

Sorrowful End of Alice Drexel's Runaway Romance

Abandoned by Her Husband When His Love Grew Cold, Left Penniless, in a Foreign Land on the Eve of Her Baby's Birth—Was There Ever a More Dismal Ending for an Heiress's Honeymoon?



The Newport Home of the Drexels, Where Mrs. John R. Drexel Has Been Entertaining Lavishly, Little Dreaming That Her Daughter Was Face to Face With Actual Poverty and Suffering.



THE first elopement on record in which the bride-to-be ran the whole affair—driving away from home in her own car, picking up her waiting lover from his hiding place in a city park and whisking him off to be secretly wedded by a suburban parson—has ended in the most dismal kind of unhappiness, poverty and actual suffering for the wife and her young baby.

Miss Alice Drexel, daughter of the very rich and fashionable John R. Drexels, of New York, Newport, Philadelphia, London and Paris, was the dashing heiress who gave surprising proof of woman's new equality with man by managing her own elopement with Captain William Barrett, an American air veteran of the war with Germany.

And to-day, before society has hardly recovered from its astonishment at her surprising runaway marriage, young Mrs. Barrett is a heart-broken, disillusioned woman—heartlessly abandoned by her husband when his love grew cold; left practically penniless among strangers in a foreign land on the eve of her baby's birth; and now, living on the money she formerly scorned for love, anxiously awaiting news of her family's forgiveness for what turns out to have been a most ill-advised adventure in matrimony.

It is not for forgiveness of all her family for which she watches the mails and cables with tearful eyes, for her father long ago forgave her impetuous, personally conducted elopement. But her mother, the proud Mrs. John R. Drexel, has never been able to pardon her high-spirited daughter for upsetting all her fondest hopes and making a marriage which she has always insisted could and only in unhappiness.

Now that it has ended so much more disastrously than even Mrs. Drexel feared, will the mother relent and open her heart once more to her prodigal daughter? On this absorbing question opinion is divided in society at Newport, where Mrs. Drexel has been entertaining of late with unusual lavishness, perhaps trying to find solace in the gay social whirl for her bitter disappointment over Alice's unsatisfactory marriage.

According to close friends, poor Alice Drexel Barrett is coming home—perhaps, however, probably not to Newport. John Drexel, with unusual determination, has taken the matter in his own hands and sent one of his secretaries to France to try to bring back his sorrowing daughter and her baby.

It is not given to many young girls, born and reared in the deepest softest lap of luxury to run the gamut of human suffering as Alice Drexel has done in the short space of what should have been the most joyous season of a woman's life. Into one short year has been thrust more tragedy than falls to the lot of the average woman in a whole lifetime.

The peculiar environment in which Alice Drexel had lived all her life forced her, gossip says, to meet in secret the man she finally married, to elope with him in sudden haste and to slip away to Europe with only her jewels and clothes and what pocket money she had left of her yearly allowance. Before the voyage across the Atlantic was ended her woman's soul must have sensed the fact that she had seriously misjudged the devotion of the man for whom she had dared the disapproval of her parents.

Not long after reaching Europe she was awake to the appalling realization that

with every passing day whatever love her husband had had for her was growing colder and colder. Was there ever a more sorrowful awakening for a bride at the very start of her honeymoon? And then, almost on the eve of her baby's birth, her husband abandoned her, leaving the young wife ill and weak, with only strangers on whom to rely in her hours of trial.

Her jewels and even some of her clothes were sold or pawned to secure money to pay for the meager food and lodging she could afford for herself. This would not have been necessary had she written to her father of her dire need, for John Drexel's love for his only daughter is far greater than his pride. But Alice was too proud to make this appeal. The final touch of pathos is added to this real-life melodrama by the fact that while Alice was lacking all the comforts an expectant mother should have—in actual suffering—her mother, Mrs. Drexel, was taking in relief work for the suffering women and children of Armenia and Poland.

Mrs. Drexel is a generous-hearted woman, her pocket-book is ever open to appeals from the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and other philanthropic organizations. But her daughter's runaway marriage had cut her pride to its very quick, and so her heart was closed to her.

There is this to be said for the mother. Not for one moment did she realize her daughter's condition. Poverty is a comparative term. What is riches to many, spells poverty to others. Alice might have been living on five or ten thousand dollars a year and been considered poor by her mother and her friends. Not for one moment did the mother realize that Alice was at times actually penniless.

When friends wrote home that they had seen the Barretts in Paris and that Alice looked careworn and shabby, Mrs. Drexel was not disturbed. Lots of women look shabby even when they have money, and even more wives look away entered Mrs. Drexel's mind until letters began coming telling of Alice's avoidance of her friends and acquaintances. "She seems to be hiding," wrote one woman.

By this time John Drexel took alarm and sent a trusted representative to France to



Captain William Barrett, the Hero of the Runaway Romance and the Unheroic Figure in the Events Which Followed.

