

**MILDRED'S MARRIED  
LIFE**

AND

A WINTER WITH ELSIE DINSMORE.

A Sequel to

MILDRED AND ELSIE.

BY

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“Domestic happiness, thou only bliss  
Of paradise that has survived the fall!”  
COWPER.

# **MILDRED'S MARRIED LIFE.**

## CHAPTER I.

“O married love! each heart shall own,  
Where two congenial souls unite,  
Thy golden chains inlaid with down,  
Thy lamp with heaven’s own splendor bright.”

— LANGHORNE.

WHAT a happy winter that was!— the first of Mildred’s married life. Her cup of bliss seemed full to overflowing. She was very proud of her husband, and not without reason, for his was a noble character; he was a man of sterling worth, lofty aims, cultivated mind, and polished address.

They were a pair of lovers who grew more and more enamored of each other day by day as the weeks and months rolled on.

And while the new love flooded Mildred’s pathway with light, the old loves, so dear, so long tried and true, had not to be given up: she was still a member of the home circle, a sharer in all its interests and pleasures, its cares and its joys.

There was no interruption of the mutual sympathy and helpfulness of mother and daughter, brothers and sisters, nor was the father deprived of the prized society of his firstborn in the family gatherings about the table or in the cosy sitting-room or parlor when evening brought rest from the toils and cares of the day; she was there, as of old, ready to cheer and entertain him with music or sprightly conversation: brighter too, and more full of a sweet and gentle gayety than of yore.

These things formed no mean or slight element in Mildred’s happiness; yet there were times when it was bliss to be alone with

her lover-husband in the privacy of their own apartments— the room that had always been hers and a communicating one— both of good size, pleasant and cheery, and made doubly attractive by perfect neatness and various tasteful little feminine devices in which Mrs. Keith and her daughters were thought to excel.

Mildred soon discovered that her husband was far from neat and orderly in his habits; but accepting the fact as the one inevitable yet small thorn joined to her otherwise delicious rose, she bore the trial with exemplary patience, indulging in never a reproachful word or even look as she quietly picked up and put in place the books, papers, and garments which he scattered here and there with reckless indifference to consequences to them or himself.

Mildred thought her efforts were unappreciated if not entirely unnoticed, until one day on opening a drawer in search of some article which he wanted in haste, he exclaimed at the neat and orderly arrangement of its contents, adding, “Really, Milly, my dear, I must say with Solomon, that ‘he that findeth a wife findeth a good thing.’ In my bachelor days I’d have had many a vexatious hunt for things which now I always find in place, ready to my hand. It has been my daily experience since I became a benedict.”

Mildred looked up in pleased surprise. “I have been half afraid my particularity about such things was a trifle annoying to you, Charlie,” she said in a gratified tone.

“Not at all, but my slovenliness must have been seriously so to you,” he returned, coming to her side. “I’ll try to reform in that respect,” he went on playfully, “and I wish that, to help me, you would impose a fine for every time you have my coat to hang up in

the wardrobe, my boots or slippers to put away in the closet, or—  
”

“Oh, I should ruin you!” Mildred interrupted with a light, gleeful, happy laugh.

“Not particularly complimentary that, to either my good intentions or the supposed amount of my income,” he returned, bending over her to caress her hair and cheek. “Besides it would depend largely upon the weight of the fine. How heavy shall it be?”

“Fix it yourself, since the idea is all your own.”

“One dollar each time for every article left out of place; fine to be increased to not more than five in case no improvement is manifest within a month. How will that do?”

“Oh,” laughed Mildred, “I shall certainly impoverish you and speedily grow rich at your expense.”

“Come now, little lady, about how often have I transgressed against the rules of order in the two weeks that we have shared these rooms?”

“Perhaps twenty. I have kept no account; so can only guess at it.”

“Well, really!” he sighed, in mock despair, “I could not have believed I was quite so bad as that. But all the more need for reform; you must insist upon the fines, Milly. I can’t let you have so much trouble for nothing.”

“O Charlie! as if your love didn’t pay me a thousand times over!” she exclaimed, lifting to his eyes dewy with mingled emotions—  
love, joy, and gratitude.



He answered with a tender caress and a smile of ineffable affection.

“And then you have been so generous with money, too,” Mildred went on. “Why, I never was so rich before in all my life! I’ve not spent a fourth part of the hundred dollars I found in my purse the day after our wedding. And mother tells me you have insisted upon paying a good deal more for our board than she thinks it worth.”

“Ah, dearest, circumstances alter cases, and with more knowledge you and mother may change your minds,” he replied, half absently.

Then after a moment’s silence, “This is my gift to my dear wife, and I cannot tell her how glad I am to be able to make it. My darling, will you accept it at your husband’s hands?”

He had laid a folded paper in her lap.

“Thank you,” she said playfully, and with a pleased smile. “I can’t imagine what it is,” opening and glancing over it as she spoke. “Why!” half breathlessly, as she scrutinized it with more care, then let it fall into her lap with an astonished, half-incredulous look up into his face, “Charlie, is it real?” she asked.

