thence N. 16 deg. E. 5 chs. to a pine, S. M. Patterson's and W. E. Key's corner, thence W. with Key's line 42.50 chs. to the beginning, containing 110 acres, be it more or less.

Second Tract: Lying and being in Siloam Township, adjoining the lands of Wess Fulk, J. A. Whitaker, Woolzie Ring and others, and bounded as follows, to-wit, viz: Tract No. 10 of the property known as the J. W. Boles farm situated about 3 1/2 miles to the Southwest of Siloam, North Carolina, as surveyed and plotted by James A. Clark, C. E., and for more particular description reference is hereby made to Plot Record in the Register of Deeds Office of Surry County, Book No. 68, page 600. Tract No. 10 containing 38.74 acres, more or less. Sale made to satisfy said debt, taxes, if any, and costs of sale to add.

This 19th day of February, 1934.
W. R. BADGETT, Trustee. 3-15

Eyes Examined
Glasses Fitted

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