

**TWO OF
A TRADE**

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Two of a Trade by Martha McCullough Williams

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MARTHA MCCULLOUGH WILLIAMS

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BY

MARTHA McCULLOUGH WILLIAMS



NEW YORK

J. SELWIN TAIT AND SONS

65 FIFTH AVENUE

1894



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Lovingly Inscribed

TO

MRS. A. M. P.,

A LIVING EXEMPLAR, IN THE ERA OF THE NEW SOUTH,

OF THE

GRACES AND GRACIOUSNESS WHICH GLORIFIED THE OLD.

23 FEB 1874



TWO OF A TRADE.

CHAPTER I.

"WHY, it's great! Superb! Immortality in a nutshell!"

And the speaker, Mr. Endymion Weeper, paced his library with stiff and measured strides that brought vividly to mind the motions of a jumping-jack. He was dark, tall, slender, and slightly bent, with an entirely correct mustache, a high, bulging forehead and prominent pale eyes, which ill-natured folk even said were fishy. But in the opinion of his Aunt Priscilla, the man did not live who was worthy to be named in the same day with her nephew.

Said Aunt Priscilla was Mr. Endymion Weeper's father's sister, a gentlewoman with high nose, and chin whose accentuated sharpness contrasted oddly with her washed-out general coloring, or rather want of it. But what Miss Priscilla lacked

of beauty she more than made up in magnificence. As she sat in the chimney corner, gazing fondly on Endymion, her satin gown rustled with each movement of her small person, and a faint tinkle of chains and bracelets emphasized every motion. At least a dozen diamonds on her skinny fingers flashed back the fire-shine. Indeed, such a sense of costliness was about her that instinctively one wondered if she dared sleep outside a burglar-proof vault.

The same affluent atmosphere breathed throughout the room, which was long and lofty, with windows of stained glass at each end, and along either side a fine array of tapestry panels encased in dark red mahogany with overlay of open brass-work. Low bookcases were crammed with rare editions—old and new. Pictures, bronzes, ivory carvings, ancient weapons and fragments of armor—indeed all the luxurious litter with which great wealth decrees its possessor shall lumber himself, was scattered about, and pervaded by an artistic note of gloom and ugliness.

The only suggestion of cheerfulness emanated from the blazing logs which crackled in the bronzed grate, and occasionally snapped a merry spark at the magnificent tiger-skin stretched be-



fore it, upon which the owner of all this luxury and fashionable gloom had just paused, repeating to himself the words:

"Glorious! Superb! Immortality in a nutshell!"

Miss Priscilla looked at him, started apprehensively—tinkle, tinkle rang her chains—and said tentatively:

"Well?"

"Very well indeed!" echoed Endymion, drawing a step nearer and gazing upon her face. "Darling Aunt Priscilla," he continued, "although every member of our family is properly appreciative of my talents, you were the first to recognize and have been the most ardent supporter of them. It therefore seems indeed fitting that you should be first to hear that soon the world will be at my feet."

Tears came to the poor little woman's eyes. She passed a film of lace and cambric across them, assumed a painfully erect posture, flashed an extra rainbow from the big diamond on her forefinger, and said, with a slightly tremulous voice:

"Yes, I knew success would come! I have said so *all* the time, and have not lost hope if you are thirty-nine. But tell me what has happened."