

# **THE PRECIPICE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649538256

The Precipice by Mrs. Pearl Groves Maddox

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**MRS. PEARL GROVES MADDOX**

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**PRECIPICE**

BY  
**MRS. PEARL GROVES MADDOX**

**THE McLEAN CO.,**  
Publishers,  
Baltimore, Md.  
1917.  
F. P. L.  
A. P. L.

\* Library Journal — Jan 30/18

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## CHAPTER I.

In her room on the second floor of a select boarding house, in one of the fashionable streets in the city of Atlanta, Mrs. Doris Chastain, wife of Gerald Chastain, and Mary Gardner, a colored washer-woman who had brought home the week's laundry, stood one bright morning in May.

"I'se jest got to have the money when I brings de close home, Mis' Chastain, or I has to quit," said Mary in a half-angry voice. "My rent I has to pay once a week an' I has to pay cash for every bite de chilluns an' me gets to eat," continued the old woman.

"I am so sorry, Mary, but Mr. Chastain left me with but little change and I've had to use that," Doris replied. "He was not to be gone but a few days and, as usual, has been detained nearly two weeks. I'm looking for him at any time; then, I assure you, I will get the money for you," Doris continued.

The old negress, mumbling to herself, left the room to come back on the morrow.

Doris, left alone, almost collapsed. How many such ordeals had she been through? Money, money, money. What was the use to try to work? None. She threw herself across her bed and gave vent to the feelings that were choking

her. What could she do to get Gerald to give her an allowance to cover household expenses? Three years of married life, living in two rooms furnished for light housekeeping! If the next fifty years were to be as the past three, it would be merciful for her to die now. Owing to Mr. Chastain's absence, sometimes for two and three months at a time, he preferred this way of living to a cottage by themselves. They were fortunate in getting rooms with Mrs. Amanda Jermain, the proprietress of the house.

No children had come to bless the union of Doris Graves and Gerald Chastain. Nearly three years ago, Gerald Chastain, a handsome man of thirty-nine years, with his big, beautiful brown eyes, very high forehead, erect, military figure, and possessing the art of knowing how and when to wear clothes, caught a glimpse of Doris in one of the largest downtown department stores, where she was one of the salesladies. Doris Graves, an orphan since early infancy, having to make her living, and at the close of the day having to go to a small, ill-furnished cottage and spend the nights with her cross, crabbed old uncle, quickly became infatuated with handsome Gerald Chastain. Doris was a rather pretty girl, of nearly eighteen summers. Her eyes were big, open, and blue, her hair a waving mass of brown. No paint had ever marred the lovely bloom in her cheeks. A full, little figure of about one hun-

dred and ten pounds; truly, she was enough to win any man's admiration.

Gerald had an extra good position as traveling salesman for one of Atlanta's oldest and most reliable manufacturing establishments. This company furnished him with a high-class roadster. Riding around in this car, wearing a large diamond ring and scarf pin, dressed in perfect fitting clothes, it did not take him long to persuade Doris that her only road to happiness lay in being made Mrs. Gerald Chastain at an early date. A few days previous to their marriage he had confessed to Doris that there had been a Mrs. Gerald Chastain No. 1, in Virginia. They had been divorced and she had died a number of months ago. He succeeded in making Doris believe that wife No. 1 had been everything that was false and untrue. Living in a city where many divorces were granted every month, Doris did not regard a divorce as immoral or disgraceful.

Soon after their marriage, Doris had an awakening. Where were the beautiful dresses promised her? Where was the costly furnished cottage? Doris had absolutely no voice whatever in what they had to eat. She could not purchase her wearing apparel and she had no spending money. She was allowed to run an account with a little grocery on the corner, the bills being subject to a rigid examination by Gerald the first