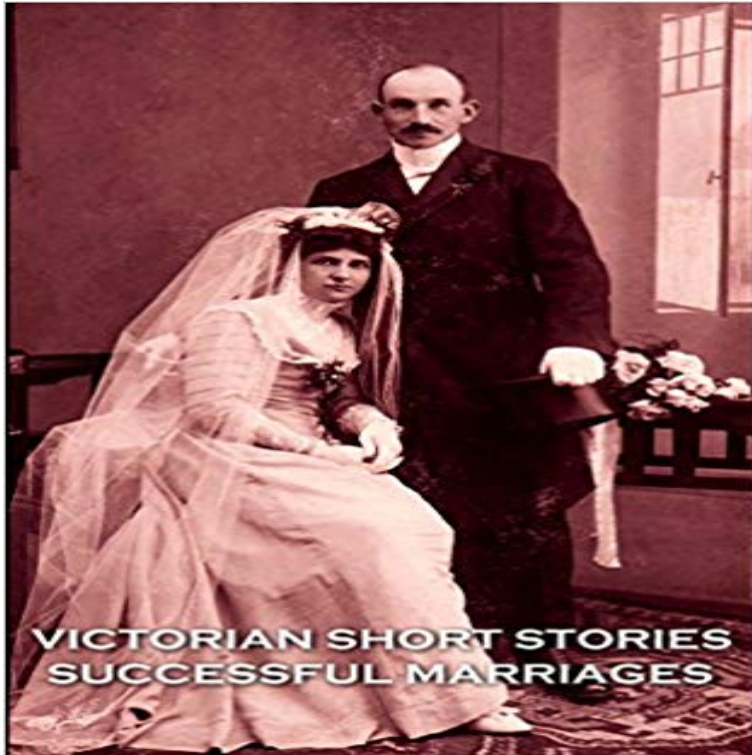


Victorian Short Stories - Successful Marriages



It seems unlikely that there could be any subject to have preoccupied writers throughout the ages more than the pursuit of love. This may have reached an all time high in the Victorian era when a new age of romanticism captured hearts and minds. However, whilst love might have been the ultimate quest there were numerous practical formalities that preceded it and after the immensely complicated and ritualised courtship, a good match was of paramount importance for both men and women. Women were on average in their early twenties when they married and by the age of 30 were ill considered as a good match and were very much on the shelf. Once married, a man had total ownership and control over all physical property and income that belonged to his wife. She not only lost the little independence that had previously been afforded her but was now the domestic servant of her husband, responsible in ensuring that every aspect of the house from food to kids ran smoothly and caused no trouble to her husband. Divorce was only available to the extremely wealthy until 1857 so for a woman the man she married determined her life whilst the married man always had options. This series of short stories wonderfully captures the Victorian world of matrimony with gems from Elizabeth Gaskell, who with strong characterisation portrays tragedy but in a successful middle class marriage, Thomas Hardy and many more.

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