

**A PRODIGAL IN
LOVE: A NOVEL**

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A prodigal in love: a novel by Emma Wolf

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EMMA WOLF

**A PRODIGAL IN
LOVE: A NOVEL**

A PRODIGAL IN LOVE

A Novel

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

BY

EMMA WOLF

AUTHOR OF "OTHER THINGS BEING EQUAL."

— "A wind along the waste,
I know not whither, willy-nilly blowing"



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1894

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A PRODIGAL IN LOVE

CHAPTER I

DAY OF
CALIFORNIA

"You will grant," said Brunton, as they paused before Rembrandt's "Head of a Boy," "that these transparencies of the flesh are marvellously acquired and natural. The color upon the cheeks seems almost to waver with life. You—"

He stopped abruptly, conscious that his companion's attention was directed in another quarter. Following his gaze, he saw that it rested upon a trio moving toward the great Millet at the farther end of the room. Brunton leaned lightly upon the hand-rail with a look of expectant pleasure in his quiet eyes.

The two girls hanging upon either arm of the young woman seemed, despite their animation, to be deferring their opinions to hers. She was undeniably noticeable, though her attire was dark and extremely simple. She was tall, and with a round, mature figure which she carried with unconscious stateliness. A black straw hat rested upon her mass of gold braids and shaded the pale ivory hue of her face. Her expression was deep and thoughtful; the air of youthful deference which the girls evinced appeared in natural keeping with the strong per-

sonality which marked her. As she turned to speak to a distinguished-looking old gentleman who had accosted them, the girls dropped their hold, and, wending their way through the crowd, made a hurried dash toward the picture before which Brunton and his companion still stood.

"Oh, Geoffrey!" they exclaimed, standing still at sight of the former.

"We wanted to get another look at this lovely boy before we leave," continued the younger, a tall school-girl, with a warm, animated face and voice, "so we left Constance for a minute while she talks to Mr. Glynn. We're in love with him, aren't we, Grace?"

"With whom, Edith, the boy or Mr. Glynn?" asked Brunton, looking with friendly amusement from her bright face to the gentler one of her sister.

"With the boy," answered Grace, a shy smile dimpling her mouth. "His cheeks and lips are as soft and flushed as if he had just had a nap. He looks so—kissable."

"That expresses it better—eh, Kenyon? This is Miss Grace, and this Miss Edith Herriott—Mr. Kenyon, girls."

They looked up with rosy cheeks to acknowledge the salutation of the tall stranger.

"Am I possibly speaking to the cousins of Severn Scott?" he asked in a full, deep voice, his dark, glowing face holding them fascinated.

"Why, yes!" Edith bubbled forth, delightedly. "And are you—can you be Hall Kenyon?"

"Oh, Edith," expostulated the quieter girl, flushing over her sister's irrepressibility. The stranger smiled, showing his handsome white teeth.

"You have guessed it," he said, courteously. "Mr. Brunton wished to confute some of my Eastern estimates of the Far West, so he brought me in to see your loan exhibition. I'm moving slowly in the direction of your residence as per promise to Scott."

"We shall be glad," returned Grace, with shy pleasure; and, as Edith plucked her by the sleeve, she nodded swiftly and darted toward the entrance, where they joined their former companion and passed on out.

"That was an unexpected flash," remarked Kenyon, moving slowly on with Brunton. "I intended calling on Miss Herriott to-night. Have you ever noticed how a contemplated action will evolve something associated with it just before the consummation? Oh, by the way, can you tell me who was that young woman with them?"

"That was their sister, Miss Herriott."

"Ah!" After an indistinct pause he rejoined, "An unusually beautiful—handsome woman. Do you know her?"

"Yes; I am their legal adviser."

They walked from picture to picture, and finally came out of the warm rooms into the crisp spring atmosphere, and turned briskly up Montgomery Street.

"I've heard a great deal of these Herriotts from Scott," pursued Kenyon, suiting his long, nervous stride to Brunton's leisurely gait. "Their history is quite unique, I think. The father killed himself, did he not?"

"Exactly; and without reason. He was a strangely excitable man, and lost his head at a sign of disaster. Once imbued with an idea, he was not to be stopped in his course. His individuality might be described as the Chinaman expressed the locomotion of a cable-car: 'No

pushee, no pullee, go like hellee.' He had made an unwise speculation in grain—not, however, at all ruinous—and, through overlooking two significant ciphers, he sent a bullet through his head."

"I've heard it all before—a somewhat selfish performance for the father of a large family."

"There was no egoism in the act. The egoist is, at worst, thoughtful. He had lost his balance entirely; he was practically insane."

"His daughter does not impress one as having inherited the tendency."

"You refer to Constance—Miss Herriott. She is quite different, by virtue of her position—the guardian, you know, of the family. But Herriott certainly perpetuated himself in one or two of the younger children. Where are you going?"

They had reached the corner of Pine Street, and Kenyon came to an abrupt stand-still.

"I promised to meet Joscelyn up here at his club at four o'clock. I'll be at your office without fail to-morrow to see about that title, if no other inclination intervenes." He laughed lightly as he moved off. "Well, so long."

With a nod the two men separated.

Kenyon would have more thoroughly appreciated Brunton's characterization had he been a witness to the little scene enacted in Eleanor Herriott's bedroom at about half-past eight that evening. She had been dressing for her first ball, and the children sat waiting in eager expectation.

As she moved into view there was a long sigh of admiration. The Herriotts' admiration for one another was

quite undisguised; they expressed it with an utter disregard as to what others might think of their family fanaticism. They were, however, equally frank with their disapproval, being heedlessly imprudent in pronouncing words which rushed to their lips on the impulse of an impression. Honest praise, however, seldom hurts; like a pleasant cordial, it sends a grateful tingle through the coldest blood.

Edith, perched on the foot of the bed, clapped her hands in applause.

"Oh, doesn't she look lovely! Oh, Eleanor, I wish I were grown up!"

"Look at her hair; it's a heap of fire-flies there with the light on it, her cheeks match, and her eyes are torches; the men will light their wits at them. She looks as though she would burst into flame. She'll surely be the belle."

"Keep still, you silly girls. Constance, put a pin in that rose in my hair, or I'll dance it out. There! Now while I put on my gloves you can give me praise galore; I like it."

She stood, a young, graceful figure in white satin, under the chandelier. The deep red rose in her bronze hair, the glow upon her cheek and lip, the restless, flashing gray eyes charmed as does a flash-light in a dark night. In the pause which followed her words, she turned to Constance in demure, laughing expectancy.

"Well, Constance?"

"Beautiful, dear," came the ready answer, in the low, tender voice. "I feel very proud of you to-night."

The younger girl threw her a kiss and swept her a deep