Mrs. John R. Drexel, Who Has Yet to Forgive Her Daughter for Running Away and Marrying a Poor, Socially Unknown Ex-Army Captain.

look into his daughter's affairs. This messenger had great difficulty in locating the unhappy young woman, and when he finally succeeded he found her deserted by her husband and just about to enter a public hospital.

Could any one, knowing the Drexel wealth and social standing, believe that a Drexel grandchild would just miss being born in the charity ward of a public hospital? But such was the case, as Mr. and Mrs. Drexel learned to their horror.

Arrangements were speedily made to have Mrs. Barrett taken to a private nursing home somewhere in Normandy, although the exact whereabouts were kept a secret. And there, with no husband to comfort her, with no relative or near friend to help her endure her ordeal, Alice Barrett's baby came into the world.

Again the apparent neglect of her needs some explanation. Neither of her parents knew of her condition until too late to do the things they doubtless would have done. She had hidden herself away with her sorrow so completely that no one who knew her well was aware of the true

state of affairs. When the Drexel secretary finally located her it was too late for any member of her family to reach her and she went through woman's greatest ordeal alone. Since she was found she has had every physical comfort, however, that money could buy, for John Drexel gave his aide full authority to spend all that was necessary to provide for his daughter.

One report from Paris is that the young wife made a pitifully small layette for her baby all herself and sewed bitter tears into every stitch. She prepared for her baby's coming with no expectation that help would come in time, if at all.

And what of Captain Barrett, if he may still be given so honorable a title—the man whose gallant war record contrasts so strangely with the tragedy in which his marriage has ended?

When the Drexels were informed of their daughter's marriage to an utter stranger to them they spent thousands of dollars looking up his background. It was generally understood that they hoped to find cause for setting the marriage aside. Investigation instituted by Mrs. Drexel showed that Captain Barrett was born and



Mrs. William Barrett, the Sadly Disillusioned Heroine of the Surprising Elopement Which She Managed All by Herself.

educated in Hillsboro, Or., making the naval academy at the end of his high school course. He is the son of the late ex-Senator William N. Barrett, lawyer, and Lucretia Parrish Barrett. He was a fine character and the Parrishes, on the mother's side of the family, were splendid people, and when Will became involved in a diamond escapade in San Francisco it was a great shock to Hillsboro. The next Hillsboro heard of him was when he eloped with the daughter of Alexander Kerr, the Tacoma capitalist. Barrett has a son by this marriage, but he and his wife disagreed and they were divorced in Portland. Next Barrett bobbed up as a lieutenant in France and then the romantic marriage with Miss Drexel and its sorrowful conclusion became public.

One of the greatest mysteries to the Drexels' friends, from the time that Alice came out, was Mrs. Drexel's frank effort to keep her daughter from marrying. To tell the truth, she had kept Alice in the schoolroom a year longer than is usual and then sent her abroad for a year or two when the other girls of her set were having their coming-out parties.

Alice was well over twenty when Mrs. Drexel finally capitulated and brought her home to make her debut. She then did the thing very well, the opening ball was most brilliant and a round of smaller parties in New York and Philadelphia completed the season.

The next step for any fashionable mother lies in securing a suitable husband for her daughter. Mrs. Drexel not only failed to take this important step, but interfered cannily with such romances as came Alice's way.

There were at least four worthwhile suitors who paid court to the Drexel heiress, or attempted to. But Alice was whisked away from one and all, and even sent to Europe to evade the most persistent

When, therefore, Alice met William Barrett and came to believe that they were in love with each other, she decided to take matters into her own hands. She explained to the captain that she had no income of her own aside from her allowance. But Barrett insisted that he wanted her, not her money. With that avowal made it was easy to persuade her to elope.

Taking all the clothes she could pack in several suit cases and a week-end trunk, and her jewel box, Alice on the sixth of June last year motored in her own car out to Bronx Park, met Barrett and was married to him.

The bride and bridegroom returned to New York and informed the Drexels of their marriage. Mr. and Mrs. Drexel were frantic—they were "surprised and shocked," to quote their first words—and summoned the bridal pair to them at once. This meeting was explained by Barrett as a love feast that meant complete forgiveness.

A few days after this historic meeting the Barretts sailed for France, the impression being that John Drexel had bought their passage and given them a check beside.

Whatever money the Barretts had soon melted away and, as the months passed, they sank deeper and deeper into poverty. There can be no doubt that the young people in the beginning had banked on forgiveness and a settled income. As their hopes faded, Barrett gradually neglected her entirely. Then the day came when he left her to face the future, penniless and alone.

New York and Newport will not count on Alice's return to the society to which she was born until she actually arrives in this country. Among her friends are several who say that she has too much pride to come home and really desires to continue living abroad if her father will arrange her finances. Time alone can tell what will be the future of the young bride and mother whose romance has ended as tragically as any in the melodramas ever did.