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The Vision of a Dream.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

From The Illustrated Home Guest

CHAPTER I

When I was a little girl I went to a school where children of both sexes were taught. The boys sat on one side, the girls on the other. We had very little to do with each other during school hours, but after its close and on holidays we played together constantly.

For my part I liked none of the girls as well as I did two of the boys, Frank Fair and Harry Myrtle. They were not in the least like each other. Frank was the son of a sailor's widow, a brown-haired, black-eyed fellow, full of fun and frolic. Harry was the doctor's son. When we went out together Frank was always finding some bit of water to sail his boat upon, and Harry always sat down to sketch something. He called it "drawing pictures" then. He had "drawn" me doing all sorts of things—fishing, reading, picking blackberries, at my desk at school. I have many of these sketches now, and I have, beside, the little schooner that Frank made me, with the cordage of yellow silk cord and little silk flags, and my name painted upon her side. I keep it under a glass case, and it really is a wonder.

Harry's sketches were wonderful for a boy, and when he told me that he meant to be an artist, I was sure he would be a great one, and told him so.

It does not take long for a child to grow to be a girl. One day, as it were by magic, I found that I had become seventeen. It was the day on which Frank, who was nineteen, had asked me to be his wife, and I had accepted him.

When I told my parents, my father said that Frank was a fine fellow, but my mother let me know that she was disappointed. She had hoped I should marry Harry Myrtle. His social position was higher; he was more to her taste. But, after the sensible fashion of American parents, they agreed that I had the right of choice, only the engagement must be a long one, for I was young and Frank poor. For our parts, we were in no haste, so that we were free to love each other, and to look forward to passing our lives together. But I was sorry that mother had spoken of Harry as she did. I had never considered him anything but a friend.

A few days after this, he also made me an offer. His father intended to send him to Europe to study, and he wanted my promise before he went. He said much more than Frank had. He was more romantic, and had read more, and had a greater command of language. If he really loved me as he said he did, it seemed very terrible that I should have to tell him that I did not care for him. What I did say was:

"I am engaged to Frank Fair."

Not a word more or a word less. Neither did he answer a word. He only arose, and kissed my hand and went his way. And when he was gone I was sorry for him. But I loved Frank, and I did not love him, although I was fond of him—very fond, as I might have been of a brother, had I one. And shortly he went to Italy, and I had no doubt he would soon find some one who would suit him better than I could ever have done—a beautiful

Italian, perhaps, with such a face as he could put into his pictures, while I was only a little Yankee girl, with cheeks like those of a milkmaid, and a little up-tilted nose, and big, baby eyes, bright enough, to be sure, for I had had such a happy life that few tears had ever dimmed them. But I never regretted that I had chosen Frank instead of Harry—not a thought like that ever came into my mind.

We had the happiest courtship that ever was known. Frank went to sea, it is true, but his voyages were short, and one day an old great uncle who had more savings than any one ever dreamed of left him some money. With it he bought part of a vessel, and then being captain and owner, he came boldly to my father and asked him when we might be married.

Father had always liked him, and he left it to mother. Mother had begun to like him also, and somehow the fact that he had named his vessel the "Dolly Fair," after his own mother, who was a plain little woman some sons would have been ashamed of, touched her.

"A good son will make a good husband," she said, and with that gave him a kiss. So we had a merry wedding-day and a gay honey-moon.

Before any trouble has come to me it is hard to believe that it ever came. I had no fear when the "Dolly Fair" set sail.

I grieved to part with my husband as I had never grieved before, but I felt sure that he would come back to me.

Even when the others began to be alarmed, I felt only anxious to hear from Frank, and when they told me that there were doubts of the ship's safety, I had none. At last her wreck was seen, and some men who had been on board, when she went down, were brought in by a steamer, and told their story.

When they left the wreck Captain Fair was still upon her. She was fast sinking, but he would not leave her until every other soul was saved.

"Do you think that God would desert a brave man like that?" I cried. "No; he'll come home yet."

And for days I hoped for news, until at last a fever fell upon me, and at its lowest stage I sunk into a strange sort of swoon or trance, in which I lay like one dead, for seven days. Indeed, some of those around me thought I was dead, and said to one another that it was better that it should be thus, for that I would never be happy again while I lived. Those were women who were themselves widows, and knew what it meant to be left so desolate.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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