

**LOVE IN
THE WEAVING**

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Love in the Weaving by Edith Hall Orthwein

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By
EDITH HALL ORTHWEIN

*To love is ever to thirst, and to thirst is
ever to pray. Thus love is prayer, and they
who love best pray best.*



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Copyright, 1910,
By
EDITH HALL ORTHWEIN.

To
MY MOTHER,

Mrs. R. G. Rombauer, whose love I wear upon my heart,—a jewel of so rare a setting that it holds the coral flame of morning and the sun-woven mist of evening in the soft wonder of its beauty.

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FOREWORD.

The lights in the studio burned low. Each candle gave forth little restless, tired, jerking flickers, as if the effort of brightening the long shadowy room had wearied it. Is it not always a struggle to bring the light into the gloom?

There were pictures everywhere. But one, only, seemed to fill the place with its presence. It hung in the very end of the room, far away from the windows, in a niche made by a deep recess in the wall. It was a picture of a woman reclining upon a wide, fur-covered couch. The beauty of her bared bosom was half exposed as she lay with her arm beneath her head. Her eyes were filled with the great mother-love of her being, a new rapture, partially veiled in a cloudy haze, the wonder of the artist's brush, seemed to float beneath her vision. At the foot of the couch knelt the figure of a man, and upon his face the light of a great love was aglow. It was a wonderful picture—*all of life* shaded upon a canvas not four feet square. It was love, face to face with the joy of its passion. You could almost see the hearts a-quiver, and feel the great ebb and flow of the love-tide that had swept them into one.

Beneath the picture sat a woman with great hungry eyes. All of her young life had been passed in an environment that would have warped the

womanhood, in a soul less pure. Her eyes were fixed upon the picture. Was it not herself portrayed there—and yet could that be she—that wonderful creature with the love-haze about her? Surely love was all. Over her neck stole soft kisses—they burned into her soul. Suddenly, from out the fire of love's embrace the meaning of life seemed to glow over and around her and she bowed her head and wept.

It was a great step to take. It would carry her out upon the ocean of the world's contempt. What was the world to her—an artist's model? It threw her crumbs, to be sure—but ah, she was starving for the whole of love's loaf. God help a woman when she loves!

A great tender, pitying influence hovered over her, there alone in the darkness. The candles had gone out and the place seemed held in the iron hands of an awful stillness that fain would choke out her very life.

She loved—how she loved him! Was that right? What was wrong? How could she tell, when she loved him so?

She could never be his wife. The words sung in her ears—"his wife." How the world honored the title! A quivering denial spoke within her breast. The world—it was the world again she was thinking about. How dared it stand in judgment of her love?

His wife—to stand abreast with him and face life—to smile in the rocking gale—to feel the blood of pride rush through the veins—surely this was best. But to gain this, she must hurt another, perhaps.

She might hurt herself, but another? And this is all the law of conscience. Did she hurt another? The man loved her—she knew it. Had he not been strong when she was weak? Had he not been true to that unloved wife—silent that she might not be hurt?

Down upon the floor the unhappy woman huddled; the spirit seemed crushed within her. Suddenly she stood erect, and through the room crept the moonlight, and her face was as the face of an angel. Strength and love,—understanding, was ablaze in her eyes. She had made her choice. Would he, her lover, let her abide by it?

Her breasts quivered—as if a child's lips were wet upon them—and the world would call that child a bastard. But would it not be endowed from the store-house of love's richest treasure? Was not such a heritage enough? The undesired child only, is a bastard, though he sleep in a satin-lined cradle of wedlock. Her babe would be the babe of love. Ah, God, would her lover let her live? And she wept again and waited there in the moon-glow—and unseen hands bathed her brow from the great alabaster box of pity.

Is it not a struggle of the soul in the body, in life to find the way?

Yet when the fatigue of the journey is over and we look back from the golden summit and see the beginning from the end, will not bitterness of judgment pass from us? For we shall see the pattern of the weaving. Will it matter what road we traveled, and must not each soul draw its own pattern, after all?