“Entirely so, dear Milly,” he answered, with a tender smile.

“You have endowed me with all your worldly goods,” she said, half in assertion, half inquiringly.

“No, my darling, not nearly half as yet. I know you thought you were marrying a poor man— at least comparatively so— but it was a mistake. And oh the delight of being able to give you ease and luxury! you who have toiled so long and faithfully for yourself and others!”

He clasped her in his arms as he spoke, and with a heart too full for speech, she laid her head upon his breast and wept for very joy and thankfulness that such love and tender protecting care were hers.

There was space for little else in her thoughts for the moment; the next she rejoiced keenly in the wealth that put in her power so much that it had long been in her heart to do for others; yet rejoiced with trembling, remembering the Master's words, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

If adversity had its trials prosperity was not without its perils, and a most earnest, though silent prayer went up that she might be kept from trusting in uncertain riches or setting her affection on earthly treasures.

"Tears, darling?" said her husband, softly stroking her hair. "I thought to give you joy only."

"They are happy tears, Charlie," she murmured, lifting her face, putting an arm about his neck, and gazing with loving eyes straight into his; "and yet— oh, I am almost afraid of so much wealth!" And she went on to tell him all that was in her heart.

"Ah," he replied, "I do not fear for you, your very sense of the danger will tend to your safe-keeping."

"Yes; if it keeps me close to the Master and ever looking unto Him for strength to resist temptation. Utter weakness in ourselves, we may yet 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.'"

"Yes, you know Paul tells us the Lord said to him, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'"

## CHAPTER II.

“Wealth heaped on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys;  
The dangers gather as the treasures rise.”

— DR. JOHNSON.

DR. LANDRETH had an errand down-town. Mildred stood at the window looking after him with loving, admiring eyes. He turned at the gate to lift his hat and kiss his hand to her with a bow and smile, then sped on his way, she watching until his manly form had disappeared in the distance and the gathering darkness; for evening was closing in.

But even now she did not turn from the window, but still stood there, gazing into vacancy, her thoughts full of the strange revelation and surprising gift he had made to her within the last hour.

She would go presently to mother and sisters with the pleasant news, but first she must have a little time alone with her best Friend, to pour out her gratitude to Him and seek strength for the new duties and responsibilities now laid upon her, the new dangers and temptations likely to beset her path.

A few moments had been passed thus when her mother's gentle rap was heard at the door of her room. Mildred hastened to open it and to unfold her wondrous tale, sure of entire, loving sympathy in all the contending feelings which agitated her.

She was not disappointed; but while Mrs. Keith fully understood and appreciated Mildred's fear of the peculiar temptations of wealth, she took a more hopeful view.

“Dear daughter,” she said, “trust in Him who has promised, ‘As thy days so shall thy strength be,’ and take with joy this good gift He has sent you. Keep close to Him and you will be safe, for ‘He giveth more grace.’”

There was great and unqualified rejoicing among the younger members of the family when they learned the news— “they were so glad that hard times were over for dear Milly, who had always been so helpful and kind to everybody;” and so thoroughly did they believe in her goodness that they had no fear for her such as she felt for herself.

“Milly, what *are* you going to do with so much money?” asked Annis, hanging about her sister’s chair; “you can never spend it all.”

“Spend it!” cried Don contemptuously. “Only silly people think money was made just to spend. Wise ones save it up for time of need.”

“The truly wise don’t hoard all they have, Don,” remarked Ada gravely.

“No; of course they must live, and they’ll pay their way honestly if they are the right sort of folks.”

“And if they are that,” said Mildred, with a sweet, bright smile irradiating her features, “they will feel that the money God gives them is not wholly their own, to save and to spend.”

“Oh no, to be sure! and what a nice big tenth you’ll have to give now, Milly,” exclaimed Annis. “I wish you’d find some work for me to do and pay me for it, so that I’d have more money to give to missions.”

“I’ll pay you ten cents for every hour you spend at the piano in faithful practice,” was Mildred’s answer, as she playfully drew her little pet sister to a seat upon her knee.

“O Milly! will you really?” cried the child, clapping her hands in delight; “but that will be twenty cents a day when I practise two hours, and I mean to, every day but Sunday.”

“And I make Fan the same offer,” Mildred said, catching a half wistful, half eager glance from the great gray eyes of that quiet, demure little maiden.

The gray eyes sparkled and danced, their owner saying, “O Milly, thank you ever so much! I’ll be sure to earn twenty or thirty cents every day.”

“Forty or fifty cents a day for you to pay, Milly!” Annis said in some anxiety.

“Don’t be concerned, little sister, my purse can stand even so grievous a drain as that,” returned Mildred gayly.

“Mildred,” said Ada, sighing slightly, “I can hardly help envying you the blessing of having so much money to do good with.”

“Perhaps your turn will come; at your age I had no more prospect of it than you have now,” Mildred said, gently putting Annis aside and rising to leave the room; for she heard her husband’s step in the hall, and it was her wont to hasten to meet him with a welcoming smile. But pausing a moment at Ada’s side, “It is a great responsibility,” she added in an earnest undertone; “you must help me with your prayers and sisterly warnings, to meet it aright.”

A liberal gift to each benevolent enterprise of the church to which she belonged was the first use Mildred made of her newly acquired wealth. Next her thoughts busied themselves with plans to increase the comfort and happiness of her own dear ones; after that of friends and neighbors.

There were some of these who might not be approached as objects of charity, yet whose means were so small as to afford them little beyond the bare necessities of life. Meantime her husband was thinking of her and how he might add to her comfort and pleasure.

It was now early in November, but the woods had not lost all their autumnal beauty, and the weather was unusually mild for the time of year. They had had many delightful walks and drives together.

Now Dr. Landreth proposed a trip to Chicago, and Mildred gave a joyful assent. There would be ten miles of staging, then three or four hours of railway travel, making a journey just long enough for a pleasure trip, they thought; and a short sojourn in the city would be an agreeable variety to Mildred at least, she having been scarcely outside of Pleasant Plains for the last six or eight years.

With a heart full of quiet happiness and overflowing with gratitude to the Giver of all good, she set about the needful preparation. No great amount of it was needed, as they were only going sightseeing and shopping; it could all be done in one day, and they would start early the next morning.

Alone in her own room, packing her trunk, her thoughts reverted to a friend, a most estimable widow lady, a member of the same church with herself, who was enduring a great fight with adversity, having an aged mother and several small children to support.

“They must be in need,” Mildred said half aloud to herself, pausing in her work. “How nice it would be to give them a little help without their knowing whence it came! Yes, I shall do it.”

She rose from her kneeling posture beside her trunk, went to her writing-desk, enclosed a ten-dollar bill in a blank sheet of paper, and that in an envelope which she sealed and directed to Mrs. Mary Selby, the lady in question.

She wrote the address in a disguised hand, and following Rupert to the outer door that evening as he was starting down-town after tea, asked him to drop that note into the post-office for her as he passed.

He readily complied, and her secret was between the Master and herself, as she desired it to be.

The little jaunt was an entire success, and the happy bride and groom returned from it loaded with presents for the dear ones at home. There was an easy-chair for father, a handsome set of furs for mother, napery for Zillah, a silk dress for Ada, a fine soft merino for each of the younger girls; beside books and a variety of smaller gifts for all, even Celestia Ann having been kindly and generously remembered.

It was a glad home-coming, a merry, happy time to all the family. And Mildred was younger, prettier, gayer in appearance and manner than they had seen her for years.

## CHAPTER III.

“For true charity,  
Though ne'er so secret, finds a just reward.”  
— MAY.

A PART of the winter's amusement at Mr. Keith's was the making of plans for a house to be built the next summer for Dr. and Mrs. Landreth. The doctor had bought an acre of ground adjoining Mildred's lot, and intended putting on it a large, handsome residence with every modern convenience that was attainable in that region of country.

As soon as the frost was out of the ground the work of cellar-digging and laying the foundation was begun. At that time the doctor hoped the house might be ready for occupancy the next fall; but as the weeks and months glided by that hope grew fainter under the dilatory conduct of workmen and those who supplied material, until the most he allowed himself to anticipate was that the walls would be up and the roof on, so that work upon the inside might be carried forward during the winter.

The delay was somewhat trying to both himself and Mildred, for they had a strong desire to be in a home of their own, though it was a very pleasant life they led in that of her parents.

Mildred kept up her church work; her Sunday-school teaching, attendance upon the weekly prayer-meetings, the sewing society, etc., and also her visits to the sick and the poor.



And now she had the happiness of being able to provide these last with medical attendance gratis, her husband joining her, heart and soul, in her kindly ministrations.

The two were entirely congenial, and their love deepened and strengthened with every day they lived together.

One bright April day the doctor invited his wife to take a drive with him a few miles into the country, on the farther side of the river, whither he was going to see a patient.

He always liked to have her company on such expeditions, when good roads and fine weather made the drive a pleasure; and she never let anything but sickness hinder her from going. She never wearied of his society or grudged the sacrifice of her own plans and purposes to add to his comfort or pleasure.

The intended call had been made, and they turned their faces homeward. The sun was still some two or three hours high, the air pure and bracing; not too cool for those who were well wrapped up; the delicate yellow green of the newly-opened buds was on the forest trees, while at their feet the blue violet, the purple anemone, and other lovely wildwood flowers peeped up here and there among the blades of newly springing grass, or showed their pretty heads half hidden by the carpet of last year's fallen leaves lying brown and dry upon the ground.

The doctor several times stopped his horse and alighted to gather a handful of the delicate blossoms for Mildred.

She thanked him with appreciative words and smiles, yet half absently, as though her thoughts were intent upon something else. "Charlie," she said at length, "I should like to call on Mrs. Selby. It

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